

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Kindness Makes a Difference and Brain Health Matters

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. This week, Feb. 14 through 20 is National Random Acts of Kindness Week and today we talk about the benefits of being kind to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, and fighting brain illness.

We are all in need of a little kindness. For months now we have been inundated with threats to our brain health, including negative messages — the pandemic, social unrest, political divides, financial crisis — each week brings a new calamity. This coming week, Feb. 14-20, is National Random Acts of Kindness Week and it provides us with the perfect opportunity to be kind to each other and BOOST the brain health of those we care about, and even perfect strangers.

Random acts of kindness are about doing something nice for someone else. They represent giving of yourself without expecting anything in return. Those acts can involve anything from a charitable donation, to opening the door for someone, to making room for that car waiting to pull into traffic. But the often-unrecognized benefit about these acts of kindness is that they increase our positive emotions (brain health) and often make us feel better physically.

Being kind boosts our brain health and performance by supporting our own sense of well-being. Kindness activates the pleasure part of our brain and promotes the production and release of oxytocin, the hormone that helps modulate social interactions and emotion. Being kind protects our brain health and is a defense against brain illness.

But wait, there's more good news about kindness: it spreads. In a long standing [study](#), researchers from Harvard University and the University of California-San Diego found that when we benefit from kindness, we tend to pay it forward. Kindness is calming, healing and contagious. That's a win-win-win for our brain health and the brain health of our community.

If you're looking for inspiration, the [Random Acts of Kindness Foundation](#) website is dedicated to celebrating kindness.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

As you plan for the week ahead, try to schedule one random act of kindness for each day. Here are some suggestions but be creative and find actions that support the well-being of both you and your recipient.

- **Pay for the order** of the person in line behind you. This also works at the drive-thru if you are social distancing.
- **Send a positive text message** to someone in your contact list.
- **Compliment** the first person to join your Zoom call.
- **Donate** unused clothing or household items to a thrift store that supports a non-profit organization.
- **Volunteer** at an animal shelter.
- **Send cards** to nursing home residents.
- **Write a thank you** note.
- **Plant a tree.**
- **Buy someone flowers.**
- **Leave a positive review** on social media for good service.
- **Help your partner** with household chores — get done twice as fast and do something fun with the found time.
- **Get inspired by** one of these this video on random acts of kindness. [Ripple effect of kindness](#) and [random acts of kindness experiment](#).
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a Brain Healthy Lifestyle**, for you and your child, 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 is a collaborative effort with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, 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](#).