

## BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



### Brain Healthy Habits Equal a Happy 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. **Today we talk about taking care of yourself and living a healthy lifestyle.***

We often talk about how to improve our sense of well-being and find more happiness in our lives. Living a healthy lifestyle can promote well-being and research suggests combining a healthy lifestyle with taking care of ourselves plays an important part in our overall happiness.

Most of us have stress in our lives, but it is how we perceive and react to that stress that makes a difference. For those of us who beat ourselves up when things don't go as planned, giving ourselves a break can lead to better brain and physical health, relationships, and general well-being. According to [Harvard Health](#), research has revealed a number of benefits of self-compassion. Lower levels of anxiety and depression have been observed in people with higher self-compassion. Self-compassionate people recognize when they are suffering and are kind to themselves at these times, thereby lowering their own levels of related anxiety and depression.

Taking better care of yourself also includes living a healthier life. When it comes to healthy living, small changes can impact your health in positive ways. It may be as simple as hydrating, adding more brain healthy fruits and veggies to your meals, improving your sleep habits, exercising, or practicing mindful meditation. Mindful meditation focuses on the here and now and can help you accept whatever arises in your awareness without judgment. It has been shown to improve self-awareness and self-compassion.

Living a healthy lifestyle and taking better care of yourself — both your brain health and your physical health — can help lead you to a better sense of well-being and a happier life.

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

Taking care of yourself is a learnable skill. The BHI and [Harvard Health](#) suggest these tips to help you discover and cultivate your own self-care.

- **Comfort yourself.** Eat something brain healthy. Take a break and rest. Get a massage. Take a walk. Do something that improves how you feel.
- **Write yourself a letter.** Write a letter to yourself describing a situation that caused you to feel pain (a breakup, a job loss, a poor performance), without blaming anyone — including yourself.
- **Give yourself encouragement.** Think of what you would say to a good friend if they were facing a difficult or stressful situation and direct those compassionate responses toward yourself.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Even a quick exercise, such as meditating for a few minutes, can be a great way to nurture and accept yourself when you're in pain. The [Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine](#) at Mass General offers several self-guided meditations.
- And don't forget to encourage your family **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](#).