

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### **Brain Health Matters and Meaning and Purpose Make a Difference Finding Your Sense of Purpose During COVID-19**

At a time when we are all dealing with angst, fear, chaos, and disruptions in our lives, many of us are questioning the meaning of our lives, as if we have lost our purpose. We may think of meaning and purpose in life as being related to religion or spirituality, and this is absolutely the case for some people. But it is important to find your purpose; having a sense of meaning and purpose in life can have profound effects on your health, both brain and physical health. We are all at our best when we dedicate part of our being, part of our living, to something greater than ourselves.

In a recent article in *Psychology Today*, Chris Palmer, MD, director of the Department of Postgraduate and Continuing Education at McLean Hospital and an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, says one of the challenges in talking about meaning and purpose is that most of us are looking for a soundbite. We want a simple, concise answer and unfortunately, it's not that simple.

There are many things that give our lives meaning and purpose and relying on only one or two of those things can leave us feeling empty or confused. For example, Dr. Palmer says, meaning and purpose are much more complicated than just religious beliefs, yet there are people who think that they should be enough. Thoughts like those can leave us feeling guilty about needing or wanting more.

The key is to choose our *own* way, to find the meaning and purpose in our *own* lives. Finding our meaning and purpose can be enough to help us endure through the most challenging of times.

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

Dr. Palmer suggests taking this self-quiz to assess your meaning and purpose. To begin to assess your own meaning and purpose in life, ask yourself these big picture questions:

- Why are you alive?
- Who depends on you, and why?
- Whom do you depend upon, and why?
- How do you help other people in your community and the world?
- How do you take care of yourself?
- How do you provide for yourself and your family?
- What are you passionate about?
- What do you love doing?

If these questions are difficult for you to answer, or if you don't like your answers to them, you are not alone. But you may now be on the path that will help you choose your way.

[Read Dr. Palmer's article in Psychology Today](#)

### **About the Brain Health Initiative ([www.brainhealthinitiative.org](http://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](#).**