

## IN BRIEF

THE hippocampus plays a lead role in creating connected memories. Researchers used functional MRI to image the hippocampus of volunteers as they learned and recalled a series of short stories, constructed so that some formed connected, two-part narratives and others did not. Listeners' brains were scanned first when they learned the stories and again the next day, when they recalled the stories. Researchers found that the hippocampus was active in weaving the narratives together, when they were connected, and that, when recalling stories that formed a coherent narrative, the hippocampus activated more information about the second event than when recalling non-connected stories. Hippocampal activity was also linked to how much detail participants could recall. (*Current Biology*, 2021 doi: 10.1016/j.cub.2021.09.013)

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY practice, not early specialisation, predicts world-class performance. Analysis of studies on over 6,000 athletes, including 722 of the world's top performers, showed that adult world-class athletes engaged in more childhood/adolescent multisport practice, started their main sport later, accumulated less main-sport practice, and initially progressed more slowly than did national-class athletes. Conversely, higher-performing youth athletes started playing their main sport earlier, engaged in more main-sport practice but less other-sports practice, and had faster initial progress than did lower-performing youth athletes. This strategy did not translate to senior success. The findings also hold for science, say the researchers. Nobel laureates had multidisciplinary study/working experience and slower early progress than did national-level award winners. (*Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2021, doi: 10.1177/1745691620974772)

## 'Timebanking' on the up

IN the wake of lockdowns initiated in the first phases of the covid-19 pandemic, more people have become involved in voluntary work through timebanking, according to the national charity supporting these programmes, Timebanking UK.

Timebanking ([www.timebanking.org](http://www.timebanking.org)) is a way of sharing time and skills with people in one's local community or workplace. It revolves around what people can do – whether accounts, simple DIY or offering a listening ear – to support others with what they need, can't do or don't enjoy. In timebanking, every skill, passion or interest is valued equally – one hour of time is always worth the same.

"The unique thing about timebanking as distinct from traditional volunteering is that it doesn't label people as 'those who help' and 'those who need help'. In a time bank, every member can both give time and receive time by logging a request for help via their time bank. That means that people who have been isolated, out of work, or suffering from ill health can rediscover their own skills and talents and develop a renewed sense of self-worth," says chief executive officer Sarah Bird.

She says, "The pandemic has changed our society in so many ways. Many of these are negative – but we have also seen powerful stories of people connecting with others for the first time; of communities pulling together to make sure no one is left alone. Timebanking is an ideal way to keep that community spirit going beyond periods of acute need – it creates friendships and relationships, connecting members all year round, in good times and bad."

According to Timebanking UK's



TIMEBANKING is a reciprocal skill-sharing model in which no money changes hands. Members earn and spend timebanking hours by helping others; for example, one member might offer an hour of gardening, while another might offer an hour of teaching guitar. They each earn a timebanking hour, which they can spend at their time bank on a skill or activity offered by another.

Timebanking allows people to dip in and out at times to suit themselves, and to decide for themselves which skills to offer.

Timebanking UK provides advice, resources, software and training to anyone who wants to set up a new time bank, develop an existing time bank, or just learn more about timebanking. There are community time banks all over the country and are free to join. Some involve just a handful of people; others cover entire counties. Timebanking UK also works with companies and health and social care providers to embed the reciprocal principles of timebanking into services and workplaces. ●

annual report, around 18,000 people are currently taking part in timebanking, with over six million hours exchanged to date. Over 60 per cent of those taking part are aged over 60. According to statistics collected at a typical time bank, 80 per cent felt more part of the community; 74 per cent had made new friends; 74 per cent had experienced a lift in mood or reduced depression; 69 per cent felt they could ask for or receive more help; 66 per cent experienced reduced loneliness; and 60 per cent said their quality of life, health and wellbeing had improved

Independent research shows that timebanking attracts proportionally more people from lower socio-economic groups, people receiving benefits, and retired and disabled people than are represented in the general population – ie it appears to appeal to people who may not want to become involved in 'traditional' volunteering. ■