

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Brain Health Benefits of Kindness and Compassion

From a brain health perspective, it is essential to support the many who are coping with anxiety over the health of our families and loved ones, as well as the economic and multiple other individual impacts of the pandemic. To this effort, the Brain Health Initiative will continue to offer **BRAIN HEALTH BOOSTS**, resources, tools and tips to stand up for your health and fight against illness.

Today, the Brain Health Initiative is focusing on the brain healthy behaviors of compassion and kindness, and how these actions can improve your health and fight illness. Compassion enables you to understand yourself and others more as you seek to relieve suffering. Thinking about other people's suffering, and not just your own, helps to put everything in perspective.

Beyond individual benefits of living a life of kindness and compassion, research shows these behaviors can be inspiring and also have a ripple effect to the entire community. The research demonstrates that seeing one person help another person creates a heightened state of well-being, or elevation in both the giver and receiver. Not only do we feel elevation when we watch a compassionate act, but we are then more likely to act with compassion ourselves.

Suddenly, we find ourselves in the middle of COVID-19 pandemic and how have we responded? With an outpouring of kindness and compassion. In our families, our neighborhoods, communities and in the workplace, people are working to get through this uncertain time — together.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TODAY TO PROMOTE YOUR BRAIN HEALTH?

[View this short video](#) on the ripple effect of kindness, where bystanders witness a stranger performing a simple act of kindness, and are then inspired to turn around and do a good deed themselves.

- Be eager to abundantly live an attitude of and take action with kindness and compassion—they are brain healthy behaviors.
- Compassion can be expressed as acts of kindness, caring, and support that relieve the suffering of others and ourselves.
- It is important to realize that compassion is a way of living or an attitude, which means that it can be practiced as much in everyday life as it can with big gestures.
- A smile or a kind word count as acts of compassion, and are the small seeds that, when planted, can make a big difference—especially if a whole community is built upon small, easily practiced, brain healthy lifestyle behaviors, including acts of compassion.

Compassion abounds in Manatee and Sarasota counties for residents who are feeling the direct impact of COVID-19. Volunteers are making personal protective equipment and children are creating art for health care workers and first responders. Restaurants and businesses are providing food and supplies to people in need. Members of the arts community and social service organizations are using technology to deliver their programs and services to those with interest or need. Philanthropists and foundations are establishing funds to support businesses and workers who are feeling the economic impact of quarantine and social distancing.

The potential benefit of a compassionate culture to the community is huge. From a brain health perspective, by continuing to respond with kindness and compassion, we end up protecting our individual and community brain and physical health. In addition to lowering heart rate and blood pressure, and strengthening the immune system, compassion boosts our sense of well-being. Connecting with others in a meaningful way helps us enjoy better health and speeds up recovery from disease. It also builds resilience to the current stressors, and may even lengthen our life. Compassion is an intervention that protects brain health and a preventive measure against brain illness at the individual and community level.

Let's keep working together, caring for each other's mind, heart and body.

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to promoting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. Through education, research, innovation and action the collaboration between Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance intends to build brain healthy communities with cultures that increase brain health protective factors and reduce risk factors,

improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Gulf Coast region and beyond. Join the movement, lifestyle makes a difference.

To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).