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The Health Motivator Program is a project of WVU Extension Service Families and Health Programs



Dear Health Motivator,

Congratulations! You will bring a spark of fun and learning to your club this coming year. You will motivate members to take action to live healthier lives. Your new role will only take a few minutes at every club meeting, but it may change your life and the lives of other club members, too!

Now, to get ready for an exciting new year:

1. Review the *Health Motivator Tips and Calendar*.
2. Attend any Health Motivator trainings available to you.
3. With the help of your WVU Extension agent, copy one calendar for each club member.
4. At the first club meeting of the year, follow the monthly notes in your *Health Motivator Tips*. Introduce the new program. Give members their calendars. Next, do these three easy tasks:
 - Read and discuss the Talking Points.
 - Do the Quick Club Activity.
 - Use the Record Form on the last page for group reports.
5. At each meeting, follow the tips and do your three easy tasks.
6. At the last club meeting of the year, complete the Record Form.

Enjoy being a Health Motivator! We hope you and your group members will learn about health and wellness. Share the tips with your families and friends, too. If you have questions or need help, call your WVU Extension agent.

Sincerely,

Health Motivator Committee
Families and Health Programs



Tips for Leaders

- Always encourage members to talk with a health professional about their specific health questions. Your role is to motivate.
- Exercise is safe for most people regardless of age. However, encourage participants to talk to their doctor if they have a health condition (heart disease, arthritis, diabetes).
- Help track individual and club goals. Offer advice and guidance in setting and accomplishing goals.
- Share Health Motivator tasks and responsibilities with other members. Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it!
- Talk with members about the Health Motivator activities. Ask for their ideas to make it more fun and personal.
- Share and recognize individual successes in improving health habits. Plan special events and celebrations to highlight accomplishments.
- Brainstorm ways to make greater progress.
- Support and encourage members. When members struggle or fail to meet their goals, remind them that changing health habits is not easy.
- Talk with your WVU Extension agent about any concerns or questions.

Source:

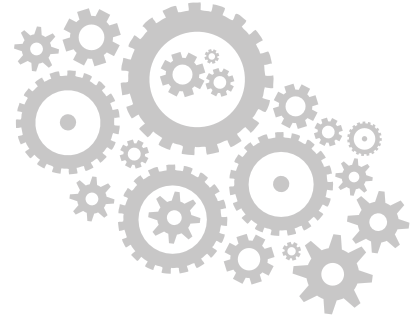
McNamara, C. (2008). Free basic guide to leadership and supervision. Adapted from *The Field Guide to Leadership and Supervision*. Retrieved July 1, 2014 from www.managementhelp.org.

Special thanks to the West Virginia Community Educational Outreach Service clubs who inspired the Health Motivator idea and work to improve the health and well-being of families and communities.



Brain Basics

By Zona Hutson, WVU Extension Agent, Doddridge County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

- The brain is the most powerful body organ weighing about 3 pounds or the size of a small head of cauliflower.
- With a texture similar to firm jelly, the brain has three main parts: cerebrum, cerebellum and brain stem. The brain has approximately 100 billion nerve cells called neurons that control our body.
- The skull, or *cranium*, is 22 bones joined together to protect our brain.
- The *cerebrum* is the largest part of our brain. It fills up most of our skull, allows us to speak, solve problems and hear, see, taste, smell and touch.
- The *cerebellum* is at the back of the brain under the cerebrum. This part of the brain controls balance, posture and coordination.
- The *brain stem* connects the brain to the spinal cord. It controls automatic functions such as digestion, heartbeat, breathing and body temperature.
- With each heartbeat, arteries pump 20 to 25 percent of your blood to the brain, bringing the oxygen and fuel your brain needs.
- Your brain is divided into a right and left half. The left half controls movement on the body's right side. The right half controls the body's left side. In most people, the language area is chiefly on the left.

Quick Club Activity: Left Side or Right Side

Ask participants to quickly decide which they prefer when you say the two items. Then, participants will move to left side or right side of the room, depending on their preference. Be creative and add your own preferences or ideas.

<i>Move to the left side if you prefer . . .</i>	<i>Move to the right side if you prefer . . .</i>
Coffee	Tea
WVU	Marshall
Hot weather	Cold weather
Dog	Cat

Learn More!

