

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Cheering Up Others Can Boost Your Spirits and Protect Your Brain Health

*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. **In this Boost, we talk about how bringing happiness to others can make you happy.***

We have all heard that it is better to give than to receive, and that may be especially true when it comes to happiness.

Research shows even if we're unhappy, bringing happiness to others is a reliable way to improve our own sense of well-being. Spending money on others — think about a time when you found someone the perfect gift — and volunteering have both been shown to raise our own happiness levels. In a recent article in [The Atlantic](#), Harvard Business School Professor Arthur Brooks highlighted research in which human subjects were asked to behave in either extroverted (outgoing people have been shown to be happier) or introverted ways for one week. The study found that those people who acted extroverted saw a significant increase in their well-being, while those who acted introverted saw a decrease.

Similarly, spreading unhappiness can be toxic to those around us. Long-term studies examining the health effects of a happy and productive life for men have found that being unhappy did not impact their health and longevity, but the women married to unhappy men tended to be unhealthier and live shorter lives, than women married to happy men.

We all enjoy being around people who are happy. So instead of focusing on what we can do to get happier, perhaps we should be asking ourselves what we can do to increase the happiness of those around us.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

There are many ways to cheer up the people around you. You don't have to go for the grand gesture: there are a number of little things you can do to bring a smile to others — and yourself.

- **Share a cute video.** The Internet is filled with photos of videos of cute animals and precocious children. A talking dog, potato chip-eating pig, or dancing toddler are sure to bring a smile to both sender and recipient.
- **Plan a game night.** Getting together for a fun activity is once again possible with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, but even if you're far apart many classic games can be played on a video call.
- **Reach out.** If you know someone who is having a tough time, give him or her a call — even if you are struggling yourself. Knowing that someone cares and having someone to talk to can lift their spirits and yours.
- **Help out.** Taking on an extra task or doing something without being told is a great gift to those with whom you live and will go a long way in making them feel supported.
- **Send a text.** Even if it's just a simple "thinking of you," it can help someone feel appreciated. Or gift them with a subscription to BHI partner Cope Notes, a subscription-based app that uses daily messages to improve mental and emotional health, training the brain to think healthier patterns over time. Go to: <https://copenotes.com/subscribe/> and enter the code **BE BRAIN HEALTHY** to save 10 percent.
- **Go see a movie.** Movie theatres are open again and watching a movie is always more fun when you are watching with a friend. If you don't feel comfortable going out, you can always make some popcorn and stay in — many movies are being released to theatres and streaming services at the same time.
- **Send a card.** Despite the immediacy of texting, instant messaging, and email, nothing can match the feeling of knowing someone cares enough to pick out and send a card.
- Remind those you love 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)

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](#).