

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Women Make 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 preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. **Today's post is a celebration of National Women's History Month, and International Women's Day on March 8.***

For more than 100 years, International Women's Day has celebrated the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The theme for International Women's Day 2021 is "Choose to Challenge" — perfectly complementing the Brain Health Initiative's soon to be launched **Be Brain Healthy: Be Brain Powerful®** Campaign. The driver of this ongoing campaign is a 30-day brain health challenge focusing first on women. The challenge encourages lifestyle changes that support brain health protective factors, decrease risk factors, and promote optimal performance—eating well, staying active, sleeping well, controlling risk, exercising your brain, and connecting with friends and family.

Women, are often the CEOs of family health and change agents in the communities. They are twice as likely as men to develop many brain illnesses, including depression, anxiety and Alzheimer's. Women also make up two thirds of brain illness caregivers.

The campaign, a collaborative effort between the BHI, [UsAgainstAlzheimer's](#), and [WomenAgainstAlzheimer's](#), also focuses on racial/ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities who often experience poor brain health outcomes due to multiple factors including inaccessibility to high quality brain health care services, cultural stigma surrounding mental health care, discrimination, and reduced access to information about brain health.

The BHI will pilot the 30-day challenge in the coming months with a group of women, men, and youth throughout the region. The participants will assist in the design of the future challenges to be launched region-wide. Check future *Brain Health Boosts* for more information.

Many women have been pioneers in human rights and changing societal norms in this country and beyond. Below is a beginning list of women role models. These leaders demonstrate the best in human capability, awakening in us a drive to change situations we once believed to be

permanent.

- **Sojourner Truth**, an abolitionist and women’s rights activist who escaped slavery with her infant daughter became known for her “Ain’t I A Woman?” speech regarding racial inequalities in the year 1851 at an Ohio Women’s Rights Convention.
- **Susan B. Anthony** was a leader in women’s suffrage movement in 1878 when she and her friends presented an amendment to Congress that would give women the right to vote. It took more than 40 years, but in 1920 it was ratified as the 19th amendment.
- **Margaret Bourke-White**, the first American female war correspondent, was the first woman permitted access to active combat zones and her work appeared on the [first ever cover](#) of Life magazine.
- **Rosa Parks** was one of the most famous, influential women of the civil rights movement. In 1955, she refused to give up her seat in the “colored section” of a bus to a white man and got charged with civil disobedience. Today, she’s widely known as the “mother of the freedom movement.”
- **Shirley Chisholm** was the first African American woman elected to Congress in 1968.
- **Gloria Steinem**, an American journalist and leader of the Women’s Rights movement of 1960s and 70s, told us “The truth will set you free. But first, it will piss you off.” She focused on issues of sexual equality, race equality, and child abuse as roots of violence.
- **Sally Ride** became the first American woman in space as crew member of the space shuttle Challenger.
- **Madeline Albright** became the first female Secretary of State in 1997 following her unanimous confirmation by the U.S. Senate.
- **Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg**, one of 12 women in the graduating class of 1959 at Columbia Law, she was the second woman ever to be appointed the U.S. Supreme Court and headed the ACLU’s Women’s Rights Project. Her guidance led the Supreme Court in several monumental decisions in women’s rights, including *U.S. v. Virginia*, making it illegal to refuse to admit women to the Virginia Military Academy and *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a landmark civil rights case in which the Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples by the Constitution.
- **Sheryl Sandberg**, an American tech giant, billionaire and philanthropist, Sandberg serves as the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook and the founder of Lean In. Lean In is a nonprofit supporting female growth in professional industries. In 2017, Sandberg published her book, *Option B*, about facing grief and building resilience after the sudden passing of her husband, David Goldberg, former CEO of SurveyMonkey.
- **Angela Merkel**, as Germany’s first female Chancellor, since 2005 Merkel has been described as the de facto leader of the European Union and is often referred to as “leader of the free world.” She has been named by *Forbes* as the world’s most powerful woman for ten years in a row.
- **JK Rowling**, an author and philanthropist, Rowling was a single mother living on welfare before becoming the world’s first billionaire author with the “Harry Potter” series of books. Her fictional characters demonstrate friendship, imagination, and courage in the face of evil and Rowling herself is an active voice in support of social equality.
- **Emma Gonzalez**, an American activist and advocate for gun control, Gonzalez survived the February 2018 Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida. At the age of 19 she co-founded the gun-control advocacy group Never Again MSD. Her speech against gun violence, proclaiming “We call B.S.” on the lack of action by politicians

funded by the NRA has gone viral. She continues to be an outspoken activist on gun control and was included in *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2018.

- **Michelle Obama** is an attorney, author, advocate, and former First Lady of United States. She serves as a role model for all women and continues to work as an advocate for poverty awareness, education, nutrition, physical activity, and healthy eating. Her influence remains high in the U.S. and abroad. In 2020, she topped Gallup's poll of the most admired woman in America for the third year running.
- **Malala Yousafzai**, this 23-year-old Pakistani is an activist for female education and the youngest ever Nobel Prize laureate. Her human rights advocacy, especially the education of women and children in her native Pakistan where the Taliban has often banned girls from attending school, has grown into an international movement. In October 2012, while on a bus after taking an exam, Malala, as she is known around the world, and two other girls were shot by a Taliban gunman in retaliation for her activism. Weeks later a group of leading Muslim clerics in Pakistan issued a fatwā against those who tried to kill her, and the Pakistani Taliban was internationally denounced by governments, human rights organizations and feminist groups. *Time* magazine featured her in 2013, 2014 and 2015 as one of the most influential people globally.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

There are many ways to celebrate the women who are heroes in your life and here are a few suggestions from the BHI.

- Learn more about the women listed above who paved the way for many of the rights and freedoms we have today. Talk about the above list with your daughters and granddaughters, sisters, nieces, friends, and neighbors.
- Consider ways you can celebrate women's health and achievements:
 - Encourage young girls and women to find and explore their passions.
 - Learn about organizations in your community that raise awareness about women's equality.
 - Attend a lecture, seminar, or festival that celebrates women.
 - Organize an event to recognize women's health.
 - Support a non-profit that focuses on women's health issues.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes 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 ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).