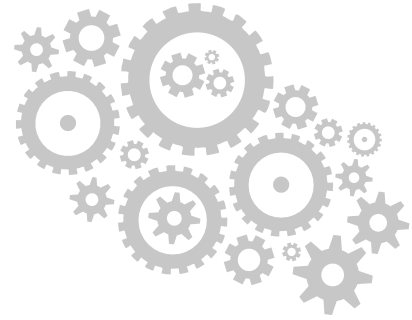
3 Main Parts of the Brain. http://www.alz.org/braintour/3_main_parts.asp.

Cowger, T., & Prinzo, L. (2015). How to Train Your Brain. <http://fh.ext.wvu.edu/r/download/219426>.

February 2017

Brainy Choices

By Gina Taylor, WVU Extension Agent, Jackson County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

Everyday choices can either make your brain healthier *OR* damage your brain.

What are the biggest risks and threats to the brain?

- Alcohol reduces blood flow to the brain.
- Smoking also reduces blood flow to the brain, because nicotine narrows blood vessels. This may lead to clogged arteries and stroke.
- Drug use causes permanent changes in the brain.
- Physical injuries can seriously reduce brain function.
- Psychological trauma and emotional stress can damage your brain.
- Lack of sleep can lead to memory loss and being less alert. Sleep helps the brain recuperate from daily stress and store information and memories.
- What brainy choices can keep your brain healthy?
 - ✓ Exercise increases blood flow, helps reduce depression, anxiety, and stress, and improves balance.
 - ✓ Stop smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.
 - ✓ Get enough sleep.
 - ✓ Avoid activities that may cause blows to the head.
 - ✓ Learn something new each day.
 - ✓ Change your routine.

More than 16 million U.S. adults are living with cognitive (brain) impairment.

Do all you can to maintain brain health!

Quick Club Activity: Balance Your Brain

Set a timer for 20 seconds. Challenge all to stand and balance on one leg. If needed, hold on to a stable chair. New research shows that those who can balance on one leg for at least 20 seconds have a lower risk for small blood vessel damage in the brain and have better brain function.

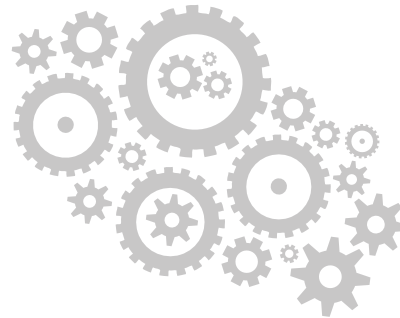
Learn More!

See this month's Healthy Extras on page 15.

Payne, J. (2014). *Change your brain, change your life before 25*. Ontario: Harlequin.

Train Your Brain

By Sue Flanagan, WVU Extension Agent, Berkeley County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

A healthy brain helps us to remember, learn, plan, concentrate and keep a clear, active mind. Daily activities that stimulate the brain add to the years and the quality of our lives. Here are a few ways to train your brain:

- *Read* – Join or start a reading club and share ideas about characters and plots. Select a unique genre to broaden your experiences.
- *Play games* – Card games of all kinds can challenge your brain as you develop strategies for winning. Also, try a variety of board games.
- *Learn something new* – Take up a new craft, learn a new language, take music lessons or sign up for a class at the community center. Check with your county’s WVU Extension Service office about classes they offer.
- *Volunteer* – Helping other people, engaging socially and learning about your community are valuable.
- *Ditch your calculator* – Balance your checkbook by doing the math in your head or on a scrap piece of paper. Recite the multiplication tables.
- *Challenge yourself* – Can you name the eight U.S. states that begin with “M”? Make a shopping list of 8 to 10 items and recall every item an hour later.
- *Learn a new sport* – Exercise both your mind and body with yoga, golf, tennis, etc.
- *Do puzzles* – Play all types of puzzles and games (i.e., crossword puzzles, Sudoku, word jumbles, word searches, etc.).

Quick Club Activity: I Train My Brain . . .

Form a circle. Have one individual get in the center of the circle and say, “*I train my brain by _____,*” and name something they do to keep their brain active and healthy. If others do the same activity, they say “That’s Me!” and join the first individual in the circle. Encourage each participant to take a turn until all have participated.

