



Harold Bekkering is professor of cognitive psychology at [Radboud University Nijmegen](#), and Board member of the [Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour](#) in the Netherlands. His research focuses on the perception and production of goal-directed actions, particularly in the context of social interaction.

QUESTION: What motivates you?

ANSWER: The talented young people in my group inspire me with either the ideal data graph—indicating that our experimental thinking was absolutely correct, or with the ultimate research idea on how to challenge our view of human interaction in a complex social world. Without them, I definitely would spend fewer hours on science.

QUESTION: What is your favorite piece of lab equipment?

ANSWER: On some days, it's fancy neuroimaging equipment like fMRI or MEG. On other days, I just love to see a nice eye movement registration indicating exactly where somebody was looking, even though the person in question did not realize it. Eye movements as a window to the mind still does it for me, as well as body-movement registration.

QUESTION: What is your guilty pleasure?

ANSWER: I have most guilty pleasures at conferences. Staying out late with the group, including dancing and drinking, makes me feel alive and young—until the day after.

QUESTION: If you could have lunch with any scientist, past or present, who would it be and why?

ANSWER: I just read the biography of Albert Einstein by Walter Isaacson, and was fascinated by his rebellious nature. I would particularly like to ask him about his later years when quantum physics challenged his ideas about the cosmos and yet he deeply believed his own thinking was still right.

QUESTION: What encouraging words would you give to young people considering a career in neuroscience?

ANSWER: All the main mechanisms of human cognition regarding memory, decision-making, and action are yet to be discovered, and it takes innovative minds to do so—so please join us!

QUESTION: Last year you gave a lecture at Aloysius Den Haag Secondary School, “Homework, how to motivate my child.” Please explain briefly, how it’s done.

ANSWER: I am very motivated to discuss recent insights from neuroscience for education. That evening, I discussed ideas about the frontal cortex in the light of perspective-taking and planning capabilities, urging parents and teachers to treat teenagers as autonomous agents rather than underdeveloped brains. At the beginning, this message was not what they were hoping for, since it involved communicating with this peer-oriented age-group. In the end, though, they understood my message. I found it very rewarding and went home happy.