

BRAIN HEALTH BOOST



Brain Health Matters and Leading to Motivate During COVID Makes a Difference

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 fighting brain illness across the lifespan for the Florida Suncoast region and beyond. This week, the BHI is discussing the challenges facing our leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today we talk about keeping teams engaged and motivated.

Focusing on the work at hand while your world is being turned upside down is an issue for all of us. Teachers, supervisors, parents, community organizers, even national and international leaders know how hard it is to keep teams engaged when our brains and hearts are elsewhere.

A recent post in [Working Knowledge](#) from the Harvard Business School addressed the challenges our leaders are facing. When they asked 600 corporate CEOs what issues were keeping them up at night during the global COVID-19 pandemic, many responded that they were struggling with keeping employees engaged and motivated during these uncertain times.

While working from home, family issues, economic worries and health concerns can be distracting, finding motivation in our work can provide a way for us to protect our brain health and find meaning and purpose. An article from the [Harvard Business Review](#) identified emotional and economic pressure and inertia for work as three negative motivators, all risk factors of brain illness, resulting from the pandemic. But the article also identified three positive motivators that can lead to increased brain and work performance. These include play, purpose and potential.

Researchers from Harvard Business School suggest our motivation is guided by four basic emotional needs:

- Acquire. Obtain scarce goods, including intangibles such as social status.
- Bond. Form connections with individuals and groups.
- Comprehend. Satisfy our curiosity and master the world around us.
- Defend. Protect against external threats and promote justice.

The pandemic hasn't changed these brain health needs, but it has intensified and complicated them. When we fulfill these drives our brains are motivated and engaged. As managers, focusing on these needs can help us promote brain health and enhance brain performance while leading and managing our teams through these difficult times.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY TO BOOST YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

The Brain Health Initiative suggests these actions to help meet these basic brain health emotional needs and to enhance brain performance of teams you work with and to help keep members engaged.

- **Acquire.** This drive is usually met through the compensation and rewards system. If this is a work team, pay your employees as well as your competitors do. Tie rewards clearly to performance. Set clear expectations by which performance is evaluated. Demand high performance and make sure team members receive rewards and recognition.
- **Bond.** This is your organization's culture. Foster a sense of brain healthy camaraderie and friendship among co-workers. Value collaboration and teamwork and encourage sharing of best practices. Encourage a sense of belonging and make them feel like they are part of the same team. Show that you genuinely care about them and their family as people.
- **Comprehend.** To optimize brain performance, design jobs so that team members have distinct and important roles that have meaning and foster a sense of contribution to the organization. Empower the members of your team; give them challenging assignments and help them learn and grow.
- **Defend.** Rooted in your basic brain function of fight-or-flight response, defense is combined with a sense of justice or fairness. You want to know that you deserve the job you have, that you got it fairly, and it will not be randomly taken away. When this neurological drive is negatively affected, you become fearful, resentful, and disengaged. Create a brain safe environment, treat people fairly, encourage team members to speak up and listen to what they say.

Were you selected for the BHI Pilot Study?

If you received an invitation to the BHI Pilot Study, sent to randomly selected adult residents from Lakewood Ranch, we encourage you to complete the online survey. The pilot study examines the ways you function mentally, socially, cognitively, and overall, as well as the factors in your life that present risk or promote resilience in brain health and performance. ***Community participation is critical to the study's success.***

About the Brain Health Initiative (www.brainhealthinitiative.org)

The Brain Health Initiative (BHI) is a cutting-edge, new approach to protecting brain health, optimizing brain performance, 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, collaboration, research, innovation, and action, with a specific focus on *brain health promotion, prevention, early detection, evidence-based intervention and optimization of performance*. 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](#).