



BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Daily PDF May Hold Key to Students' Success, Development

*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 explore the need for young people to take advantage of unscheduled relaxation during the summer months.***

Between difficult courses, homework, a full slate of extracurricular activities, and community service projects, the school year can be a time of stress and exhaustion for students of all ages. The summer is a good time to break that cycle and acquire new strategies for promoting your children's body and brain health and well-being.

[Challenge Success](#), a group of child and adolescent well-being experts convened by Stanford University, surveyed more than 250,000 middle and high school students nationwide as part of a search of alternative models of success and healthy child development. The group found that 95 percent consider themselves sleep-deprived, and 77 percent have experienced stress-related health symptoms.

The remedy? *Challenge Success* says it's PDF – or playtime, downtime, and family time. After reviewing research on factors that protect young people from risky behaviors, poor academic outcomes, and brain/mental health challenges, the *Challenge Success* team recommends children and teens alike get all three every day to thrive.

According to *Challenge Success*, “We believe that all students should be valued for their own interests, unique talents, and individual definitions of success. They shouldn't have to choose between doing well and being well. Success is measured over the course of a lifetime, not at the end of a semester.”

For young children, free-form play is key for finding out who they are and what type of person they want to be. Older children use downtime to reflect and dream. Both groups benefit from stronger family bonds.

Following is a description of each PDF category. See below for suggested activities.

Play time is unscheduled time for social interactions and playing informal games, sports, and other activities for fun. Kids need time for exercise and informal play beyond structured extracurricular activities, though those can create positive development as well.

Down time is time to relax, reflect, or just be. Kids need downtime throughout the day — in addition to quality sleep — for their physical and emotional health.

Family time connects young people to family and creates a sense of belonging. Kids who are part of a family unit that spends time together are more likely to feel supported, and loved unconditionally, as well as have higher self-esteem and better academic outcomes.

There is no better time than now to try out PDF. Maybe it will lead to a smoother, more rewarding and brain healthy school year.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO PROTECT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

The BHI offers the following suggestions maximizing the PDF (Playtime, Downtime, Family Time) for your children this summer break.

PLAY TIME

- Just being with friends, doing nothing in particular
- Riding bicycles to the playground
- Camping out in the backyard or spare room
- Exploring a park
- Playing on a sports team, keeping the focus on fun

DOWN TIME

- Let kids chill, leaving time for sitting on the couch, reading, watching TV, listening to music, napping
- Allow teens to sleep in late
- Let kids be bored
- Fight the urge to tell kids to “do something”

FAMILY TIME

- Create simple rituals, such as taco night or game night
- Take a daily walk together
- Head to the library as a family and pick out books to try
- Explore a nearby site or neighborhood together

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.***