

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Brain Health Matters and More Free Time 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 how more free time can be a key to brain health and increasing happiness. Finding more free time now can enhance the quality of your living today and help bridge the gap between lifespan and brainspan in the future.

We have all heard the saying “money can’t buy happiness,” usually followed by “but it does pay the bills.” And when given a choice, most of us choose money and career over the things that truly make us happy.

These past several months have caused many of us to question these choices. For example, the lines between work and home have been blurred by working remotely, virtual classes and meetings, and even less “free time.” In a recent post on the Harvard Business School site [Working Knowledge](#), Ashley Whillans talks about the importance of restoring the proper balance to our lives. An assistant professor of business administration at Harvard, Whillans’ research focuses on the work-life balance, a brain health protective factor.

We tell ourselves that we are working hard now so we can be happy later, Whillans said in the article, but those of us who have more free time are actually happier, healthier, and more productive than those who work long hours and make more money. Based on her research and her personal experiences, she has found happiness is more time, not more money.

Most of us spend our time as adults acquiring money and the “things” that we think will bring us happiness in the future, such as when we retire. Far fewer of us spend our lives focused on living a brain healthy life — actually enjoying and benefiting from our hard work. The Brain Health

Initiative aspires to empower each of us to take control of our brain health and performance, to live a brain healthy life and to do all that is possible to equalize our brainspan and lifespan.

If 2020 has taught us anything, it is to enjoy those moments of health and happiness, focusing on the moments instead of the money. We are all striving so hard for... *something*, but then we are too burned out to enjoy the potential benefits. Maybe we need to focus on finding our happiness first, then find opportunities that support it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

There are many ways to find more time to increase your brain health and performance in the moment, increasing your happiness and reducing risk of brain illness in the future. These tips are supported by the Brain Health Initiative and based on some of Whillans' findings:

- **Prioritize.** Try scheduling time for your most challenging work. Turning off phone and email notifications and getting your core work completed will leave you feeling more in control of your workday and less stressed. Don't be afraid to say no to unplanned, last-minute impositions on your time — especially those that benefit someone else.
- **Ask for more time.** If the deadline for a project seems too tight, ask for an extension. Asking for more time can be a signal to your boss that you place more value on doing the job right the first time.
- **Outsource.** Find other sources for chores and other unpleasant experiences. Hire a housekeeper, use a grocery delivery service, or hire a lawn service. It may sound like an extravagance, but it can give you more free time and lead to greater life satisfaction.
- **Schedule down time.** In addition to spending more time on enjoyable activities, build chill time into your day for downtime or spontaneity.
- **Use your vacation days.** Rest is key to your happiness. Most jobs offer paid time off, yet most of us don't use it — more than 700 million vacation days go unused each year. Taking time off will increase your energy and help you feel more engaged, creative, and productive when you return. And resist the urge to check work email or make phone calls during vacation time.
- **Appreciate your free time.** If you have free time, take a moment to appreciate it. Don't worry about how much money you are spending on a trip or the career opportunities you might be missing. Value the experience and not the cost.
- **Sign up for the Mindful Triathlon.** There is still time to [register](#) for the Second Annual Mindful Triathlon benefitting the Brain Health Initiative. It features a **virtual 5K run/walk** and **in-person yoga and meditation** from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m. on Nov. 14 at Bob Gardner Park in Lakewood Ranch.
- **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](#).