

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

BRAINWORKS

Simple solutions for staying sharp



INTRODUCTION

A man with a grey beard and a dark cap is kayaking on a river. He is wearing a dark jacket and is holding a yellow and black paddle. The background shows a dense forest of tall trees and a mountain in the distance. The water is calm with some ripples.

Matters of the mind

Daily mental multitasking and our constant state of “busyness” can lead to chronic stress on our brains, causing us to be unfocused, distracted, and less productive. What’s more, research suggests that age-related cognitive decline – characterized by a decrease in the brain’s ability to perform regular functions like judgment, reasoning, memory, learning, and language – begins in healthy, educated adults in their 20s and 30s.

We have more control than we “think”

While cognitive decline may be an inevitable part of the aging process, studies show that we can prevent or at least postpone its development through intervention. Our brain is actually radically adaptable if we train it appropriately – like we do our bodies. The “fitter” our brain is, the more energy efficient it becomes, and the easier it is to do important mental tasks such as focusing attention and being creative. Janus Henderson created BrainWorks with this in mind.

Learn how to train your brain

1. **Brain health:** Set the foundation through “The Fab Five” (food, social connectivity, rest, balancing stress, and physical activity)
2. **Cognitive fitness:** Exercises to build mental muscle, flexibility, and endurance for healthy aging
3. **Brain booster training regimen:** Create a customized training program based on the principles of specificity, challenge and repetition

Heidi Hanna

This program was developed in partnership with Heidi Hanna and her New York Times bestselling SHARP book series. Heidi is a performance coach, keynote speaker and nutritionist who specializes in applying the science of personal energy management, health and wellness to improving business performance.

Brain health assessment



Use this assessment to identify key areas of focus for your own training program. Check any of the following that are true for you and total the number of checkmarks at the end of each section:



Food is fuel

- ☐ I eat something every 3-4 hours during the day
- ☐ I eat balanced snacks and meals (approximately 25% protein, 25% whole grains and 50% produce)
- ☐ I do not drink more than 2 servings of alcohol on any given day (not an average)
- ☐ I very seldom consume portions that are larger than what would make me feel physically satisfied
- ☐ I regularly consume high nutritional value foods (veggies, fruits, fish, nuts, seeds)
- ☐ I eat fatty fish at least 2 times per week or take a fish oil supplement

Total



Activity is activating

- ☐ I never sit for longer than 90 minutes at one time
- ☐ I get at least 60 minutes of general activity each day
- ☐ I am able to get outside for fresh air and/or sunshine on a daily basis
- ☐ I get at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity cardiovascular activity a minimum of 3x a week
- ☐ I do full body strength training exercises a minimum of 2x a week
- ☐ I stretch regularly after exercise

Total



Balanced stress is a balanced life

- ☐ I balance my stress levels in a healthy way
- ☐ I regularly practice relaxation strategies (meditation, yoga, massage, etc.)
- ☐ I very seldom feel frustrated, angry or irritable
- ☐ My emotions are usually positive and opportunity based rather than being in survival mode
- ☐ I enjoy challenges at work and do not feel threatened by failure
- ☐ When work is over, I am able to turn it off and focus on other things

Total



A social life is life support

- ☐ I have enough friends to feel well connected socially
- ☐ I seldom feel lonely
- ☐ I maintain intimate emotional connection with others
- ☐ I find time to participate in hobbies I enjoy just for fun
- ☐ I have social interactions outside of work or family
- ☐ I laugh often and experience joy throughout the day

Total



Resting is working

- ☐ I sleep at least 7 hours each night
- ☐ I wake up feeling rested in the morning
- ☐ I do not feel sleepy or lethargic during the day
- ☐ I wake up in the morning when I want, without setting an alarm clock
- ☐ I fall asleep within 30 minutes of going to bed
- ☐ I sleep soundly throughout the night

Total



Cognitive fitness

- ☐ I seldom find myself multitasking
- ☐ I maintain focus during the day
- ☐ I feel mentally challenged on a daily basis
- ☐ I have recently learned a new skill (language, art, etc.)
- ☐ I actively seek out challenging conversations with others
- ☐ I have a strong sense of purpose in my life that I connect to regularly during the day
- ☐ I am currently doing specific brain training exercises

Total

Sections with the fewest of checkmarks should be considered areas of focus for your personal action plan.

The brain health fab five

A critical component of any cognitive training program is establishing a foundation of healthy habits. Just like you wouldn't attempt strength training with a broken bone, you want to ensure that your mental training efforts will bring you the biggest return on investment. A healthy brain provides the optimal environment for brain training to be most effective.



Fab five: Food is fuel

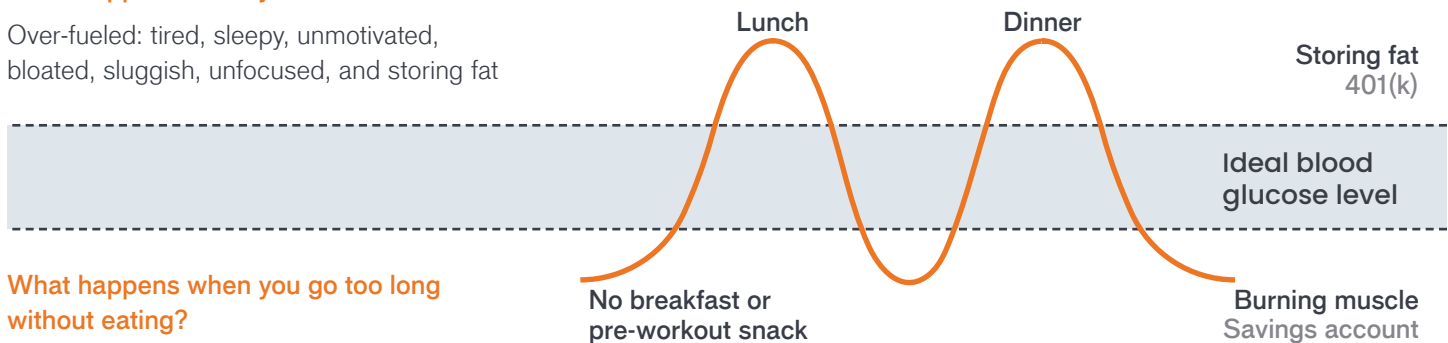


Managing physical energy: The glucose story

Survival-based eating

What happens when you eat too much?