Learn More!

What is Brain Health? <http://brainhealth.gov/>.

Melone, L. 10 Brain Exercises That Boost Memory. <http://www.everydayhealth.com/longevity/mental-fitness/brain-exercises-for-memory.aspx>.

Brain Games. http://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/brain_games/.

April 2017

Active Body = Active Brain

By Terrill Peck, WVU Extension Agent, Raleigh County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

Being physically active every day promotes good brain health. Persons of all ages benefit from regular exercise. How does physical activity benefit our brains?

- Exercise helps clear the cob webs or “brain fog” that may happen as we age. Increased heart rate and blood flow protects memory and thinking skills.
- Exercise improves your mood and sleep habits, and reduces anxiety and stress.
- Brain chemicals are released when you exercise, stimulating growth of new blood vessels and helping existing brain cells last longer.
- With exercise, extra blood bathes your brain cells in oxygen and glucose, which they need to function. The more they get, the better they perform.
- Your body releases the feel-good hormone oxytocin during exercise. Its effects can last up to 12 hours.
- Nature boosts our mood. Going to a park or walking in the woods can improve creativity by up to 50% and reduce stress hormones by 16%.

How can you make the most of daily exercise and benefit your brain?

- Be active at least 30 minutes a day, no matter what your age.
- Get outside and enjoy nature. Take a walk. Join an exercise group. Go dancing. Walk the dog. Play with your grandchildren and pets.
- Exercise with a friend. Just having someone with you helps keep you engaged, and they are counting on you.

Quick Club Activity: Active Body = Active Brain

Play dance or salsa music. Not feeling spicy? Play the chicken dance song. Those who are able, get up and dance. If not, dance in your chair! Get your heart pumping oxygen and glucose. Toss a few balloons in and keep them in the air. If you’re laughing, that’s a real brain bonus! After dancing, talk about it: “*How does your brain feel now?*” All that oxytocin hormone will keep you feeling great!

Learn More!

Mind & Mood – Harvard Health. <http://www.health.harvard.edu/topics/mind-and-mood>.

Find local events and things you love to do. <http://www.active.com/>.

Your Brain on Cortisol

By Dana Wright, WVU Extension Agent, Mingo and Logan Counties



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

- Stress is a normal part of life. The demands of family, friends and work are the most common sources.
- Experiencing stress for long periods of time affects memory and may even shrink your brain.
- When stressed, the adrenal gland releases the hormone cortisol. It makes thinking and problem-solving difficult.
- Ten to 15 minutes of stress can hardwire your brain to get stressed more easily and stay stressed longer for the next two to three days.
- We can't avoid stress; however, we can learn healthy ways to deal with it.
 - ✓ *Think positive.* Dwelling on the negatives increase anxiety.
 - ✓ *Be active.* As little as 30 minutes of physical activity improves your body's response to stress and improves mood.
 - ✓ *Maintain a healthy diet.* When stressed, comfort foods can be tempting. Remember, foods high in sugar, fat and sodium can lead to future health issues.
 - ✓ *Connect with others.* Positive relationships help you adapt better to stressful events.
 - ✓ *Escape.* Take a few moments for yourself. Even 10 seconds to refocus your thoughts causes the "fight or flight" chemical cortisol to stop flooding your brain and body.

Quick Club Activity: Knock Your Stress Out

Pretend you are in a boxing match with the stressor that is bothering you. Get in a boxing stance with fists in a ball. Move around like you are in a boxing ring. Knock your stress out!

Learn More!

Adult Stress – Frequently Asked Questions. (n.d.). http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/stress_factsheet_ln_142898.pdf.

12 Effects of Chronic Stress on Your Brain. (2016). <http://bebrainfit.com/effects-chronic-stress-brain/>.

RELAX: Alternatives to Anger Curriculum (HNI98CD). (n.d.). http://msue.anr.msu.edu/resources/relax_alternatives_to_anger_curriculum.

