# BRAIN HEALTH BOOST

## Brain Health Matters and Clearing Your Mind for Sleep Makes a Difference

*The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is working to develop brain healthy communities, creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Today, the BHI is talking about clearing your mind to get your best sleep.*

The BHI studies and takes action on lifestyle behaviors that support brain health. Sleep is a brain health protective factor. Not getting enough good quality sleep can put you at greater risk for brain illness. The science demonstrates that sleep is essential to brain health and for optimal daily performance. Sleep deficiency increases your risk for a wide range of health problems including obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and stroke. A lack of sleep can also weaken your immunity and impact your mood, cognitive performance, memory, and even your safety.

This week we are all adjusting to "falling back" to standard time. As the days grow shorter, the time change gives us an extra hour of daylight in the morning. We need that daylight to signal our brain to stop our sleep cycle and start our day.

We all know that a regular sleep schedule is important for our brain health, but right now our brains and our clocks are slightly out of sync. One way to help reset your internal clock for your new bedtime is to clear your mind before going to bed.

Clearing your mind for sleep means avoiding stress in the evening. Tasks such as paying bills and returning emails can wait until tomorrow. If you're relaxing in front of the TV, you need to turn off scary or action-filled movies — including the news— because they stimulate your brain and make it harder to relax.

There are many things you can do to help clear your mind to get ready for sleep. It might be a warm bath, playing soft music or practicing meditation. It doesn't matter what technique you use, as long as it helps you get the seven to eight hours of healing sleep you need to maintain a healthy brain.

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

Going to bed while your brain is buzzing is a recipe for tossing and turning, but staying up until you are tired isn't always an option. If you're having trouble clearing your mind for sleep, why not try some of these tips suggested by BHI sleep expert, Dr. Michael Breus.

- **Lifestyle changes.** Caffeine, alcohol and nicotine all contribute to sleeplessness. If you can't give them up, try avoiding them at least 3 hours before bedtime.
- **Physical activity.** Regular aerobic activity helps you fall asleep faster, spend more time in deep sleep, and awaken less often during the night.
- **Sleep hygiene.** Maintain a regular sleep-and-wake schedule, using the bedroom only for sleeping or sex, for example. Keep the bedroom dark and free of distractions, such as electronics.
- **Relaxation techniques.** Meditation, guided imagery, deep breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation can counter anxiety and racing thoughts.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy.** Cognitive behavioral techniques can help with insomnia, changing your negative expectations and building your confidence in getting a good night's sleep.
- **Adopt a brain healthy lifestyle**, including thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote:
    - Stress resilience
    - Nutrition
    - Physical activity
    - Sleep
    - Social connection
    - Emotional wellbeing
    - Meaning and Purpose
    - Cognitive stimulation and creativity
    - Engaging with nature
    - General health
    - Positive impacts

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

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, 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, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance.* 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.**