

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Surviving and Thriving During a Transition

*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 we talk about planning for transitions in our life and ways to make the most of the next chapter.***

Transition (tran-SI-shən): a change or shift from one state, subject, place to another; a period or phase in which such a change or shift is happening. In other words, transitions are times of change. Spring is the time of year most often associated with transitions, and that is especially true in 2021.

In addition to the end of the school year, graduations, weddings, and other fresh starts, we are also emerging from a global pandemic. For the first time in more than a year people are returning to work, school, travel, gatherings, and events. Some of us are making the decision to take our lives in a new direction. We are re-examining our priorities and deciding what our next step should be. Transitions can be stressful, but it is how we perceive and respond to that stress that really makes a difference when it comes to our brain health.

Coping with the stress of a transition in a positive way is known as resilience, and it has many brain-health benefits. Resilience is associated with lower rates of depression, greater satisfaction with life, and even a longer life. If we do not handle our stress well, our lack of resilience can result in chronic stress. Chronic stress is associated with multiple physical and brain illness risk factors, including high blood pressure, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, insomnia, heartburn, indigestion, and heart disease.

Luckily, resilience is a skill we can learn and improve upon every day and there are many programs, apps, and websites out there to guide us. Here are just a few of the many programs designed to help us learn to become more resilient.

- The Harvard-affiliated Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine offers the [Stress Management and Resiliency Training \(SMART\) Program](#). SMART is designed to help participants regain control and build resilience through a variety of mind-body principles and self-care interventions, leading to reduced physical and brain illness symptoms and enhanced quality of life.
- The *New York Times* [Fresh Start Challenge](#) provides 10 days of tips for mindful living,

- stronger connections, and healthy habits.
- [Calm](#) offers monthly mindfulness, health and happiness challenges.
  - The Mindfulness Challenge from [Mindful](#) introduces new exercises that build on each other over the course of seven days

Our ability to bounce back from stress or adversity during a transition is important throughout life. It is how we adjust to these changes that helps determine what life will look like moving forward.

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

No matter what age or stage you're at, transitioning is a skill to work on. The BHI and the [Harvard Business Review](#) recommend focusing on these skills to help guide you during a time of transition.

- **Pacing and planning.** The longer you live the more you need to plan for change. Think of your life as a series of seven-year cycles. How do you want to spend them?
- **Leave gracefully.** There usually comes a time in most life phases — school, jobs, relationships — where you know it has reached its end. Knowing how to end well is a valuable skill.
- **Be true to yourself.** Self-knowledge is one of the rewards of getting older. As you get to know yourself better, think about how you want to spend your time and focus on those things that mean the most to you.
- **Be open to change.** Before you make a major transition, take it for a test drive. How does it feel? Is it what you thought it would be? Ask others for their feedback.
- **Take the leap.** Thinking and testing will only get you so far, don't be afraid to take the next step.
- And don't forget to **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](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 ***Be Brain Healthy*** movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).