

BIGGEST MOVER!

Train Your Brain

Have you ever forgotten where your bank is? The answer is probably not. Have you ever forgotten where your cell phone, car keys, or laptop are? You probably have because these items are moved around a lot. Sometimes it may feel like you perform mental gymnastics to remember all the important things in your life. Guess what? As we age, our brain can lose its agility. The absence of novelty causes the dopamine-producing areas of the brain to shrink. The best thing you can do is to try something new.

Brain Cells

Our brains are stimulated by new experiences. Science has visual evidence through MRI technology showing that the learning centers in the human brain produce fresh neural pathways when we try something new. These signs of growth are evident regardless of age. So, just as your body needs exercise, your brain needs a workout too. Even if you're not very good at your new pursuits, you receive the brain-boosting benefits simply by doing them. Just like physical exercise, the more you do it, the more you'll benefit. And in many cases, your life will simply be enriched by experiencing something new. Here are some tips to keep your brain strong:

Alter Regular Routines: Do things like vacuuming, brushing your teeth or brushing your hair with the opposite hand; Reverse your normal walking/running route – the same scenery will look completely different; Rearrange your furniture; Shop at a different grocery store – your brain will work harder because you are unfamiliar with where the ingredients are located.

Try Something New: Cook a new recipe rich in brain foods like fish and nuts; Eat at a new restaurant (and try something new!); Get to know someone outside your normal circle of friends; Learn to speak a different language; Take lessons to learn how to play an instrument; Participate in a new exercise class; Plan a vacation, weekend getaway, or day trip to a place you've never visited before.

BRAIN GAMES

Not only does your body need a workout, so does your brain. It's black and white: there are a number of ways to stimulate your gray matter, including Sudoku, crossword puzzles, and computerized brain games. There are a number of websites that offer free brain games to stimulate your thinker. Try surfing the web under the name 'Brain Games' to see what you can find, or Prevention Magazine has a dedicated section of their website www.prevention.com/brainfitness for training your brain. If games or puzzles are not your thing, studies show that socializing with a friend for 10 minutes has the same effect on the brain as doing these brain puzzles.

BRAIN FOODS

The foods that benefit your heart are the same foods that benefit your brain. As it turns out, science has linked healthy bodies to healthy brains, as well as unhealthy bodies to unhealthy brains. Your diet goes hand in hand with your brain health.

One of the best defenses against dementia, which becomes more prevalent as our population ages, is to consume fatty fish such as salmon, herring or mackerel. According to several studies, one of which is the well-known Framingham Heart Study, three servings a week can cut your Alzheimer's risk nearly in half. A fish-based diet provides numerous protective benefits, probably the most famous of which are omega-3 fatty acids. One of these fatty acids is DHA. DHA is vital for development of new brain cells and aids learning and memory. Omega-3s are most notably found in walnuts, with traces in hazelnuts, cashews, almonds, and Brazil nuts. You can also buy omega-3 fortified foods such as eggs, orange juice, and more.

Other brain-boosting foods are found in the produce aisle and include tomatoes, watermelon, blueberries, blackberries, spinach, broccoli, sweet potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, mango, corn, melon, cauliflower, potatoes, garlic, and onions. Foods that drain the brain include high fat and high sugar foods, and foods with no nutritional value such as diet soda.