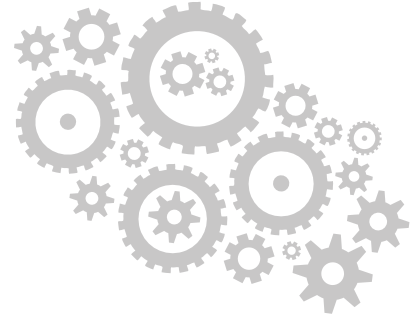
Aronson, D. (n.d.). Cortisol – Its Role in Stress, Inflammation, and Indications for Diet Therapy. <http://www.todaysdietitian.com/newarchives/111609p38.shtml>.

Short-term Stress Can Affect Learning and Memory. (2008, March 13). <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/03/080311182434.htm>.

June 2017

Hydrate Your Brain

By Lauren Prinzo, WVU Extension Agent, Marion County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

- Water makes up 75% of your brain. It is important to every body system.
- Dehydration can impair short-term memory and recall of long-term memory.
- Dehydration can physically shrink the gray matter in your brain, which makes your brain work harder to process information.
- Drinking a glass of water can sharpen your mind, and improve your reaction time and ability to process information. Water is a natural remedy for headaches, too.
- Sugar-sweetened beverages do not hydrate as well as water.

Try these tips to stay hydrated and brain healthy:

- Drink at least eight glasses of water every day. Remember, the amount of water you need depends on your body weight, activity level, illnesses/health conditions and weather.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, because they contain a lot of water.
- Check you urine. If you drink enough water, your urine should be colorless or light yellow. Darker? Drink more water.
- Keep a glass/bottle of water handy. Have water with each meal and between meals.

Quick Club Activity: “Drink, Drink, Drink Your Water”

Sing to the tune of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat”:

Drink, drink, drink your water
Drink it every day
Morning, noon, all day long
Your brain will say, “HURRAY!”

Try singing it in rounds to really get your brain working!

Learn More!

Nutrition and Healthy Eating. (2016). <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/water/art-20044256?pg=2>.

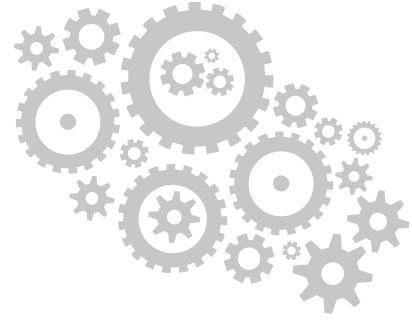
Ritz, P., & Berrut, G. (2005). The Importance of Good Hydration for Day-to-Day Health. *Nutrition Reviews*, 63. doi:10.1111/j.1753-4887.2005.tb00155.x.

The Water in You. (2016, May 2). <http://water.usgs.gov/edu/propertyou.html>.

July 2017

Nourish Your Brain

By Cheryl Kaczor, WVU Extension Agent, Marshall County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

Healthy foods are good for your heart, bones, brain and whole body! Which foods should you choose?

- Whole grains help promote blood flow.
- Blueberries may reduce the risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and improve learning and motor skills.
- Citrus fruits have antioxidants that protect the brain.
- Vegetables are a colorful way to get antioxidants.
- Fish is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which are essential for concentration and mood.
- Nuts are high in vitamin E and may lessen cognitive decline.
- A few cups of caffeinated tea or dark chocolate may help improve memory, focus and mood.
- Foods from the Mediterranean lifestyle are excellent choices, because they have anti-inflammatory properties. Avoid too much red meat, saturated and trans fats, refined grains and sugar. A brain-healthy diet helps appetite-regulating hormones work, which may curb cravings.

Quick Club Activity: Chair Zumba

Play a peppy song, such as "New York" by Frank Sinatra or a Latin tune. Lead your group in chair Zumba:

1. Sit up straight, toward the edge of the chair.
2. Shrug your shoulders up and down to the beat four to five times.
3. Raise your arms to the sides, up above your head, then back to your sides.
4. Heel, toe each foot four to five times.
5. Kick each leg four to five times.
6. Side step each foot four to five times.
7. Take turns adding creative movements.

Enjoy the music and movement!

Learn More!

