



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Keep Your Brain Sharp with New Experiences on Summer Vacation

*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 take time to learn about ways to engage our brains during summer, the season of vacations.***

Summer vacation is a great time to get away from the daily grind of work and routine and relax with friends and family. But guess what: Your brain doesn't really want to relax. It thrives when there are new experiences, challenges, and places to be absorbed.

"Mentally stimulating activities, especially ones that are challenging, help our brains create new connections. The more connections we have, the more paths our brain has to get information to where it needs to go. This can help with improving brain health and performance, including cognition overall or in specific areas, depending on the activity," says Dr. Joel Salinas, a behavioral neurologist and faculty member of the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies.

So, the BHI offers these suggestions for stimulating your brain while taking a break from everyday life.

Finish a Book

You know you have at least one book, and probably several, that you have meant to finish but haven't found the time. A long plane trip or a visit to the beach is the perfect opportunity to get to the end, or start and finish a new book.

Keep Current

Read up on the latest news in your field, in our nation, the world, and the community, if you don't have as much time as you might like during work hours. Or take up a new topic and learn all you can.

Get Out in Nature and Get Lost

Especially if you're in an unfamiliar setting, going outdoors is a sensory experience that can improve your brain health, reduce risk of brain illness and improve your brain performance, including mood, and reset your perspective.

Alter Your Fitness Routine

It's common knowledge that exercise is good for your brain. It promotes neurogenesis, the development of new brain cells. For summer, try out a new sport or a different type of fitness class for a spark.

Share Your Knowledge

Teaching a skill you have mastered to others helps you reinforce your brain performance and retain the technique in your memory as well as increase your understanding of the details. Try your hand at volunteering in the community or teaching children.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

A [Harvard Health report](#) suggests going low-tech to improve brain performance this summer. Here are a few additional opportunities to log off and engage your brain:

- **LEARN A LANGUAGE.** Those who can speak more than one language have better mental flexibility and could have protection against developing brain illness, including cognitive decline and dementia, compared to those who speak one language. Take an online class, listen to recordings or download an app, such as [Duolingo](#) or [Babbel](#).
- **MAKE A LITTLE MUSIC.** Music activates most regions of the brain, including those involved with physical movement, emotion, and memory. Listen to a new style of music or learn to play an instrument.
- **REMEMBER TO PLAY.** Improve your brain performance, including memory, and think strategically by playing card and board games. Card games make you use your executive functioning skills, memory, visualization, and sequencing.
- **GET OUT AND GO.** Traveling to a new place exposes you to unfamiliar sights and sounds, contributing to brain plasticity by making new connections.
- **ATTEND THE ARTS.** Plays, films, concerts, and museum tours stimulate the brain in several ways. Choose something complex for optimum brain challenge.
- **PUZZLE IS THE WORD.** Doing word puzzles like [Wordle](#), a crossword, Jumble, or Sudoku has helped people improve scores on attention, reasoning, and memory tests. Do different types of puzzles to give your brain some variety and different skill sets.

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 well-being
- Meaning and Purpose
- Cognitive stimulation and creativity
- Engaging with nature
- General health
- Positive impacts

Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative, Inc. (BHI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit, 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 promote brain healthy lifestyles, foster protective factors and address risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes at the individual and community level for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. ***Brain Health Matters and Lifestyle Makes a Difference.***