

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Reducing Brain Drain Important for 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. **In this Brain Boost we talk about staying sharp and maintaining focus, especially during the summer.***

Staying smart, sharp, and focused is important for our brain health at any age. But it can be challenging — for kids and adults alike — to exercise our brains as the temperature hovers in the 90s and all we want to do is float in the pool or sit in the air conditioning. The good news is that there are plenty of fun ways we can keep our brains active and engaged during the summer.

As parents, we worry about summer “brain drain.” Research shows that all kids lose some of their cognitive skills over the summer. Keeping kids focused and engaged doesn’t mean they have to attend summer school. Instead, look for fun teachable moments to reinforce the skills they learned during the school year. If they want to watch baseball, talk about how to calculate batting averages and earned run averages to help keep their math skills sharp. A trip to a museum is a learning experience and you can ask your child to read the information out loud to strengthen reading skills.

And don’t forget that play is an important part of brain health. In early childhood, play fosters crucial social-emotional and cognitive skills and cultivates creativity and imagination. Adolescents and adults also need time to play. Vacations allow us time to recharge, have fun with family and friends, and get out into the world. A study in the [Journal of Play](#) links the decreasing amount of children’s play time to the increase in brain illnesses, such as depression and anxiety in children, adolescents, and young adults. The article contends play functions as the major means by which we develop intrinsic interests and competencies; learn how to make decisions, solve problems, exert self-control, and follow rules; learn to regulate our emotions; make friends and learn to get along with others as equals; and experience joy.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

There are many ways to stay focused and keep your brain sharp — no matter what your age. Try one of these activities to challenge you and your kids.

- Read a book. Pick a book and read it out loud to each other.
- Go to a museum. Museums don't have to be boring. In addition to art and history, there are museums for sports, music, science, and even kids' museums that encourage learning by touching. Find something the whole family can enjoy.
- Listen to music. Music soothes your soul, but it can also teach you and your kids about other cultures and past generations.
- Play a game. Games are fun and they challenge your brain to solve problems, make decisions, and follow rules.
- Find a summer activity that challenges your mind and your body. Check the [MyLWR Community Calendar](#) for events happening in the community. There are sports camps, yoga and exercise programs, arts classes, and more for all ages.
- And don't forget to **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:
 - 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)

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](#).