

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Brain Health Matters and Focusing on Optimism Makes a Difference

The Brain Health Initiative is talking about protecting brain health and fighting brain illness by enhancing emotional well-being this week. We have all heard that happiness is a choice, but it isn't always easy to choose to be happy. Sometimes it is just too hard to smile and believe everything is going to be OK. And everything that 2020 has thrown at us — COVID-19, the financial crisis, political propaganda, social injustice, remote learning and working, and even the weather — many of us to experience an increase in stress, anxiety, agitation, and anger.

Remaining optimistic during these challenging times can be difficult, but it is critical to our brain and physical health, as well as our overall physical and emotional well-being. Numerous studies suggest that happier and more optimistic people are healthier people. Positive thinking has been shown to increase our resilience, improve our immune system, and help us manage stress.

So can we just decide to be happy? Some of us find that an increase in the experience of happiness is as easy as focusing on thinking positive. For others, being happy isn't a "do-it-yourself" project. Luckily, we draw strength from each other. By leaning on our family, friends and community we can find support in staying positive. There are also programs that teach strategies and techniques for helping us manage life's challenges and attaining long-term happiness

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

The BHI studies and takes action on lifestyle behaviors that promote and protect brain health and fight brain illness. Increasing brain health protective factors and reducing risk factors will optimize your brain performance today, and boost your brain health now and into the future. Here are some strategies to BOOST your emotional well-being.

1. **Practice gratefulness.** There are always things for which we should be grateful. Keep a gratitude journal or do a quick morning gratefulness meditation.
2. **Start your day positive.** Take a few minutes for yourself and smile. Make your quick gratitude meditation part of your routine before reaching for your phone and starting your day.
3. **Slow down.** Don't rush into things. Pay attention, remain present, and practice continuous mindfulness.
4. **Relax.** If you feel your muscles tensing or if you're frowning, take a break to relax and breathe.
5. **Exercise.** If you're not exercising, make it part of your daily routine. In addition to the physical benefits of moving, the endorphins released during exercise trigger positive feelings.
6. **Stay in touch.** Everyone has learned how to stay in touch while practicing safe distancing. Your friends and family are probably experiencing the same stresses and anxieties as you, so work together to stay positive.
7. **Be creative.** Connect with the arts and find a way to create and express something new each day.
8. **Practice breathing.** Focus on your breathing while meditating and your mind is less likely to wander away from the meditation. Diaphragmatic breathing, or deep breathing, also lowers your stress hormone levels, heart rate and helps you relax.
9. **Laugh.** Humor is important to improving your positivity. Numerous studies have confirmed the benefits of laughter on your mind and body, from stimulating your organs to lowering your stress levels, improving your blood circulation, strengthening your immune system, and even relieving physical pain.
10. **Walk away from stress.** It's easy to get pulled into negative interactions and exchanges that can leave you feeling distressed and pessimistic. Recognizing these situations and removing yourself from them can help you manage your stress and contribute to positivity. This also includes news coverage: know when you have had enough and walk away.
11. **Have faith.** Believe in science, technology, love, health care, your resilience, the good in people, perseverance, your ability to overcome, the future — whatever it is that gives you hope. Believe in yourself.
12. **Adopt a brain healthier lifestyle.** Include thoughts, behaviors, emotions, and language that BOOST brain health and fight brain illness.

About the Brain Health Initiative

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health and fighting brain illness across the lifespan. The BHI works collaboratively with Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital, and the Academy for Brain Health and Performance to build brain healthy communities through education, research, innovation, action, and collaboration with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention, and performance optimization*. The BHI is creating a culture that promotes brain health protective factors and decreases risk factors, thereby improving brain health and optimizing brain performance outcomes for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. Join the brain health movement, ***because brain health matters, and lifestyle makes a difference***. To view all Brain Health Boosts [click here](#).