



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Brain Training Can Boost Your Brain Fitness and Performance

*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. **October 13 is National Train Your Brain Day, so we are talking about the role brain training can play in promoting and protecting our brain health.***

If it isn't doing something new, your brain gets bored. Just like the muscles in your body, your brain needs to be stretched and strengthened for maximum performance. To keep your brain sharp, you need to break out of your routine and try new activities that test your brain performance, including cognitive skills and problem-solving abilities. Fortunately, there are plenty of simple, low-cost, low-tech ways to boost your brain power.

Brain training, including learning new skills and activities such as TaiChi, cooking lessons, art courses, playing a musical instrument, completing crossword and jigsaw puzzles, board and card games, and reading are easy ways to boost your brain performance including cognition. In a recent [Harvard Health](#) article, Behavioral Neurologist Dr. Joel Salinas from the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, said mentally stimulating and challenging activities help our brains create new neuronal connections. The more connections we have, the more paths available for our brains to send information where it needs to go.

Researchers are exploring the long-term benefits of brain training exercises. A direct link has not yet been established between brain training and reducing the risk of dementia, but it can help sharpen the thinking skills that tend to decline as we age. Brain exercises can help improve planning skills, reaction time, decision making, and short-term memory, which all boost your brain/s processing speed and build cognitive reserve, therefore reducing risk of brain illness, including dementia.

In addition to improving the fitness of your brain to protect your brain health and performance, you need to take care of your body. Healthy lifestyle factors, such as: not smoking; limiting

alcohol; eating a healthy diet; managing stress, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol; and getting plenty of cardiovascular exercise all help boost your brain health and protect you from brain illness.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

The BHI and [Harvard Health](#) recommend these mentally stimulating activities to put your brain to work processing and producing information and boost your brain health while reducing risk of brain illness, including dementia.

- **Learn a language.** People who speak more than one language have greater brain flexibility and agility. Research also suggests learning a second language later in life may delay cognitive decline. You can get started by taking an in-person or virtual class, or download an app such as [Rosetta Stone](#), [Babbel](#), or [Duolingo](#).
- **Listen to music.** Music activates almost all regions of your brain, including those involved with emotion, memory, and physical movement. You get the most benefit from listening to new kinds of music or by playing music yourself. Learn more about healing aspects of music from our [Brain Boost: Music Makes a Difference](#).
- **Play games.** Board games strengthen your ability to retrieve memories and think strategically, while card games require you to use memory, visualization, and sequencing skills.
- **Travel.** Exposure to new places enhances your brain plasticity. New sights and sounds help form new connections in your brain. The world is slowly beginning to re-open to travel, but even exploring right here on Florida's Suncoast can stimulate your brain. Visit a new town, beach, or park to gain new perspectives.
- **Attend films, concerts, or museum tours.** You live in the cultural mecca of Florida, and cultural activities stimulate your brain in many ways. Check out [Visit Sarasota](#), [My Manatee](#), or [My LWR](#) for ideas. Look for more ideas in our [Brain Boost: Plan a Family Break](#).
- **Work a puzzle.** Word and number puzzles such as a crossword, Jumble, or Sudoku, have been shown to help improve your scores on tests of attention, reasoning, and memory. Jigsaw puzzles require concentration and can help improve your cognition and visual-spatial reasoning in addition to improving short-term memory and problem-solving skills.
- **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 approach to protecting brain health, promoting brain performance, and preventing and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI is creating brain healthy communities, cultures that foster brain health protective factors and address 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](#).