Over-fueled: tired, sleepy, unmotivated, bloated, sluggish, unfocused, and storing fat



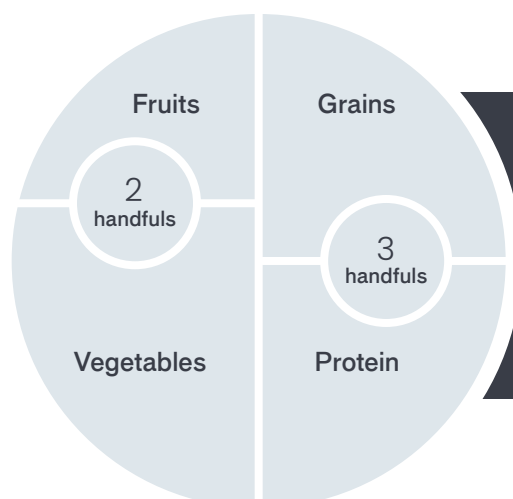
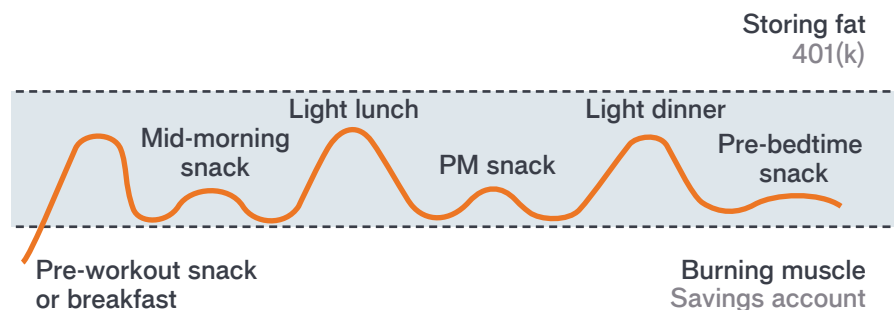
What happens when you go too long without eating?

Under-fueled: low energy, moody, impatient, unfocused, conserving fat, burning muscle, and slowing metabolism

Opportunity-based eating

Strategic fueling: energized, stable moods, focused, thinking clearly, in control, patient, fueling brain and muscles, and burning fat

- ▶ Always eat breakfast
- ▶ Don't exercise on an empty stomach
- ▶ Eat in a series of sprints: only what you need for the next 2-3 hours of your day



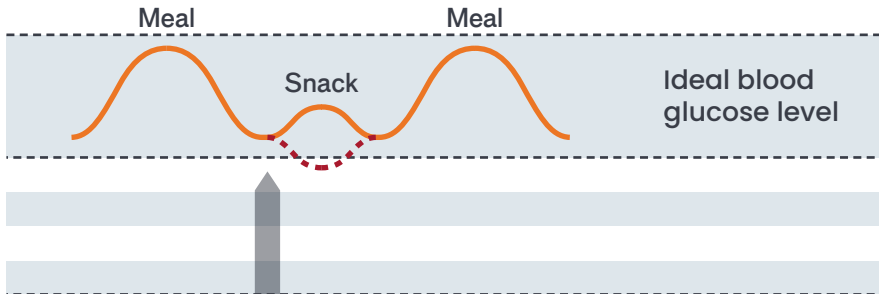
PORTION

5 handfuls of food

- ▶ Grains: 2 handfuls
- ▶ Fruits and/or vegetables: 2 handfuls
- ▶ Protein: palm of hand/1 handful

Strategic eating

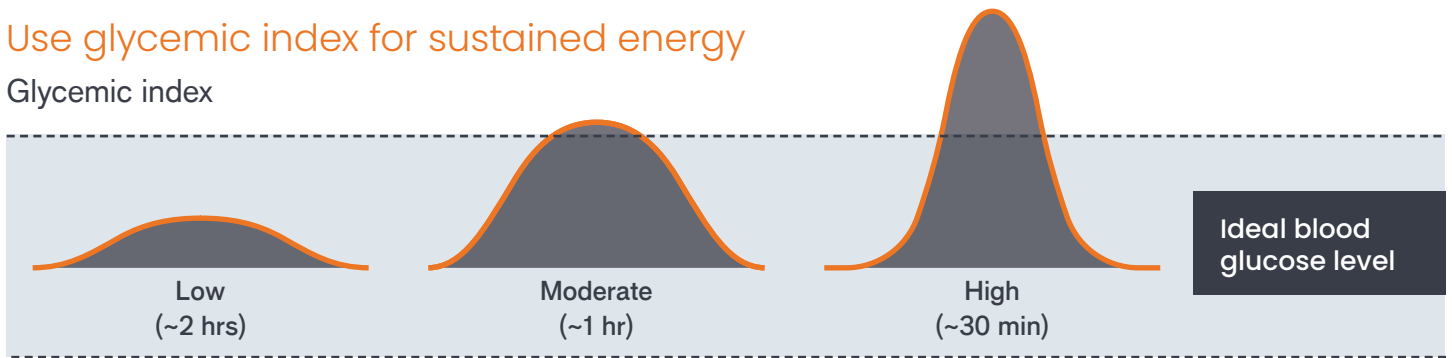
Snacks are the bridges between meals



- ▶ Eat low-glycemic snacks
- ▶ Snacks should be 100-150 calories

Use glycemic index for sustained energy

Glycemic index



Fab five: Activity is activating



Best practices

Daily movement

- ▶ Every 30-45 minutes: small movements (stretch, stand up)
- ▶ Every 90-120 minutes: large movements (walk, climb stairs)

Aerobic training

- ▶ Minimum of 3 cardiovascular workouts per week
- ▶ 30-60 minutes
- ▶ Alternate between levels of high and moderate intensity in 3-minute intervals (see example)

Resistance training

- ▶ Minimum of 2 days per week (non-consecutive)
- ▶ 20-45 minutes
- ▶ 1-2 sets per exercise; 8-12 repetitions using a challenging weight

