



## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Repetition Enhances Young Children’s Brain Development

*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 study repetition into promote learning, specifically related to early childhood development.***

If at first you don’t succeed, it’s because repetition – then more repetition – is a key to learning and development. The phrase “practice makes perfect” is well-worn, and “practice makes permanent” may more accurately describe the development of neuronal pathways created through repetition, but what type of practice makes information stick across the lifespan and especially in early childhood?

There is a lot to be gleaned from the way young children learn. While it may seem to adults that children are gluttons for requesting the same story or video over and over, they are likely experiencing it in a new way each time. Consider that much of the world is confusing and full of unknowns for young children. To hear or watch something familiar is reassuring and offers a sense of understanding and self-worth.

It’s not that different for adults. We repeat things we enjoy. Each time we find comfort and reward in reaching a new level of mastery.

Children and adults alike create a new neural pathway in the brain when they learn something new. Going over the learned knowledge again and again only strengthens that pathway. When children are exposed to a new activity or lesson, they are experiencing it more than learning from it. But as the process is repeating, the child advances to anticipating what will happen, to understanding the concepts, mastering the new task or content and being integrated completely as a new set of knowledge, skills or habits.

And not only is repetition reassuring to children, but it is a powerful tool to learn and master skills such as coordination and fine motor skills, vocabulary, reading, math, and learning to write.

It may sound simple to help young children learn. Just do the same thing over and over, right? Well, there's a catch. For the repetition to take root, the activity or lesson must live in a sweet spot of complexity. It must be intricate enough to encourage progression through levels of comprehension. You can find out by watching the child. If the repeated activity is too easy (no longer stimulating), they may get bored and distracted. If it's too difficult, they may get frustrated and lose confidence. But if they are in the sweet spot, children, in general, will remain calm and pleasantly engaged.

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

*Are you interested in creating a brain healthy, high performing, and repetition-friendly environment for your child? The BHI presents these suggestions:*

- **KEEP IT GOING.** If a child is really engaged in an activity, find a way to include that activity again and again, allowing the child to learn something new each time.
- **MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO.** Don't change the learning environment too often. Comfort is a key part of repetition (and learning) for children.
- **WORK ON YOUR PRESENTATION.** It is important for adults to engage children when reading stories multiple times. Try out voices for characters and talk to the child about plot points and real-life implications.
- **KEEP IT SIMPLE.** Repeat nursery rhymes. At first, the child will enjoy hearing the story, then will join in when you leave a pause. It's an easy way to encourage mastery.
- **LET THE CHILDREN LEAD THE WAY.** Don't get too rigid on scheduling. If a child is engaged in an activity, feel free to let them stay in it.
- **GUIDE FURTHER LEARNING.** Ask open-ended questions during an activity that has the child engaged. "What happens if we ...?" "Why are they doing that?"

**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), a 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](#).