

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### **Brain Health Matters: Humanity and Science Make a Difference**

Over these past months, we have grown together—and learned together—as we endeavored to meet the multiple human, economic and social challenges that are upending ALL of our lives and attacking our societies at their core. The Brain Health Initiative (BHI), as a wellness leader, recognizes that it is more important than ever to stand up for our individual brain health and the brain health of our greater community. We need to provide support to those we know—our family, friends, neighbors and colleagues—and those we don't. We especially want to be mindful of providing an all-out effort to support those experiencing particular inequities and injustices and the disproportionate risks that threaten our health, well-being, financial security, personal safety, and lives. Choosing to be open-minded, open-hearted and to live a life of kindness—well informed by science—makes a difference to our brain and body health and to humankind.

### **Using Science to Calm Our Uncertainty Protects our Brain Health**

Through these past months, we have experienced relentless uncertainty: a threat to our physical and brain health. How many times have you looked to that proverbial crystal ball to provide some glimpse of an answer, any answer, to the multitude of questions that are presenting daily? Life is filled with uncertainty, but it is our nature, driven by our brain, mind, and body to crave security. We want to feel safe and in control of our lives, and many of the experiences of the past months have taken that away from us.

At a time when many of us thought the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic would be diminishing, we find ourselves facing even more uncertainty than ever about the virus. Right now, Florida is the epicenter of COVID-19 in the U.S. We are seeing more than 10,000 new cases of the virus every day and hospital ICUs in Manatee and Sarasota counties are filled to capacity again. School officials are faced with the difficult decision of when to bring students and teachers back into the classroom and businesses and restaurants that had reopened for business are now closing again due to the virus.

It's no wonder that we are all starting to feel like this uncertainty will never end. Plus, we have the ongoing battles between the "we-need-to-protect-ourselves" and the "it's-all-a-hoax" camps complicating issues. Which group is right? Does anyone really know?

To help with the uncertainty related to COVID-19, the BHI recommends listening to information that is backed with solid science. With great confidence, the BHI implores everyone to use the unbiased science of public health to drive our behavior around and response to COVID-19. It's important to remember that the very nature of science means that every day scientists and clinicians are learning more about the virus, how to protect the public's health against the virus, and how to respond to different aspects of the virus, and how to respond to different aspects of the virus when individuals test positive. Please stay informed with current and reliable information.

Resolving uncertainty is a major challenge for our brains. Research suggests that learning to deal with uncertainty can help protect our brain health and fight brain and physical illness. People who see past the ambiguity, who listen closely to the science and respond with evidence-based behaviors, who block the competing noise while focusing on the positive and what can be controlled, often experience more physical and mental energy, increased health, and feel less depressed and anxious.

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

Chronic worrying doesn't give you more control over the uncertainty in your life, but it does take away your ability to enjoy the present, drains your energy, reduces your immunity and keeps you awake at night. A brain healthier way to cope with the uncertainty begins with informing yourself with solid scientific findings about the issues of concern and building your resilience while adjusting your mindset.

- Be well informed about the issue(s) causing your angst, with current information from reputable sources.
- Focus on controlling those things that are within your control.
- Challenge the need for certainty in your life.
- Learn to be tolerant, or even embrace, the inevitable uncertainty present in your life.
- Reduce your anxiety and stress levels.

Some days it's easy to fall into despair. When everything seems out of control, make brain healthy choices and try focusing on the basics:

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Stay hydrated.
- Be physically active.
- Smile and laugh.
- Make healthy food choices.
- Perceive, think, feel and express positive thoughts and emotions.

- Find humor where you can.
- Spend quality time with loved ones.
- Significantly limit news and social media exposure.
- Get out into nature.
- Learn something new today.
- Breathe deeply and practice mindfulness and meditation.
- Experience, appreciate, and express through the Arts.
- Drive your actions with humanity and kindness.
- Wear your mask and practice social distancing.

Remember, taking care of ourselves and being kind to others is a brain healthy victory over uncertainty.

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](#).