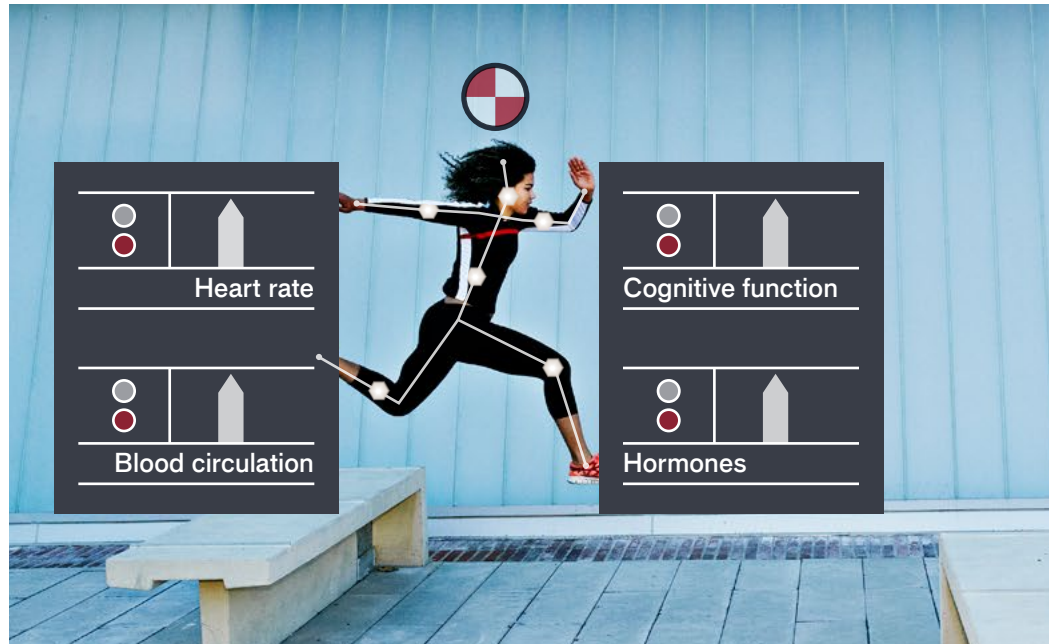
Flexibility training

- ▶ Minimum of 2-3 days per week
- ▶ 5-10 minutes after each exercise session

EXAMPLE OF A 30-MINUTE INTERVAL TRAINING SESSION:

- ▶ 3-minute warm-up
- ▶ Four 3-minute work intervals at high intensity combined with four 3-minute recovery intervals at low intensity
- ▶ 3-minute cooldown

Strategic movement



Movement stimulates energy production

The foundation of full engagement is physical energy. The physical energy requirements of the body are met through glucose and oxygen. Movement and exercise play vital roles in the delivery of oxygen to the cells through increased circulation.

Long periods of minimal or no movement tend to lead to low energy levels, fatigue, disengagement, and decreased performance. Improved fitness translates to more endurance mentally and emotionally as well as faster recovery from stress. Researchers have discovered links between physical fitness and improved concentration, improved problem-solving, leadership effectiveness, improved decision-making, and error reduction. Increased fitness helps you perform better at work and improves your quality of life outside the office.

Interval training: think quality, not quantity

Interval training allows you to exercise at higher intensities than you could normally sustain for a given time by interspersing short periods of high-intensity activity with short periods of low intensity. Recent research suggests interval training can improve your level of cardiovascular fitness as well as your body's ability to burn fat.

Fab five: Balanced stress is a balanced life



The human system is well equipped to handle a fair amount of stress and actually needs stress in order to perform at its best. Growth within the body and mind only happens when there is a stimulus that causes us to adapt and get stronger. For example, flu shots give us a small amount of the flu to trigger our immune system to fight off the invader and build up its defenses for future attacks. Cardiovascular exercise challenges us to be more efficient at using oxygen and glucose for energy, and as we become more fit, we can better adapt to increasing needs for physical energy. But without recovery, the body and brain are unable to put the pieces into place that are needed to repair and rebuild the system, which can lead to system-wide breakdown.

Recovery strategies

- Practicing mind/body activities like yoga and meditation
- Doing deep breathing exercises
- Participating in hobbies you enjoy
- Sticking to a consistent exercise routine
- Taking movement breaks during the day
- Getting adequate sleep
- Listening to music
- Journaling in the evening, after work
- Spending time with friends and/or family
- Serving others by volunteering in the community

DID YOU KNOW?

Experts estimate that 75% to 85% of all health care costs are stress related.

Fab five: a social life is life support



Strong social support helps people feel they're better equipped to handle challenging situations, which can cause the body and brain to respond to stress in a more positive way. The key to increasing social support is to take time out of your busy schedule to be around people you care about. Of course, maintaining a sense of connection takes a time and energy investment. Why not boost your social support while also enhancing your energy in other dimensions? For example, you could:

- Go for a walk with someone for a quick work break
- Call home to connect with family at a scheduled time each day
- Start or join a sports team or club
- Join a training team for a charity walk, run, cycle or triathlon
- Establish a date night and put it in your calendar as a priority

What are some ways you could improve your sense of social connection throughout the day?

Write down one person with whom you'd like to have a stronger relationship. What will you do to facilitate the growth of this relationship?

DID YOU KNOW?

Recent studies show that loneliness and social isolation can be as damaging as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. The problem is particularly acute among seniors, especially during holidays.

Fab five: resting is working



Strategic recovery

Sleep improves memory by enabling the brain to replay, consolidate, and store information that was encountered earlier in the day. When scientists analyzed brain images taken during deep sleep, they found that the neural pathways that were active during the learning period were reactivated during sleep. The re-firing of neurons during sleep strengthens the neural pathways that retain new information. Sleep also improves memory by allowing the reduction of stress hormones, which can be toxic to the brain.

How much sleep is enough?

According to research by the National Institutes of Health, the average person requires eight hours of sleep during the 24-hour day. However, there are individual differences that make it possible for some individuals to function well on seven hours, while others to do better with nine or 10.

