

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Let Go of Regrets for a Brain Healthy Life

*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 are talking about living without regrets.***

Most of us feel regret — that sense that our lives would be better now if we had just made a different decision in the past. Sometimes we regret the things we did, but more often than not, we regret the things we didn't do.

Regret is a difficult emotion that, on its own, isn't really positive or negative. It is the actions we carry out in response to feeling regret that impact our long-term brain health and sense of well-being. As we age, our regrets begin to pile up and if we let them, those things that happened in our past can prevent us from enjoying our best life right now. In the words of Kierkegaard: "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards."

In a recent [Harvard Business Review](#) article, Dr. Amy Silver, a psychologist, speaker, author and media commentator on the management of emotions, suggests several actions for turning those feelings of regret into something productive.

- Recognize the feelings and let them out.
- Practice gratitude.
- Determine what you truly value.
- Consider what you really want.

We can't rewind time, but we can use what happened in the past to guide our future. Instead of dwelling on the "could haves" and "should haves," we can make our regrets productive by looking at what we learned and what we can do to get closer to the things that matter the most to us.

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

Here are some suggestions from the BHI and the [Harvard Business Review](#) for turning your regrets into tools for growth.

- **Hindsight is 20-20.** What you should have done always seems clearer in retrospect than it was at the time. Instead of focusing on what you should have or could have done, give yourself a break and accept your actions.
- **Let your past regrets guide your future decisions.** Instead of ruminating over what might have been, let your past decisions help point you in the right direction. Let it help you prioritize what you choose to invest in relationships, your career, service to the community, and your health, as well as help you set reasonable financial goals.
- **Find a balance between regret and risk.** Remember, we tend to regret the things we didn't do as much, if not more, than the things we did. Instead of choosing a less risky option, choose the one that will maximize your chance of reaching realistic goals. Let those past regrets provide you with a greater understanding of what experiences might be worth any perceived risk.
- **Don't worry alone.** If you feel consumed by your regrets, talk to someone who can help you put things in perspective. The most successful people are those who have learned from their experiences and continued to move forward. Support from colleagues, mentors, or coaches can boost your resilience. And if your regrets begin to spiral into depression and anxiety, professionals may help bring you back on track toward your personal and career goals.
- **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](#).

