



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Do Spring Cleaning in Your Mind for a Refreshed Outlook on 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. **Spring ushers in a season of hope and renewed possibility right alongside warmer temperatures and blooming flowers. Today, we look at spring cleaning our minds.***

Springtime is traditionally dedicated to clearing away the clutter accumulated during a long winter and refreshing our living spaces. It's called spring cleaning.

What if we took the same approach to our brain health and wellness? We can take stock of our recurrent thoughts and mental data and sweep away what isn't working for us, creating a clean and efficient headspace. Think of your brain as a file cabinet stuffed with bits of paper, notes from unfinished projects, and books you'll never read. When you search for a specific piece of information, you can get bogged down, or worse led down a rabbit hole, by superfluous material. So it is with our brains. Troubling or unnecessary thoughts get in the way when we're trying to access knowledge or a specific memory.

How do we spring-clean our brains, removing the unproductive, negative thoughts and clearing space for optimal, positive and, and productive performance?

Be Present

Mindfulness is the ability to stay present and be aware of what we are doing and where we are, blocking out thoughts that cause us anxiety or distraction. It's a good way of cleaning up and clearing out a cluttered brain.

Instead of your mind wandering to what you'll watch on TV later in the day, why Vladimir Putin is the way he is or the state of your 401(k), you can bring your full attention to what's in front of you. Your thoughts may drift occasionally, but don't despair: You can always return your focus to the present. See some tips for increasing your mindfulness in the "What You Can Do Today

to Protect Your Brain Health” box below.

Commune with Nature

The additional daylight that comes along with spring spurs the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that regulates mood and emotion. We feel more like getting outside, being physically active, and being in nature.

Brain Health Initiative Advisor Jennifer Walsh, a nature and wellness expert, offers three suggestions for reconnecting with nature to reset your mindset:

- **WELLNESS WALK.** This walk is not about getting from point A to point B in a specific amount of time. It is allowing your body to truly activate the senses.
- **TAKE IT ALL IN.** Smell what is around you, hear the sounds, really look at nature in your own backyard and neighborhood. Don't be afraid to get your hands dirty.
- **FRESH-AIR BREAKS.** Every once in a while, pop out of your chair and off of your computer and give yourself (and your brain) some fresh air. We become more creative when we spend time outside.

Follow a Brain Healthy Lifestyle

These rules apply whether you're doing a deep clean on your cluttered mind or not. Here's what you can do to keep your brain healthy.

- **GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP.** Research has shown sleep-deprived people handle stress less effectively.
- **EXERCISE.** Beyond the obvious benefits to your physical health, exercise has been shown to be vital to brain health.
- **EAT WELL.** A healthful eating pattern such as the Mediterranean diet, which emphasizes healthy fats, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and seeds, protects brain health and is correlated with a decreased rate of cognitive decline.
- **MANAGE STRESS.** Identify sources of stress and formulate a plan for reducing its impact or coping more effectively.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Mindfulness helps lower the volume on all that's going on in your mind and focusing attention on the present. Below are some tips from BHI to ease anxiety and calm your mind:

- **DECLARE YOUR INTENTION.** Remind yourself why you are doing something and set an intention to overcome the anxiety you may have related to that activity.
- **DRAW OR COLOR.** Give your brain a break and stoke your creativity with some doodling or coloring.
- **SPREAD GOOD WILL.** Wish someone else happiness in your mind. The positive energy will lift your spirits.
- **LEAVE THE PHONE.** When you walk into another room or to the table to eat, leave your cell phone. Take a few extra breaths and relax instead of worrying about the

outside world.

- **WRITE IT DOWN.** Journaling, or just jotting down your thoughts, can have a soothing effect on the mind.
- **CHECK OUT SOMETIMES.** Being mindful all the time can be taxing. If you feel like you need a night of mindless TV, take it.

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](#).