Sleep stages

STAGE 1: Slow eye movements

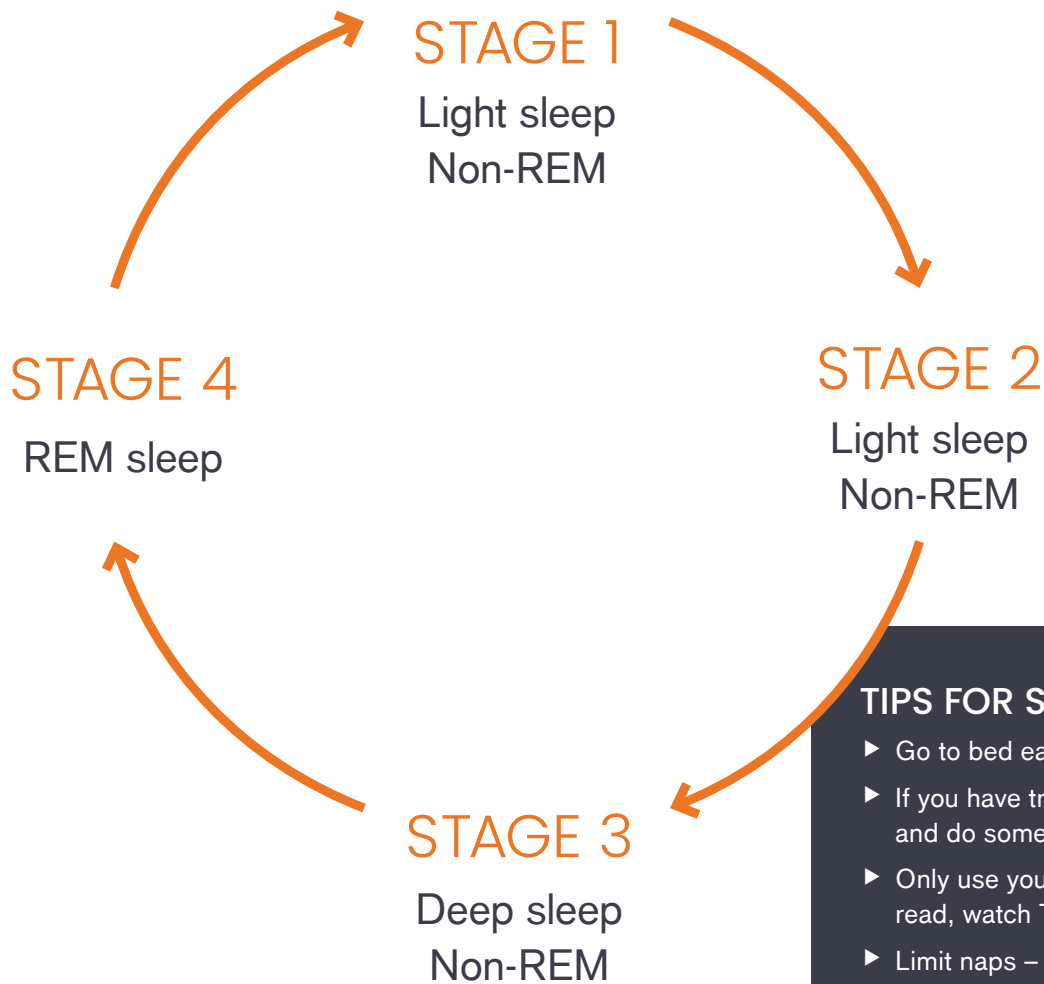
STAGE 2: Body temp drops, lose sense of place, slower brainwaves, eye movement stops

STAGE 3: Blood pressure drops, muscles relax, tissue grows and repairs, hormones are released

STAGE 4: Brain is active and dreaming, eyes dart rapidly, muscles are paralyzed, essential for learning and memory

DID YOU KNOW?

According to MedicalNewsToday (MNT), the long-term effects of cumulative sleep loss include risk of hypertension or high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, depression, heart attack, and stroke.



TIPS FOR SLEEPING WELL:

- ▶ Go to bed early.
- ▶ If you have trouble falling asleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.
- ▶ Only use your bed for sleep – don't study, read, watch TV, or talk on the phone in bed.
- ▶ Limit naps – if you take a nap, keep it brief. Nap for less than an hour and before 3 p.m.
- ▶ Keep your schedule consistent – go to bed and wake up at the same times on the weekend as you do during the work week.
- ▶ Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and at night. It stays in your system for hours and can make it hard for you to fall asleep.
- ▶ Adjust the lights – dim the lights in the evening and at night so your body knows it will soon be time to sleep. Let in the sunlight in the morning to boost your alertness.
- ▶ Take some time to “wind down” before going to bed. Get away from the computer, turn off the TV and the cell phone and relax quietly for 15 to 30 minutes.
- ▶ Never eat a large meal right before bedtime. Enjoy a healthy snack or light dessert so you don't go to bed hungry.

Cognitive fitness



Exercise your brain like a muscle

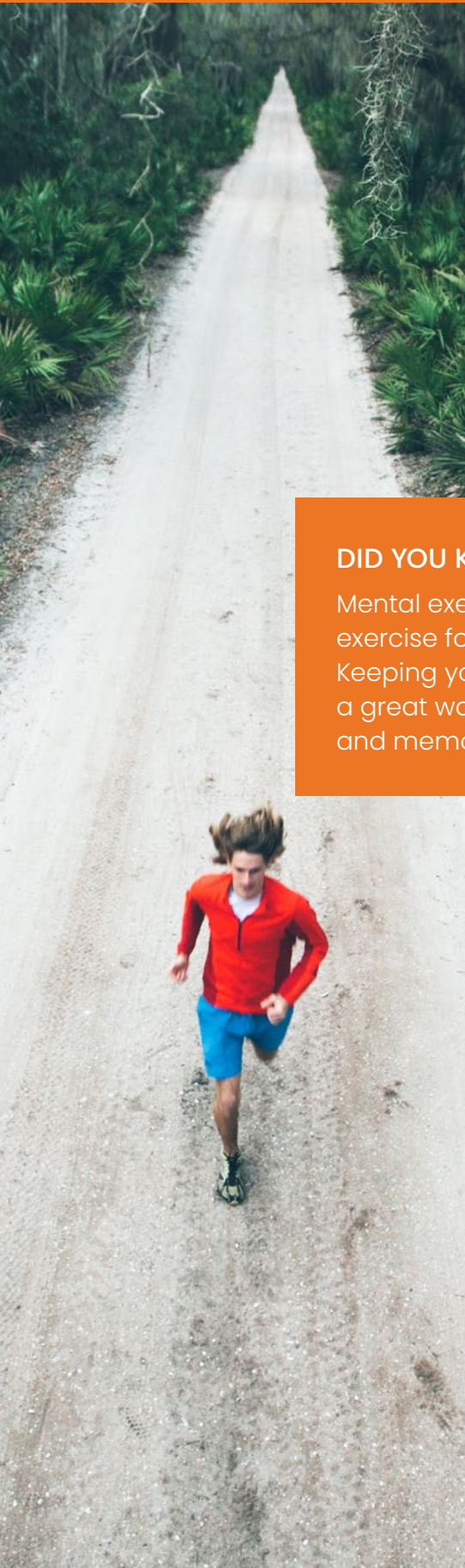
"Cognitive fitness" is being able to train the brain like a muscle to perform at its best.