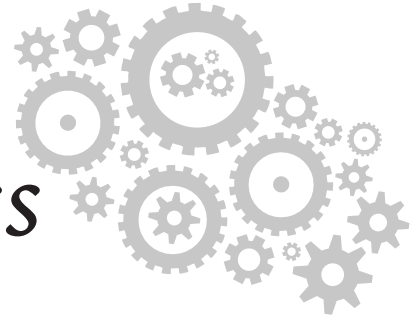
Agnvall, E. (2015, October 30). Foods to Try and Avoid for Brain Health. <http://blog.aarp.org/2015/10/30/these-foods-linked-to-bigger-brains-better-memory/>.

C. S., & Chang, L. (2008, December 18). Best Brain Foods for Brain Function. <http://www.webmd.com/diet/eat-smart-healthier-brain>.

YouTube-Zumba Gold Chair Part 1 and other videos.

Practicing Mindfulness

By Ami Cook, WVU Extension Agent, Braxton County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

Mindfulness is paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally. There are three basic aspects of mindfulness: body, breath and thoughts. Mindfulness is powerful for your brain. It can help you balance stress, lower anxiety and depression, improve sleep, lessen chronic pain and more. How? The focusing and refocusing with mindfulness practices can increase brain connectivity and builds your memory and ability to pay attention.

Practice these daily mindful activities to benefit your brain.

- *Mindful breathing* – Find a comfortable place where you won't be disturbed for 5 to 10 minutes. Sit upright with your hands in your lap. Take a deep breath. Close your eyes, if you wish. Simply notice the breath as you breathe in and out. Focus on the sensation of air moving in and out of your lungs. Notice your chest rising up and down. As thoughts come into your mind, acknowledge the thought and refocus on your breathing. Breathe in and out for 5 minutes. Gradually return, widen your attention and open your eyes. Try mindful breathing one to two times a day and gradually increase as desired.
- *Mindful walking* – Begin walking more slowly than usual. Notice your surroundings – sights, sounds and smells. Be aware of your body by paying attention to sensations in your feet and legs. Feel your feet touching the ground. Notice what muscles are working to move your legs. Pay attention to your breath as it increases. Acknowledge other thoughts as they come and then refocus on the present.

Quick Club Activity: Use Humor to Accept Your Thoughts

Pick a worry that weighs heavily on your mind or that you carry with you often. Say it out loud. Now, pick a favorite tune. Sing about your worry.

Here is a fun example (sung to the tune of “Jingle Bells”) – *“Dirty house, dirty house, dirty to the max, neighbor’s here and house is a mess on this awful day. Oh! Dirty house, dirty house, they will be so sad. Maybe next year Santa Claus will bring a brand new maid! Hey! Dirty house, dirty house . . .”*

Laughter is a Brain Booster

By Becky Smith, WVU Extension Agent, Harrison County



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

Research suggests that humor has many benefits, especially for our brains.

- It can improve short-term memory in older adults. The stress hormone cortisol is not our friend for preserving memories. Cortisol levels go down when people are exposed to humor and laughter.
- Our memory works better when we have less stress. Laughter can reduce stress, give us a better perspective and help us be more creative.
- Dr. Lee Berk, with Allied Health says, “The act of laughter increases endorphins, sending dopamine to the brain to provide a sense of pleasure and reward. That, in turn, makes the immune system work better and changes brain wave activity towards what’s called a ‘gamma frequency,’ amping up memory and recall.”
- Laughter stimulates dopamine, a neurotransmitter vital for long-term memory.
- Humor can improve our retention of knowledge. Humor triggers our sense of wonder, which is where learning begins.

So let’s keep practicing laughter for our own good health.

Quick Club Activity: The Good Wishes Laughing Game

Everyone stand in a circle. Throw a beach ball or other light object to someone in the circle. Say a good wish to that person and end with everyone saying with a smile “Ha-ha-ha. Hee-hee-hee. Ho-ho-ho.” Then go to the next person. Alternative: Stand up from your chair. Go around the room and each person say a good wish to the person on their right. End with both saying with a smile “Ha-ha-ha. Hee-hee-hee. Ho-ho-ho.”

Learn More!

Strean, W. B. (2009). Laughter prescription. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2762283/A> Game of Blessings. (2010). <http://www.deepfun.com/competitive-blessings/>.

