

**BRAIN HEALTH BOOST**

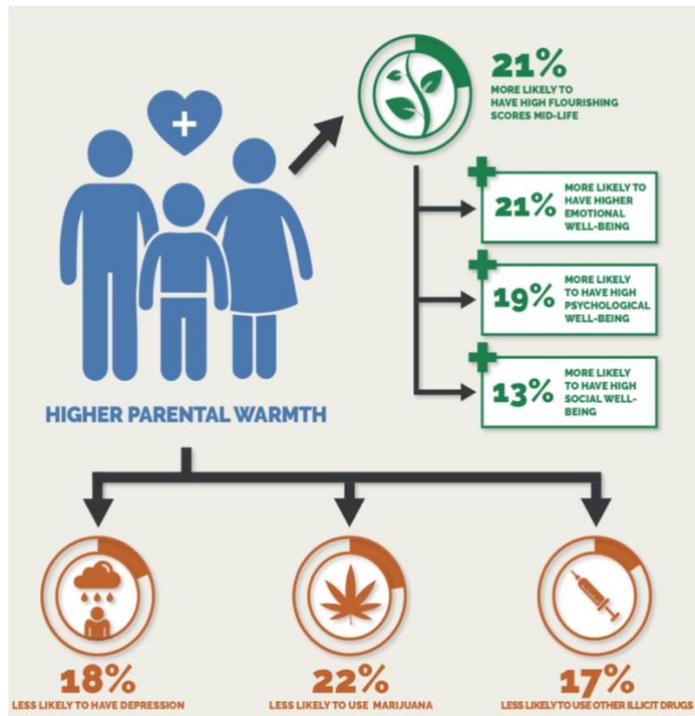


**Being a Loving Parent Makes a Difference and Brain Health Matters**

*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 how being a warm and loving parent can build your child’s brains architecture and give your kids a lifetime of happiness, health, achievement, and well-being.***

As parents, we want our kids to grow up to be happy and healthy. According to a recent study from [Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University](#), being a warm and loving parent is the one thing we can do to increase our children’s chances of living a flourishing life.

The study of nearly 4,000 people, [Parental Warmth and Flourishing in Mid-Life](#), showed a distinct correlation between people who described their parents as warm and loving and reporting that they are doing well in a life, or “flourishing.” Flourishing measures a person’s well-being. In the study, flourishing represents a combination of feeling good, functioning effectively, and having a sense that life is going well. According to a press release from the [Human Flourishing Program](#), the study demonstrates that our first relationship – with our parents – has a robust and positive influence on our emotional, psychological, physical, and social well-being well into mid-life.



From the [Human Flourishing Program at Harvard’s Institute for Quantitative Social Science](#)

“Much of the past research on childhood antecedents of health has focused on identifying risk factors for illness, such as parental neglect and parental abuse – in comparison, what positive factors may help promote health and well-being in later life is relatively understudied,” the

paper's lead author Ying Chen states in the press release.

Yes, we will still worry that we are parenting all wrong and messing up our kids. But if we are warm, supportive, attentive, and affectionate, we may be setting our kids up for a lifetime of happiness and brain health.

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

In addition to being a warm and loving parent, there are many ways we can help our children grow into happy, resilient, brain healthy adults. In a [post for CNBC](#), Lisa Feldman Barrett, PhD, Chief Science Officer for the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior at Harvard, suggests some of these tactics for raising brain healthy kids.

- **Be a gardener.** Gardeners cultivate a fertile landscape and let things grow. Provide your child an environment that encourages healthy growth in whatever direction they choose.
- **Read to your child.** Before birth and even when children are newborns their brains still make use of words. Talking and reading to your child helps build the neural foundation for later learning.
- **Explain things.** Even when “why?” is their favorite word, taking the time to explain something to children helps them understand their world and their behavior. Reasoning helps them understand the consequences of their actions and fosters empathy.
- **Be a role model.** Children learn by watching, playing, and most of all, by copying adults. And remember, they will copy you for better or worse.
- **Celebrate acting independently.** Children love to try things on their own without your help. They are developing an understanding of their world and how their actions affect it. It can be hard to let them do things like getting dressed or assembling puzzles on their own but letting them struggle builds resilience and helps them understand the consequences of their actions.
- And don't forget to encourage your child to **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](#).