

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Being Creative Supports 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. **Today we offer guidance on supporting our kids' creativity and the implications to brain health, development, and performance.***

Creativity is important for healthy brain development. In young children, creative play stimulates the brain to develop the neurological connections that help develop gross motor skills like running, walking, jumping, and balance, as well as the fine motor skills necessary for using pencils, crayons, and other tools. For adolescents and teens, being creative promotes connectivity in the frontal lobe, which plays a critical role in executive function, including planning and decision-making skills.

The importance of arts education in our schools has been debated for decades. Budgetary issues have often resulted in arts education taking a back seat when it comes to educational priorities, but since the 1960s researchers in cognitive development have been focusing on the critical role arts education plays in learning and brain development.

One such project was the Harvard Graduate School of Education's [Project Zero](#). For more than 50 years, Project Zero has been working to understand and enhance learning, thinking and creativity. As the research around creativity and critical thinking has evolved so has the work of Project Zero. What began as research into the mental processes involved in creative activity has evolved into exploring the best ways to include arts curriculum in our schools to help students develop the skills for life-long learning, critical thinking, and creativity.

In his book *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, author Eric Jensen says the arts deserve to be treated equally in our educational system. The book examines the research surrounding arts education as it relates to the brain and learning. While Jensen says the research supports arts education as part of the curriculum, he also recommends against the traditional style of grading when it comes to the arts. He points out that the benefits of participating in artistic activities — the development

of complex neurobiological systems — are difficult to evaluate and measure. Teaching the arts is “about life, growth, and expanding who we can become as human beings,” Jensen concludes.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

You can help your children be more creative and support their brain health, development, and performance. Instead of letting them fill their free time with screen time, the BHI offers these suggestions for helping your kids think creatively.

- Make learning fun and creative. Plan a family outing to a park, concert, or museum. Try [Visit Sarasota](#), [Fun 4 Sarasota Kids](#), [My Manatee](#), or [My LWR](#) for ideas.
- Create a story together. Draw from current events or your child’s interests to come up with a topic and take turns adding to the tale.
- Balance screen time with creative time. Encourage your kids to spend as much time creating as they do online. Balance an hour of screen time with an hour of listening to music, learning an instrument, singing, drawing, painting, coloring, writing a story, reading, putting on a play — the list is endless!
- Give creative gifts. Yes, your kids want electronics but make sure you also give them art supplies, music, books, blocks, Legos, and other gifts that encourage creativity.
- Take classes together. Creating things together can inspire your child to be more creative on their own.
- Be creative. Be a role model and let your child see you being creative.
- And don’t forget to encourage everyone in your family 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 builds 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](#).