

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Forgetting is a Normal Part of Remembering

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.

Our memories are the stories of our lives. They are what shapes us and makes us who we are. But memory is a funny thing. We may have clear memories of a long-ago family vacation but can't remember why we just walked into the kitchen. And as we age, remembering often becomes more difficult.

Age-related changes in the brain can slow some cognitive processes and are considered normal, but they can also be frustrating. And while these lapses in memory may cause concern, forgetfulness is not necessarily a sign of Alzheimer's or other types of dementia. Memory loss happens to all of us. But only a percentage of people experience actual dementia, a serious and progressive decline in memory and cognitive abilities.

Forgetting is part of being human, according to neuroscientist and author [Lisa Genova](#). In her latest book *Remember: The Science of Memory and Art of Forgetting*, Dr. Genova explores how memories are made and how we retrieve them. In her book, she points out that a healthy brain quickly forgets most of the daily barrage of incoming information and only fragments of experiences are actually stored as memories.

Dr. Genova also points out that these memories of our experiences are not necessarily accurate. Retrieving memories is a process in which we reimagine an event. As part of that process, we unintentionally add new information to the memory. Our moods and emotions, suggestions from others, dreams, and even time can change our recollection.

The good news about memory is that research shows, and the Brain Health Initiative strongly and proudly promotes, we can boost our cognitive skills and optimize our brain performance, while preventing, mitigating, and delaying the risk of brain illnesses, including dementia, depression, anxiety and many others, with a brain healthy lifestyle. This includes reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors.

Brain illness risk factors, include:

- Sedentary lifestyle
- Consistent challenges with sleep quantity and quality
- Smoking
- Chronic stress
- Social isolation.
- Alcohol overuse
- Poor nutritional habits.
- Low Vitamin D levels
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Obesity

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Research suggests that there are strategies you can use to protect and preserve your memories. The Brain Health Initiative recommends these tips from [Harvard Health](#).

- **Keep learning.** Better mental functioning is linked to a higher level of education. Challenging your brain with mental exercise may help maintain brain cells and stimulate communication among them.
- **Care for your health.** Many medical problems can impair cognitive skills if they go unrecognized or untreated.
 - Treat diabetes. Rises and falls in blood sugar can impact blood supply to the brain.
 - Control blood pressure. High blood pressure can reduce blood flow to the brain.
 - Treat sleep apnea. People with sleep apnea score worse on memory and cognitive tests.
 - Treat depression. Cognitive problems can be a sign of depression. In addition, adults diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment who are also depressed are more than twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.
 - Check your thyroid. An underactive thyroid can adversely affect learning, memory, and attention.
 - Manage cholesterol. Experts don't fully understand why, but high cholesterol appears to increase the risk for mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's disease many years down the road.
- **Use all your senses.** The more senses you use in learning something, the more of your brain that is involved in retaining the memory.
- **Believe in yourself.** If you believe you are in control of your memory function you are more likely to work at maintaining or improving their memory skills.
- **Economize your brain use.** Use calendars and planners, maps, shopping lists, file folders, and address books to keep routine information accessible.
- **Repeat what you want to know.** When you want to remember something, repeat it out loud or write it down to reinforce the memory or connection.
- **BE BRAIN HEALTHY and adopt a lifestyle** that includes thoughts, behaviors, emotions, responses, and language that promote brain health protective factors:

- 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](#).