



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
TEACHING HOSPITAL

BRAIN
HEALTH
INITIATIVE



ACADEMY FOR
BRAIN HEALTH
AND PERFORMANCE



Brain Health Matters and Brain Development Makes a Difference, Part 5

COVID-19 has changed just about everything in our lives, and yet, our children continue to grow, learn and build the architecture of their brain during this time. This week is our final installment for the Spring in ways to support the healthy brain development of your child: the need for parents and caregivers to take a break.

Parents and Caregivers, Sometimes You Just Need a Break

Over the past several weeks we've talked about the importance of supporting our children's brain health development during COVID-19, including:

- **Executive functioning:** Developing the essential skills that enable us to control impulses, make plans, and stay focused.
- **Interaction:** Practicing back-and-forth interaction with your child.
- **Social Connections:** Connecting socially in the era of social distancing.

This week we're talking about the importance of taking care of you. Sometimes, you just need a break. If you're feeling overwhelmed by *everything*, it's probably time to take a step back and give your own brain a rest. We are all struggling right now. COVID-19 has changed our lives and all of us — including you — are doing the best we can. It's important to remember that you just can't do it all.

By giving yourself a break, you are also helping your kids. Giving yourself a time out, models for your kids how to proactively walk away from a stressful situation or living in general, and refresh, restore and carry on. By taking some "me" time, you can come back from your break rejuvenated and ready to support your family's needs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Every day you are responding to the stress around you. Taking a brain break allows you to give your stress response a rest. You don't have to put yourself in a timeout, but maybe try one of these tactics to give yourself a break.

- **Walk around the block.** You get a break and exercise at the same time.
- **Meditate or practice deep breathing.** Find a quiet place, close your eyes, and focus.
- **Read a book.** Whether you're learning something new or enjoying a good story, books provide a great escape.
- **Chat with a friend.** You are probably both going through the same thing so why not share your experiences?
- **Watch TV or a movie or listen to or create music.**
- **Engage in an artistic activity such as drawing, journaling, painting or knitting.**
- **Plant an herb garden or nurture a new plant.**
- **Prepare a new recipe.**
- **Laugh, smile, and dance.**
- **Take a bath.**
- **Get a massage.**

Whatever works for you? Do it. Your family will thank you.

If you're looking for national and international COVID-19 resources, our colleagues at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard have developed a [list of links](#) that can help.

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

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI works collaboratively with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance to build brain healthy communities through education, research, innovation and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and performance optimization*. 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 brain health movement, because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference. **To view all Brain Health Boosts** [click here](#).