

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### **Brain Health Requires Caring for Your Mind, Body and Soul**

*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.*

There is plenty of information about caring for your mind, heart and body, but how do you care for your soul? It's not as difficult as it sounds. In fact, there are many brain healthy lifestyle behaviors that you can rely on to nourish your soul.

For example, spiritual practices, such as organized religion, yoga, praying, chanting, drum circles, connecting mindfully with nature, and meditation help you care for your soul. Lifestyle choices like these are an important part of taking care of yourself that can improve your physical and brain health along the way. Spiritual practices are linked to increased levels of brain healthy feel-good chemicals like serotonin, dopamine, and endorphins; and decreased levels of cortisol and noradrenaline, which are risk factors for brain illness.

Studies show that being religious or spiritual leads to healthier behaviors, better quality of life, and higher life satisfaction. Spiritual and religious beliefs related to meaning, peace, and faith were associated with reduced risk of brain illness including depression, and better health outcomes in people with chronic physical health conditions. Having a sense of meaning, purpose, or connection to something larger than oneself is associated with positive brain and physical health outcomes.

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

Try these simple, everyday ways of being; rituals that can bring comfort, create better brain healthy lifestyle habits, and set positive intentions while also helping you slowly uncover a deeper purpose.

- **Meditate while walking**
- **Take spirit breaks during the day**
- **Count your blessings — live an attitude of gratitude**
- **Learn about spirituality**
- **Find a spiritual community**
- **Make spirituality part of your routine**
- **Practice patience**
- **Start your day with a short meditation or prayer**

Herbert Benson, MD, founder of the Benson-Henry Institute of Mind-Body Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital, says relaxation can be as simple as sitting in a quiet place, closing your eyes and repeating a sound, word or prayer for about 10 minutes. If your mind wanders, acknowledge it and return to the repetition. Several options for guided meditation are available on the [Benson-Henry Institute website](#).

### **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, 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](#).