Just as we require consistent physical training to keep our body strong and performing at its best, the brain must also be exercised to be kept in top shape. Similar to physical fitness, our cognitive fitness can be developed through exercises that focus on building flexibility, strength, and endurance over time.

While working through the three concepts on the following pages, ask yourself, "What can I do differently in my life to build this capability, and perhaps more importantly, why don't I do it now?"

DID YOU KNOW?

Mental exercise is as important as diet and physical exercise for keeping both your body and brain strong. Keeping your brain "fit" with plenty of mental stimulation is a great way to support healthy cognition, mental function, and memory throughout your life.



Flexibility: The mindset makeover



Stroop test

A “Stroop Test” measures cognitive flexibility and performance and is named after J. Ridley Stroop, who discovered this effect in the 1930s.

Read the words that are below from left to right, top to bottom as fast as you can like this: blue, red, yellow, orange, green ...

This is very easy to accomplish in quick fashion.

BLUE	RED	YELLOW	ORANGE
GREEN	BLUE	PURPLE	RED
PURPLE	YELLOW	RED	BLUE
ORANGE	BLUE	YELLOW	RED
RED	GREEN	ORANGE	BLUE
PURPLE	YELLOW	BLUE	ORANGE

Now do the same thing with the words below, but instead of reading the word, say the color the word is shown in – again, as fast as you can. The difficulty you may be experiencing is the well-worn pathway of reading conflicting with another well-worn pathway of knowing your colors.

On average, people require about twice as long to read the incongruent set of words than the congruent set. The mismatch between the different information your brain receives makes this exercise significantly more challenging. The words themselves have a strong influence over your ability to say the color.

While it may seem silly to worry about whether you can read colors and ignore letters in the real world, the implications are much greater than they seem. Understanding how our automatic processing system overrides other possible responses is important in our day-to-day functioning, especially when we think about habits that we are trying to change. Trying to change a habit increases in difficulty based on the complexity as well as the length of time the habit has been in place.

BLUE	RED	YELLOW	ORANGE
GREEN	BLUE	PURPLE	RED
PURPLE	YELLOW	RED	BLUE
ORANGE	BLUE	YELLOW	RED
RED	GREEN	ORANGE	BLUE
PURPLE	YELLOW	BLUE	ORANGE

DID YOU KNOW?

People who keep a daily gratitude list feel more optimistic, exercise more frequently, and report fewer physical complaints. They also experience more positive emotions, fewer negative emotions, and exhibit more helpful behavior toward friends and neighbors.

#1 POSITIVE THINKING

Believe it or not, our perception is more critical to brain functioning than our actual experiences. The more we practice thinking in an optimistic way, the more we train our brain to see life through a positive lens and increase our brain's flexibility to adapt. There are many strategies that can be used to train our brain to think more positively, including having a more positive perspective on life. This includes writing down things you are grateful for or journaling about negative experiences to reflect on positive outcomes.

Exercise

Begin each morning by writing down three things for which you're grateful. In the evening, share three positive experiences during your day with a friend or family member.

What are three things you are grateful for right now?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Top 10 quick positivity trainers

		Duration
1.	Daily gratitude list	30 seconds
2.	Create a meaningful life vision	5-10 minutes
3.	Acts of service	5-60 minutes
4.	Laughter	as much as possible
5.	Journaling	2-5 minutes
6.	Deep breathing practice	2-5 minutes
7.	Massage	30-90 minutes
8.	Visualization	2-10 minutes
9.	Count your blessings	1-2 minutes
10.	Physical activity	20-60 minutes

#2 CREATIVITY

Our mind is often rigidly set around what we believe to be the truth, when there may be an unlimited number of possibilities that have yet to be explored. In science, we often consider something impossible until proven to be possible, but who's to say it couldn't be the other way around? Training our brain to be more flexible allows us to see possibilities beyond what we believe to be true, to explore new ideas and opportunities, and to think outside the box.

How might boosting creativity benefit you? What are some ways you might challenge yourself to think outside the box to train your mental flexibility? How do you foster creativity?

How creative are you?

	Not creative			Very creative
Creative people should specialize in coming up with lots of ideas. Other people should then implement these.	1	2	3	4
If I have a problem, I allow myself to back off active problem solving, and I create some mental distance between myself and the issue.	1	2	3	4
When I'm coming up with ideas, I find myself using phrases like "we can't" or "we don't."	1	2	3	4
I'm busy. As soon as I have a good idea, I move forward with implementation.	1	2	3	4
I gather information from a wide variety of sources to stay current with what's happening in my field of work.	1	2	3	4
I see problems, complaints and bottlenecks as opportunities rather than as issues.	1	2	3	4
When solving a problem, I try to rethink my current understanding of an issue to develop a deeper insight into it.	1	2	3	4
I often ignore good ideas because I don't have the resources to implement them.	1	2	3	4
I find problems and issues distracting. They cause me to lose focus on my real work.	1	2	3	4
I'm confident that I can develop creative ideas to solve problems, and I'm motivated to implement solutions.	1	2	3	4
I take time to investigate how things are working, even when there are no current problems.	1	2	3	4
I always look for the causes of problems so I can understand what's really going on.	1	2	3	4
I look for things in my environment to inspire me to find new interpretations of problems.	1	2	3	4
I focus on issues that are important right now, preferring to worry about future problems as they arise.	1	2	3	4
When gathering information about an issue, I explore solutions that have worked elsewhere in the past.	1	2	3	4
When I generate ideas, I evaluate them and I quickly discard ideas that I don't like.	1	2	3	4

TOTAL SCORE:

SCORE INTERPRETATION

16–32

You're unsure of your creative talent. Maybe you haven't been given opportunities to be creative, or maybe you're convinced that you're simply not a creative person. Either way, look for opportunities to improve how you do things, even if you don't have any current problems.

