

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Laugh Your Way to Brain Health

*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. **During National Humor Month, we discuss how we can laugh our way to brain health.***

Laughing is brain healthy. It increases your heart rate, improves the flow of oxygen to your brain and the flood of feel-good hormones released during a good laugh can increase positive emotions and reduce pain and stress.

After a year of pandemic fears, social isolation, job woes, and racial inequity we could all use a hearty laugh. The problem is that most of us aren't feeling very funny. Research shows that being in a positive mood can help you feel funnier. When you feel good, you tend to think more creatively and feel more confident. Sometimes you just have to look for the humor in a situation and look for the people who make you laugh.

Humor is a natural and free stress reducer. In addition to relieving stress, anxiety and tension it can improve your perspective on life and living. Viewing life through a filter of humor can increase your physical and brain health protective factors and distance yourself from any anxiety-inducing situations around you.

That's especially true at work. Yes, there is room for humor in the workplace. In an article for the [Harvard Business Review](#), writer Alison Beard says: "The workplace needs laughter. According to research from institutions as serious as Wharton, MIT, and London Business School, every chuckle or guffaw brings with it a host of business benefits. Laughter relieves stress and boredom, boosts engagement and well-being, and spurs not only creativity and collaboration, but also analytic precision and productivity." Beard cautions that there is a fine line between funny and inappropriate. She advises being careful about sticking to the types of humor that may work at the office. It is also important to consider culturally acceptable forms of humor.

Here is a tip to tell if you are eliciting true, not faked, laughter. Look for crinkling around the eyes; if it's there, you've got true laughter. So, go ahead, tell a joke or act silly at least once a day and be prepared for a healthier outlook on life.

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

If you feel as though your sense of humor could use a boost, the BHI has these suggestions to get the laughs started.

- **Look to everyday things.** Examine what makes you smile and laugh—and then look for those sorts of things in your circumstances.
- **Use your imagination.** Focus on something you find silly and imagine it being even more extreme to the point of total ridiculousness and worthy of a full-throated laugh.
- **Use your frustrations to create short, amusing stories.** Share those stories with your friends and colleagues and see if you can get a laugh.
- **Watch humorous, goofy, or silly videos.** When you find something that really makes you laugh, share it with others.
- **Don't get discouraged.** Remember, what's funny to you may not be funny to someone else so don't be offended if your friends don't laugh. Keep smiling and keep trying.
- McCurdy's Comedy Theatre in Sarasota is still closed due to the pandemic but has been holding some outdoor shows and a virtual experience to keep the laughs rolling. If you've always wanted to be the one telling jokes, you can also check out the Humor Institute.
- **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](#).