



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Cultivate Your Best Brain; Consider Adopting the Perennial Mindset

*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're exploring perennials, a group of people that defy generational labels and live in the present with a vibrant mind and interests.***

Are you familiar with the term perennials? We're not talking about plants that bloom every spring. But that definition is not far off. Perennials is a relatively new concept that describes people who remain active and engaged year after year, rejecting limits placed on them by age.

A better definition comes from Gina Pell, the online marketer who coined the term in 2016. According to Pell, perennials are "ever-blooming, relevant people of all ages who live in the present time, know what's happening in the world, stay current with technology and have friends of all ages."

Perennials are described as curious, collaborative, confident, and creative. They are always learning and enjoy meeting new people. In marketing terms, selling to perennials is based on shared values and passions instead of outdated generational stereotypes, like millennials living in their parents' basement and drinking craft beer, or baby boomers are cranky and rigid or members of Generation X are cynical and self-sufficient. According to Pell, "The term perennials is not a fluffy euphemism for relevant people over 40. Millennials can be perennials."

How does all of this relate to brain health? Well, two important ways to reduce your risk for brain illness, including dementia or other cognitive impairment, is to engage your mind and to cultivate a large social network.

According to one [Harvard Health report](#), "Challenging your brain with mental exercise is believed to activate processes that help maintain individual brain cells and stimulate communication between them."

Another [Harvard Health report](#) said of the importance of being social, “Scientists have found that people with strong social ties are less likely to experience cognitive decline than people who spend most of their time alone. In fact, one large study, which included some 12,000 participants, suggests that when people are lonely, their risk of dementia rises by as much as 40%.”

Would you consider yourself a perennial? If not, are there aspects of the perennial mindset that interest you? In the long run, your brain health and performance may benefit and reduce your risk of brain illness, including dementia.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

There are ways to promote brain health and enhance brain performance throughout your lifespan, so you can keep that perennial mindset. Here are multiple ways to enhance your brain function, brought to you by the BHI:

- **Increase cognitive stimulation.** Read, take courses, try word puzzles, learn to play a new instrument, or solve challenging math problems. Also do things that require manual dexterity along with mental effort, like drawing or painting or other crafts.
- **Move.** Research shows exercise encourages the development of new nerve cells and increases connections between brain cells. Exercise also lowers blood pressure, improves cholesterol, balances blood sugar, and reduces mental stress.
- **Improve your brain healthy nutrition.** It has been shown that people who eat a Mediterranean diet rich in fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts, seeds, unsaturated oils, and plant sources of protein are less likely to develop cognitive impairment and dementia.
- **Focus on your general health.**
 - **Lower your blood pressure.** High blood pressure in middle age increases the risk of cognitive decline later. Stay lean, exercise, limit alcohol intake to two drinks a day, reduce stress and eat right.
 - **Improve your blood sugar.** Diabetes is a risk factor for dementia. First, improve your blood sugar numbers through diet and exercise. Then, if necessary, use medication for control.
 - **Improve your cholesterol.** Much like diabetes and high blood pressure, high levels of LDL (bad) cholesterol is a risk factor for dementia. Get it under control with diet, exercise or medication.
 - **Consider low-dose aspirin.** Some studies suggest low-dose aspirin may reduce the risk of vascular dementia. Ask your doctor before trying it.
 - **Avoid tobacco.** In all forms.
 - **Limit alcohol use.** Alcohol overuse is a risk factor for dementia. Limit your input to two drinks per day.
- **Protect your head.** Moderate to severe head injuries increase the risk of cognitive impairment.
- **Tend to your emotional well-being.** Try to avoid anxiety, depression and sleep deprivation. Good mental health and quality sleep are important goals for brain health.
- **Connect socially.** Strong social ties have been linked to lower risk of dementia and longer lifespan.

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), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, uses 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](#).