33–48

Your creativity is a "work in progress." You've had some successes, so now it's time to let loose and stretch yourself. Share your ideas and perspectives with others, and ask them how they view problems. Adopt a collaborative approach to problem finding, and work actively with others to create and innovate.

49–64

Creativity is one of your strengths, and innovative and creative minds are highly sought after. So don't hide your ability! Look for ways to share your creativity process with others. Engage family, colleagues and teammates in creative pursuits, and promote creativity in your team and/or network.

#3 RESILIENCE (BOUNCING BACK)

Cognitive resilience is key to bouncing back quickly during the day and critical to maintaining your performance.

How do you bounce back?

Try one of these bounce-back strategies:

- Take 30 seconds to two minutes to do some deep breathing exercises
- Go outside for a brisk walk
- Spend a minute doing some stretches in your office
- Close your eyes and imagine your next conversation going just the way you want it to
- Write down three things you're grateful for
- Call a friend/spouse/partner/child or other support person for a quick chat (let them know you just have a minute or two)
- Journal about your experience with a difficult client to clear your mind and focus on the present
- Do a few simple exercises or climb the stairs at the office to boost endorphins
- Set a timer for two minutes and visualize yourself somewhere relaxing; use a picture if it's helpful
- Read the comics, a funny story, or motivational message to boost positive emotions

DID YOU KNOW?

As proposed by Barbara Fredrickson's "broaden-and-build" theory, experiences of positive emotions during times of stress prompt individuals to pursue novel and creative thoughts and actions. By trying different coping strategies, you can create an arsenal of resources that help buffer the physical and emotional impact of negative life experiences.

Strength: Building mental muscle



Just as we require consistent physical training to keep our body strong and performing at its best, the brain must also be exercised to be kept in top shape. Similar to physical fitness, our cognitive fitness can be developed through exercises that focus on building strength, flexibility, and endurance over time.

#1 MENTAL REHEARSAL

Just thinking about what you want to do can build strength in the areas of the brain that support the desired behavior. What is something you'd like to improve upon now, and how might you use mental rehearsal to become better prepared?

Situations where you could use mental rehearsal include:

DID YOU KNOW?

Mental rehearsal can train the brain. In a study by neuroscience pioneer Alvaro Pascual-Leone, two groups of people who had never studied piano were given a series of notes to play and told which fingers to move to hit specific keys. One group sat in front of a keyboard for two hours a day for five days, imagining playing the piano and hearing the correct tones. The second group actually practiced playing the piano for the same amount of time. Brain scans were done before, during and after the experiment and a computer was used to measure the accuracy of their performances. By the end of the study, brain change and accuracy were the same in both groups.

#2 MAKING MEMORIES

Have you ever taken time to notice what types of things are easy for you to remember and which things you're quick to forget? When people start to worry about losing their memory, experts will evaluate specifically what someone is struggling to remember and any particular circumstances that might impair memory such as stress, poor nutrition, or lack of sleep. By analyzing what we retain and what we don't, we can see patterns that can help us make new memories more sustainable. Common characteristics include current relevance, understanding, meaning, and emotional connection. To build stronger memories, it's important that we not only create meaning around what we want to remember, but that we also practice recalling the information regularly.

Maintaining memory

Maintaining memory is training your brain to capture information, store it, and retrieve it when needed. What do you need to remember? If it's something you can write down and refer to, don't bother trying to remember it. Organizing thoughts and creating systems to have easy access to important information saves us real estate in the brain to retain only what we need to remember. Names, faces, client family members' names – what else do you need to remember? Can you develop criteria for what needs to be remembered and what doesn't so you don't overwhelm your brain with too much information?

What's in your database?

In business and in life, relationships are critical, and remembering names and personal information can demonstrate engagement and value. Can you list five people you regularly interact with professionally and their spouse's or significant other's name? How about their children's or pet's names?

1. Name: _____
Spouse/family: _____
2. Name: _____
Spouse/family: _____
3. Name: _____
Spouse/family: _____
4. Name: _____
Spouse/family: _____
5. Name: _____
Spouse/family: _____



#3 MEMORY TEST

On the following page is a series of 18 photos showing different common items. You will have 30 seconds to look at the photos, after which time you will write down as many of the items as you can remember in the boxes provided below. (Keep your pens down until the 30 seconds is up – no cheating – and note that there is no “good” or “bad” score. This is something that can be used to measure your own memory, in the moment, and monitor it over time.)

?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?
?	?	?	?	?	?



#4 DISTRACTION RESISTANCE

Complete focus requires filtering what we don't want to pay attention to or resisting distractions. Mindfulness training (being aware and intentional with our mental energy) trains us to be fully engaged when we want to be. A noisy brain is not able to give its full and best attention.

Exercise

In order to maximize your ability to focus, identify some common distractions, eliminate what you can eliminate, and then practice tuning out unnecessary noise. Try this exercise the next time you're mentally preparing for an important client conversation, meeting, or seminar.

- Turn off: computer monitor, harsh lighting, music or other excess noise, television, cell phone, etc.
- Tune out: background noise, other conversations, distracting thoughts – keep a notepad handy to write down things you want to remember and turn off the need to retain excess information that is not necessary in the moment.

I will turn off:

I will tune out:

DID YOU KNOW?

Too much sugar can cause "brain decay." According to studies at New York University School of Medicine, people who are unable to manage their glucose effectively throughout the day achieved lower scores on short-term memory tests than people with normal blood sugar.

