



## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Mindful Eating Holds Key to Long-Term Healthy Habits

*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 reinforce healthy eating as a way of life instead of dieting to lose weight. The brain may hold the key.***

Many of us are chasing the perfect body weight or shape. We sample different diet plans, superfoods or exercise combinations in an effort to reach an ideal weight and stay there, once and for all.

There is increasing research that suggests diets don't work, especially in the long run. Limiting food intake makes you want to eat more. Dieting could even slow metabolism and make it harder for you to lose weight in the future.

No matter how many calories you count or favorite indulgences you sidestep, with a typical weight loss plan, you are more than likely to fail over the long term.

Many experts, including BHI's NeuroNutritionist, Harvard-trained psychiatrist and [national best-selling author](#) Dr. Uma Naidoo, say mindful eating, which forces you to acknowledge how and why you're eating, is the answer. Earlier this year, Dr. Naidoo teamed up with Whole Foods Market and Headspace meditation app to help people improve their well-being, eat more mindfully and feel more connected to food. A Harris Poll survey conducted on behalf of Whole Foods revealed those aspects of healthy eating were especially important to consumers a year into the Covid-19 pandemic.

The [new wellness series](#) includes four "food for mood" episodes available on the [Whole Foods Instagram TV Channel](#), each featuring a mood-enhancing recipe. The themes of these episodes are **Joyful** ([gluten-free berry crunch](#)), **Energized** ([scallops with jalapeno crema, peas and artichoke succotash](#)), **Focused** ([green tea-poached halibut with a sauteed kale](#)) and **Relaxed** ([turmeric tempeh with chamomile asparagus](#)).

Dr. Naidoo explains, “From a mental well-being perspective, many Americans—as well as people worldwide—are suffering with poor sleep, increased stress, feeling blue and so much more. It seemed appropriate to help bring forward these messages with positivity by sharing tasty recipes paired with good brain foods. We selected the words to highlight the feelings individuals may want to improve. Rather than ‘sadness,’ a positive way to share this is ‘joy’—it’s called ‘positive reframing’ in psychology. For the four emotions we identified, we offered a solution. Sadness became joy. Fatigue became energized. Brain fog became focused. Stressed became relaxed. We hope you love it as much as we all do.”

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

According to a post from [Harvard Health](#), there are 10 behaviors that can support healthy brain and body eating goals:

- **Measure up.** Keep a food record for three days, tracking all the food and beverages you eat, along with portion sizes.
- **Make a plan.** What is your goal and how will you achieve it. Be specific and start small.
- **Map roadblocks.** Identify barriers to your goals and ways to overcome them. Never have ingredients for healthy meals? Look up some recipes and head straight to the grocery store.
- **Assess habits.** What things do you do on a regular basis that leads to unhealthy eating? Do you relax with snacks while watching TV?
- **Exercise restraint.** Be aware of standard serving sizes. One serving of poultry or meat is 4 ounces, or the size of a deck of playing cards. One serving of pasta is a half cup.
- **Know limits.** Try to stop eating before getting full. It takes about 20 minutes for your brain to register “stop eating” cues from your stomach.
- **Be positive.** Changing behavior takes at least three months. Take time to acknowledge improvements you make along the way.
- **80/20 rule.** Aim to stay on track 80 percent of the time, then leave room for indulgences. You won’t feel deprived or guilty.
- **Health first.** Find activities you enjoy and do them every day. Choose season, whole, high-quality foods over diet brands.
- **Slow down.** Enjoy the experience of eating, the aromas, tastes and textures of the meal in front of you. (Dr. Naidoo would approve!)
- **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](http://www.brainhealthinitiative.org))**

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses a cutting-edge approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is building brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address 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](#).