



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

**BRAIN
HEALTH
INITIATIVE**



ACADEMY FOR
BRAIN HEALTH
AND PERFORMANCE

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Whether You Think You Can or Whether You Think You Can't, You Are Right

We are all facing challenges related to COVID-19. This pandemic impacts every aspect of our lives. Over the last week, the BHI has received numerous communications demonstrating that we are all growing tired of our safer-at-home experience.

Are you concerned about your ability to rise up to the multiple challenges of COVID-19 that you may be experiencing and to persevere? If you are experiencing these thoughts and feelings, you are not alone. According to recent studies, a person's willingness to push through hard times and overcome obstacles, persistence, appears to come from a small network of neurons near the center of the brain, according to recent studies.

***Puff, puff, chug, chug, went the Little Blue Engine.
"I think I can– I think I can– I think I can...." – W. Piper***

Multiple studies demonstrate that approaching life challenges, like the famous little train engine from the classic children's book, the Little Engine That Could — "I think I can, I think I can! — is a brain healthy mindset. Alternatively, experiencing feelings of doubt about your own abilities to rise up and overcome the difficulties that life has thrown your way, is not a productive or brain healthy way of feeling and thinking. Self-efficacy, or your belief in your own abilities to deal with various situations, can play a role not only in how you feel about yourself, but whether or not you successfully achieve your goals in life.

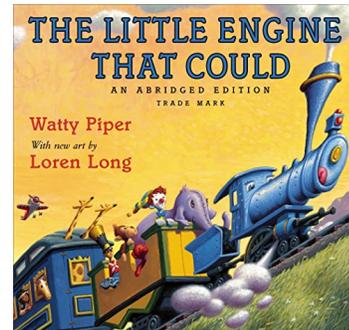
According to well-known psychologist Albert Bandura, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation. Bandura described these beliefs as determinants of how people feel, think, and behave. As Bandura and other researchers have demonstrated, self-efficacy can have an impact on everything from brain and physical health and overall well-being, to our daily performance in relationships, learning, work, and play.

I think I can, might just become a byline for our daily living. The strength of you as an individual, and collectively as a family and community, is paramount in helping us be both motivated and positive like the little engine that could... *and did*.

It would be wise for us all to become little blue engines, huffing and puffing our way to success through this time where we have limited control. Convincing ourselves to overcome self-doubt and use perseverance to master the challenges in front of us will enhance our brain health, the quality of our lives, and can transform our sense of self. We know that certain skills are needed to master difficult situations and the little blue engine epitomizes this process. It helps to silence self-doubt and to quiet that harsh judgmental voice inside.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROMOTE YOUR BRAIN HEALTH TODAY

- Read the classic children's story, *The Little Engine That Could*. Look at the 1954 version of this classic as a parable to our current individual and global situation. It is a story that tells us of motivation in the face of hardship. All of us have our current challenges and strengths we can bring to the situation. Maximizing your strengths and working diligently to protect your and your family's brain health and well-being during this time is essential.



- Here are some questions to ponder: Do you ever feel like an underdog when you try to overcome hardship? How might the determination of the little engine that could help you overcome a current challenge in your life?

- [Listen](#) to this BHI week's playlist-songs of perseverance
- Watch the movie Finding Nemo (2003), Finding Dory (2016) or Free Willy (1993)

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The *Little Engine That Could* is the story of an underdog who achieves the most unlikely and improbable of victories. It's also a story about reaching difficult goals. It's clear that pulling the train over the mountain is not easy for the little engine. The little engine's repetition of **'I think I can'** represents the power of determination and is a metaphor for overcoming a challenging situation while promoting brain health and optimizing your daily performance.

Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you are right. (Henry Ford).
Choose to think, I can!

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](#).**