PRACTICING MINDFULNESS IN DAILY LIFE

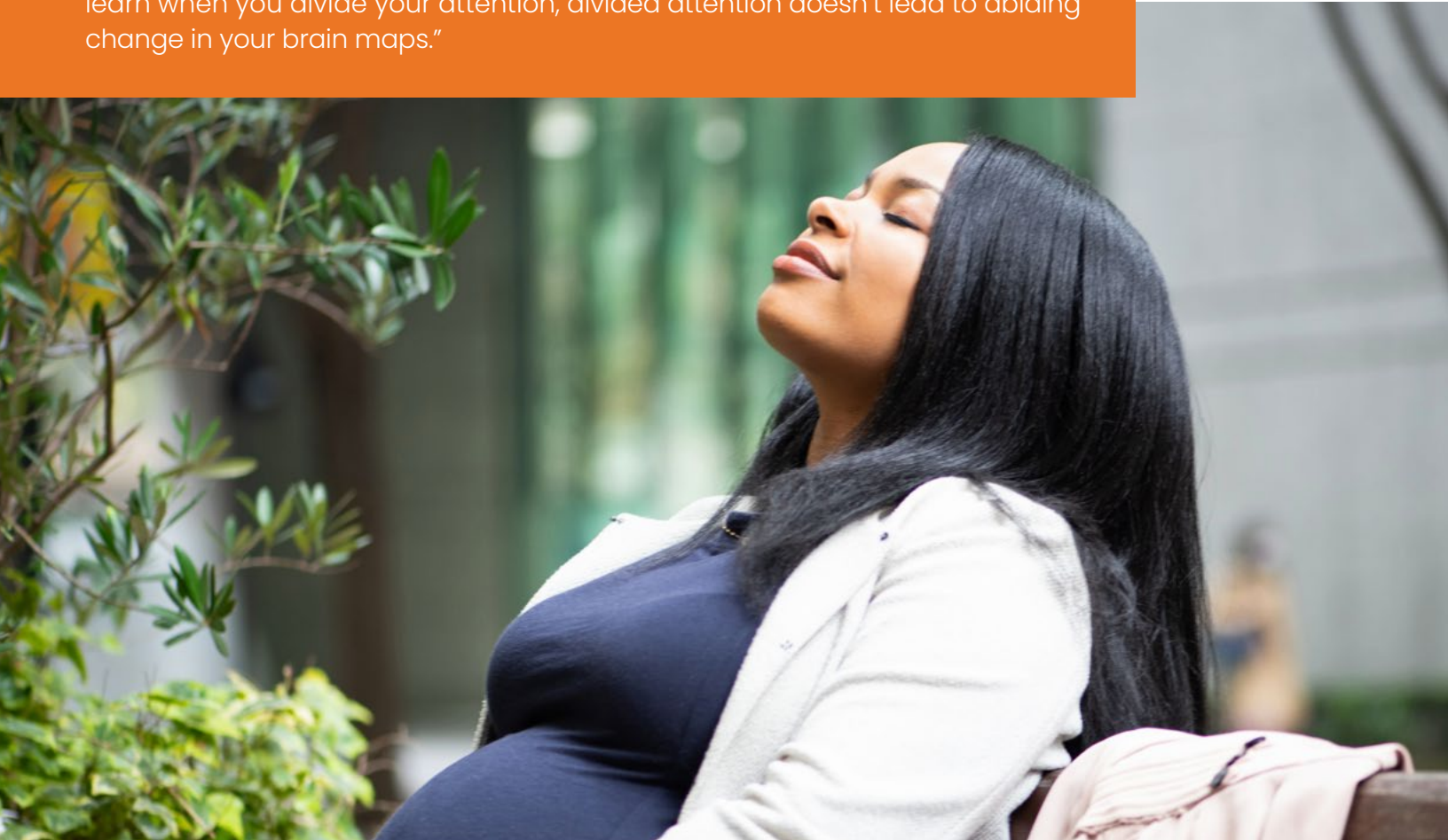
Mindfulness exercises can help you focus on the here and now, training your brain to be fully present in the moment. You can practice mindfulness at any time, doing any task as simple as eating or walking, or as complex as playing with a child or meeting with a client.

Here is a simple step-by-step mindfulness exercise:

- Start by bringing attention to how your body feels. Do a quick scan from head to toe and try to relax.
- Breathe in through your nose, expanding your abdomen fully and allowing the air to expand your lower belly. It may help to count slowly as you inhale to a number that feels comfortable to you (~six seconds).
- Next, breathe out through your mouth. As you exhale, try to relax your body. Drop your shoulders and release the tension in your back and neck. Gently roll your shoulders and/or neck to help relax tight muscles.
- Repeat deep breathing at least three times and then proceed with the task at hand slowly, with deliberation. Engage your senses fully, noticing each sight, sound, smell, and touch to engage your full awareness and attention.
- When you notice that your mind has wandered from the task at hand, just let it go without judgment and bring your attention back to a full awareness of the moment.

DID YOU KNOW?

In studies on training animals, when the animals performed tasks automatically – without paying attention – they changed their brain maps, but the changes did not last. In his book, *The Brain That Changes Itself*, Norman Doidge states, “We often praise the ability to multitask. While you can learn when you divide your attention, divided attention doesn’t lead to abiding change in your brain maps.”



Endurance: Healthy aging



In addition to practicing healthy habits, exercises that target brain endurance are those that also continue to develop strength and flexibility over time. In order to get the biggest return on your time and energy investment, aim for activities that incorporate both strength and flexibility exercises such as journaling, meditation and simple yoga.

#1 THE POWER OF PURPOSE

According to Dan Buettner, author of *Blue Zones*, people who know why they wake up in the morning live up to seven years longer than those who don't. In one of the five "Blue Zones," Okinawa, this concept is known as "ikigai," which has been translated as "believing that one's life is worth living," "something important one lives for" or "a reason for being." This can be especially important as we advance toward new stages in our life, such as retirement. For many, retirement can be a difficult time, as it represents a dramatic shift in focus. The toll it takes on us emotionally and physically can be intense. In fact, the two biggest spikes in mortality come at birth (when there is more of a risk of illness or complications) and at retirement (when people can lose a sense of purpose). We often talk about the power of purpose but can easily find ourselves slipping back into survival mode when we feel overly stressed or crunched for time. Simple writing exercises can help us tap into our passion in life, which can fuel our efforts and give us a clearer sense of direction.

What is your ultimate mission in life?

List your top 5 priorities or values

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How do you connect to your values or priorities on a regular basis?

Do your actions from yesterday align with your top 5 priorities or values?

Let's create a habit(s) that supports your prioritie(s) or value(s)



Step 1: Identify your priority or value

A healthy lifestyle so I can live a long happy life with my children.

Step 2. Identify the habit

Working out five days a week.

