



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Playing Games Promotes 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. **Today we are talking about how playing games can help improve brain function.***

Research has shown that we can train our brains to help improve our memory and thinking. Mentally challenging card games, puzzles, and board games provide people of all ages with a fun and intellectual way to stimulate their brain and provide social interaction.

Brain games are activities that stimulate thinking. We're not talking about interactive video games, but word puzzles like crosswords and Scrabble, as well as chess, Sudoku, and bridge that are both mentally stimulating and fun. Studies have found the cognitive stimulation we get from playing games can sharpen our thinking skills and short-term memory, and some research suggests that playing brain games may even delay dementia or slow its progression.

According to a recent post from [Harvard Health](#), when we take part in brain stimulating activities, we create new connections in our brains. These connections, or pathways, provide new ways to help get information to where it needs to go. Low-tech activities like playing card games or board games, working word puzzles, learning a language, traveling to new places, and even listening to music, can help boost our brain power.

Evidence also suggests that physical activity enhances the effect of these brain games. Moderate-intensity exercise increases blood flow to the brain and the cognitive stimulation we get playing games is expanded by the benefits of exercise. In fact, research has found that the combination of exercise and brain games builds cognitive reserve better than exercise alone. So, get moving and have some fun!

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Brain games should be fun and challenging. If you aren't enjoying the activity, try something else, like one of these suggestions from the BHI for fun and brain stimulating activities for you and your family.

- **Checkers or dominoes.** These classic games involve strategy and thinking ahead, plus they are something you can play with the whole family.
- **Puzzles.** If you are on your own, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, or a jigsaw puzzle will challenge your memory and thinking and skills.
- **Word games.** Scrabble requires creativity and your ability to recall words. For a quick challenge, get a word search book for a short brain-stretching activity.
- **Card games.** Card games provide mental stimulation and a social connection. Games like bridge use logic, reasoning, quick thinking, patience, concentration, and partnership skills.
- **Board games.** Board games like Trivial Pursuit strengthen your ability to retrieve memories while others, like Monopoly, can make you think strategically.
- **Chess.** Chess may be one of the most challenging brain games, requiring you to remember moves, think strategically, and anticipate your opponent's actions.
- **Scavenger hunt.** A scavenger hunt uses your problem-solving skills and gives you a social boost while working as a member of a team.
- **Charades.** Charades draws on your creativity as well as memory and cognitive processes.
- **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 building 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](#).