

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### **A Healthy Environment Makes a Difference and Brain Health Matters**

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Today we are talking about healthy spaces and their implications in promoting and protecting brain health and preventing and fighting brain illness.*

Maintaining a healthy environment took on new meaning with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us have been working and learning from home, but with the availability of the COVID-19 vaccines and decreasing numbers of new cases of the virus, many schools and businesses are starting to look at reopening.

According to [The Harvard Gazette](#), predictability and flexibility will be top priorities during the reopening process. Harvard Business School Professor Joseph B. Fuller said in the article: “It’s the Next Normal we’re headed to, not ‘back to normal,’ and that, for a lot of companies, is going to feature changes in work practices, changes in employee expectations of their employer, and companies learning from this duress about what they can do to be more effective and efficient and attractive employers.”

In addition to the need for personal protective equipment, adequate ventilation and spacing needs in workspaces, many employers are struggling with the question of asking — or requiring — employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 before returning to the office. Most employers seem to be leaning to the “highly encourage, but not required” side of the vaccine question.

Most of the area schools have been operating on a hybrid model of in-person and remote learning this school year, but many schools and universities are considering a return to in-person learning in the fall. According to the current guidelines from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), the decision about when children should return to in-person classes should be based on the family’s unique needs and situation and the parent’s comfort level with the steps the school is taking to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Back-to-school planning checklists are available on the [CDC website](#).

Until the majority of us have been vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus, the best way to maintain a safe environment at work and at school is to:

- Wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others who don't live in the same household.
- Get a COVID-19 vaccine when it is available.
- Avoid crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces.
- Wash hands often with soap and water. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

If your company is planning a return to working in the office, the BHI and the [CDC](#) recommend the following guidelines for maintaining a safe workplace environment.

- Wear a mask. Someday you may be able to go out in public without a mask, but that day is not here yet.
- Physically distance in shared spaces.
- Avoid sharing equipment such as phones, desks or workstations.
- Clean and disinfect common surfaces after using them.
- Wash your hands often.
- Avoid close contact and wear a mask if using any type of public transportation.
- Monitor your health.
- Stay home when you are sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, or if others in your household have been exposed.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses and language that promote:
  - Stress resilience
  - Nutrition
  - Physical activity
  - Sleep
  - Social connection
  - Emotional wellbeing
  - Meaning and Purpose
  - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
  - Engaging with nature
  - General health
  - Positive impacts

**About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, to build brain healthy communities through education, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).