Step 3. Identify your CUE

Every habit has a trigger; identify one that regularly works for you.

I'll set my alarm to wake me up at 6 a.m. every morning so I can exercise before work.

Step 4. Identify the REWARD

The end result of the behavior/habit that supports your priority or what you value.

Delicious protein shake, sense of accomplishment, endorphin rush.

Step 5. Execute the ROUTINE

The routine is the activity/behavior you want to become a habit.

Drive to the gym and exercise.

Step 6. Write it down, make it happen

The simplest and most effective way to form a new habit is to write a plan.

Use the following formula to write yours:

When _____ (CUE) I will _____
(ROUTINE) because it supports my _____
(REWARD).

When my alarm clock goes off at 6 a.m. (CUE), I will jump out of bed and drive straight to the gym to exercise for 60 minutes (ROUTINE) because it provides me with a healthy lifestyle, a fit physique, and an energetic start to my day so I can live a long happy life with my children (REWARD).

Brain booster training regimen

SAMPLE PLAN

My focus phrase/mantra: clear and present

Brain health areas of focus

More high-nutrient foods

Consistent physical activity/exercise routine

Brain training

Positive mindset

Build more creativity

Strategies

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Morning check-in, 3 gratitudes							
Midday mental break; get outside if possible							
60 minutes of physical activity/exercise							
Add at least one power food to each meal							
Evening download, 5 minutes journaling before bed							

Sample brain health strategies

- Eat something every 3-4 hours during the day
- Eat balanced meals: 25% protein, 25% whole grains 50% fruits/veggies
- Eat fatty fish at least 2x week or take a fish oil supplement
- Regularly consume high-nutritional value foods (veggies, fruits, fish, nuts)
- Get at least 60 minutes of general activity each day
- Take regular stretch and/or walk breaks during the day
- Get 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise at least 2x a week
- Do full-body strength training at least 2x a week
- Regularly practice relaxation strategies (meditation, yoga, massage, etc.)
- Get at least 7 hours of sleep each night
- Volunteer in community 1x a month
- Call home to connect with family at a scheduled time each day

Sample brain training strategies

- Daily gratitude list each morning
- Journal each night before bedtime
- Use mental rehearsal techniques before important events
- Take a midday mental break (get outside if possible)
- Practice mental focus exercises daily
- Connect to purpose or vision each morning
- Read a challenging book every month
- Practice mindfulness with family, friends, clients
- Try a new hobby or sport
- Practice memory techniques for client names, birthdays, etc.
- Utilize online brain-training games or programs

MY PLAN

My focus phrase/mantra: _____

Brain health areas of focus

Brain training

Strategies

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

Sample brain health strategies

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- Eat balanced meals; 25% protein, 25% whole grains, 50% fruits/veggies
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Additional resources



BRAIN “POWER” FOODS

Power foods are those containing specific nutrients that add value to the brain. These nutrients are found in lean protein, complex carbohydrates and healthy fat. Aim for a plant-based “Mediterranean” diet and limit saturated and trans fat, refined carbohydrates, and added sugar.

- Fish
- Poultry and other lean meats
- Beans and legumes
- Eggs (include yolks)
- Low-fat milk, cheese, and yogurt
- Nuts and seeds: almonds, cashews, walnuts, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, peanuts, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, flaxseed, peanut butter, almond butter
- Olives, olive oil, avocado (in moderation)
- Whole grain bread, cereal, and pasta
- Fruits (especially berries), dark-colored fruit juices (such as grape and pomegranate)
- Vegetables (especially leafy greens like spinach and lettuces, red bell peppers, broccoli, and broccoli sprouts)
- Coffee and tea (in moderation)
- Spices, especially turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, saffron, and garlic

Additional nutrients:

Be sure to take a multivitamin supplement and any other supplements necessary to bring your body into balance, as directed by your physician (such as vitamin D, calcium, magnesium, folic acid, etc., as needed).

Brain games

- happy-neuron.com/games
- lumosity.com/brain-games
- mybrainsolutions.com
- positsscience.com/braingames

Brain research sites:

- Brain Resources: brainresource.com
- Sharp Brains: sharpbrains.com
- Society for Neuroscience: sfn.org
- The Dana Foundation: dana.org

DID YOU KNOW?

The omega-3 fatty acids in fish have been shown to slow the risk and progression of Alzheimer’s disease.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A BRAIN BOOSTER

<input type="checkbox"/>	6:30 a.m.	Breakfast – oatmeal with blueberries, chopped walnuts and cinnamon OR omelet with peppers, mushrooms, and spices
<input type="checkbox"/>	7 a.m.	Morning gratitudes – write down three things I'm grateful for
<input type="checkbox"/>	7 a.m.	Focus exercise – look at daily training log, think about my purpose and goals for the day
<input type="checkbox"/>	7:30 a.m.	Time blocking – block out specific times for specific projects, and email-free blocks
<input type="checkbox"/>	9:30 a.m.	Morning snack – 10 almonds or Greek yogurt with berries
<input type="checkbox"/>	10 a.m.	Midmorning walk break – get outside if possible or climb stairs 5-10 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Noon	Lunch – Leafy green salad with lean protein or ½ sandwich with tomato soup
<input type="checkbox"/>	2 p.m.	Afternoon workout – outside and with a friend or group if possible
<input type="checkbox"/>	5 p.m.	Evening download – look at training log, score or check off new strategies, organize for tomorrow
<input type="checkbox"/>	7 p.m.	Counting blessings – connect with friend or family member to talk about gratitudes from the day
<input type="checkbox"/>	9:30 p.m.	Sleepy tea, warm bath, or relaxation exercise to prepare for good night's sleep

[illegible]

Personal effectiveness workshops

What's the impact of negative stress, personally and professionally?
This flexible, ongoing curriculum is designed to provide actionable tools and tips to manage stress to your advantage.

Energize for Purpose

Stay focused on what matters most with a personalized plan to replenish and sustain your energy for a life of purpose, engagement, and peak performance.

Managing Stress for Success

Use stress as an opportunity for growth by employing actionable tools to identify the sources of stress, our reactions to it, and ways to manage it more productively.

BrainWorks

What's wealth without health? Prevent, or at least postpone, the development of cognitive decline with developed training strategies for better brain health.

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