

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### **Brain Health Matters and Connections with Acquaintances Make a Difference**

The Brain Health Initiative is talking about enhancing emotional well-being through positive social engagement this week. COVID-19, the financial crisis, political propaganda, social injustice, remote learning and working, and many other current events and issues have a negative impact on our ability to stay positive and protect our brain health. In addition to the daily ordeals we are all experiencing, forced changes in how we interact with others also impact our emotional well-being.

While we are scheduling time with friends and family to make sure we remain connected, physical distancing has caused us to lose contact with our acquaintances. The loss of these casual interactions — the barista at the coffee shop, Joe from accounting, the person in the seat next to us on a plane — are taking a toll on our brain health and our emotional health, according to a recent article in the [Harvard Gazette](#).

“These ties are critical to our health and well-being because they end up giving us the opportunity to vent, confide, brainstorm, and discuss things that we think are important,” Dr. Mario Luis Small, Harvard’s Grafstein Family Professor of Sociology, says in the article. “Because of COVID-19, we don’t have that many opportunities to just run into people anymore, not just strangers, but also those who are not exactly strangers, but people we know casually (or because they’re in our profession or line of work.)”

Research suggests these brief, informal conversations provide us with an opportunity to be heard without any expectations. They also provide us an opportunity to confide our personal thoughts. Yes, you read that right. The article says we confide in people we don’t know that well for many reasons. We think they may be able to empathize with us and we also tend to believe they won’t share the information with others. And sometimes we share with strangers just because they are there when we need someone to listen.

The Brain Health Initiative is studying and taking action on factors that promote and protect brain health and fight brain illness across the lifespan. Positive social engagement and emotional well-being are two brain health protective factors that can become a risk to brain and physical illness if individuals do not experience enough quality social interaction. This risk can lead to feelings of loneliness, isolation, anxiety, and depression. Positive emotions and socializing BOOST our brain and overall health and wellbeing.

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

Scheduled virtual calls and Zoom meetings can actually increase your stress and leave you exhausted. Dr. Small suggests that you consider more informal options to replace those “water cooler” conversations that aren’t happening. Try these methods for BOOSTING brain health and promoting social engagement and emotional wellbeing:

- Send a text.
- Participate in online chats.
- Make a phone call.
- Engage in online apps.
- Adopt a brain healthier lifestyle, including thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and language that BOOST brain health and fight brain illness.

### 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](#).