



COGNITIVE HEALTH

A community of friends enjoying enriched, vibrant and independent lives together

Greetings IAH Members:

Aging often comes with some changes to learning, memory and overall cognitive health. But just like with your physical health, you can give the mind a workout to help mitigate the effects of aging on your brain.



Here are seven techniques to bolster brain connections and exercise your mind to help keep it working at its maximum ability:

1. Move Your Body

Staying active improves blood flow to the brain which supports healthy brain cells. As we age, an area of the brain called the hippocampus often shrinks. Research has found a strong link between exercise and retention of the size of the left side of a person's hippocampus, where verbal memories are coded.

Work with your doctor or a physical therapist to determine the exact amount and type of exercise that's best for you.

2. Keep Learning New Things

*Learning new skills and knowledge helps to promote brain plasticity and cognitive function. A 2020 study in the *Journals of Gerontology* found that older adults ages 58 to 86 who learned multiple new skills for three months scored higher on cognitive assessments just a month and a half into the trial as they did beforehand. Study participants learned creative new hobbies like drawing, dancing and a new language.*

3. Eat for Brain Health

There is no single almighty brain food that can ensure a sharp brain as we age. The most important strategy is to follow a healthy dietary pattern that includes a lot of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Try to get protein from plant sources and choose healthy fats, such as olive oil or canola, rather than saturated fats. Fatty fish like salmon, trout, albacore tuna, herring, and sardines are a rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, a major building block of the brain.

Cut back on foods and drinks that are high in sugar and avoid the sugar rush might lead to brain fog and fatigue.

4. Make and Maintain Social Connections - You don't have to go further than I'On At Home!

We're here for you, so sign up and join your friends at the latest IAH events and programs.

And nothing beats being an IAH Volunteer as way to make new friends.

5. Play Mind Games

Participating in mental activities such as chess, bridge or crossword or jigsaw puzzles can help keep the brain sharp, according to the Cleveland Clinic, and – bonus! – involve some social interaction, too.

6. Focus on Lowering Stress

Negative effects of chronic stress have been linked to advanced aging of both the brain and the body. Get a hold of stress by first connecting with yourself on a regular basis to discover when you are feeling stressed.

Focus on taking a few deep inhales and exhales, listening to your favorite songs or taking a quiet walk. Keeping a journal can help relieve stress and anxiety, especially if you focus on the positive. Gratitude may help relieve stress and anxiety by focusing your thoughts on what's positive in your life.

7. Get Some Rest

Quality sleep is important to brain function. It helps nerve cells communicate and maintains the pathways that help facilitate learning. Aim for seven to eight hours a night. Sleeping less or more than that is associated with poor cognitive function. Avoid caffeine too late in the day, minimize your screen time before bed and keep your bedroom temperature cool.

And remember...Humor is the Sunshine of the Mind!



***CLICK HERE to see the latest information on
upcoming IAH events and programs.***