Henderson, S. (2015, March 31). Laughter and Learning: Humor Boosts Retention. <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/laughter-learning-humor-boosts-retention-sarah-henderson>.

Stress relief from laughter? It’s no joke. (2016). <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456>.

Figalora, S. (2014). Laughing Makes Your Brain Work Better, New Study Finds. <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/laughing-makes-brain-work-study-finds/story?id=23393053>.

October 2017

Give Your Brain A Rest



By Gwen Crum, WVU Extension Agent, Wood County and
Elaine Bowen, WVU Extension Health Promotion Specialist

Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

- Sleep helps you learn, use your memory and creatively problem solve.
- During sleep, the brain is active, making pathways for new learning, memories and ideas.
- Lack of sleep slows down reactions and makes it harder to focus and make good decisions.
- How can you improve your sleep for a healthy brain?
 - ✓ *Be more active.*
 - ✓ *Get morning sunshine.*
 - ✓ *Have a bedtime routine.*
 - ✓ *Limit caffeine and other stimulants.*
 - ✓ *Limit naps.*
 - ✓ *Limit noise and light.*
 - ✓ *Talk to your health care provider.*

Quick Club Activity: Rise and Shine!

1. Let's stand, and rise and shine. Every morning, we s-t-r-e-t-c-h tall!
2. How will we practice healthy sleep habits today? Think of an important daily habit that will lead to quality sleep and a healthy brain. Without speaking, each person will take their turn to act out a habit. The rest of us will act it out, too, and try to guess what it is.
3. After everyone has had a turn, close your eyes briefly as if you're resting. Then, rise and shine again with a big s-t-r-e-t-c-h!

Learn More!

See the Healthy Extra on page 18.

www.ninds.nih.gov.

www.healthysleep.med.harvard.edu.

www.sleepfoundation.org.

Your Head and Meds

By Dave Roberts, WVU Extension Agent, Boone and Lincoln Counties



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

- Three-fourths of U.S. adults over age 45 take prescription medications regularly.
- Understand and properly manage your medications with the help of your doctor, pharmacist and other family members. It is up to you to be fully knowledgeable about your meds, to follow directions exactly and to keep track of medications. Carry a list with you.
- Ask your doctor and pharmacist to review your med list with you every year. Ask: “What is the purpose of this medicine?”, “What are the possible side effects?”, “What interactions with other meds or herbal supplements should I look for?”, “Are there any alternatives?”
- Some common prescription medications can affect brain health and memory.
 - ✓ *Antianxiety drugs* – These drugs can interfere with brain transfer of data from short- to long-term memory.
 - ✓ *Cholesterol drugs* – These drugs may lower cholesterol levels in the blood and in the brain, too. If these levels drop too low, nerve cell connections can lead to forgetfulness. In most cases, these medications are dosed to avoid dangerously low cholesterol levels.
 - ✓ *Tricyclic antidepressants* – Individuals may have episodes of memory loss and trouble concentrating.
 - ✓ *Hypertension drugs* – Beta-blockers can block crucial brain chemicals and *may* cause memory problems. This is more common with certain types and with elderly patients.
 - ✓ *Sleep aids* – These may lead to short- and long-term memory problems.
- *Please Note:* These side effects are unlikely with most of these medications. Problems may occur when larger medication amounts are in the body either from higher doses or decreased kidney function, which may happen with increasing age. Always talk to the doctor and pharmacist about potential side effects of all medications!

Quick Club Activity: Keep It Up

Blow up a balloon. Toss it in the air. Explain that we need to keep up the balloon, just like keeping up the conversation with our health care providers. As you keep up the balloon, ask participants, “What do you want to talk about with your pharmacist or doctor?”

Learn More!

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2012). Older Adults and Adverse Drug Events http://www.cdc.gov/MedicationSafety/Adult_AdverseDrugEvents.html.

Food and Drug Administration. (2015). Medicines and You: A Guide for Older Adults <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm163959.htm>.

This content was reviewed by Dr. Travis White, WVU School of Pharmacy.

Your Brain Needs Social Time

By Lauren Weatherford, WVU Extension Agent, Fayette and Nicholas Counties



Health Motivator Talking Points

Did you know . . . ?

We know getting out and spending time with others is good for us, but do you know why? Here are some important benefits:

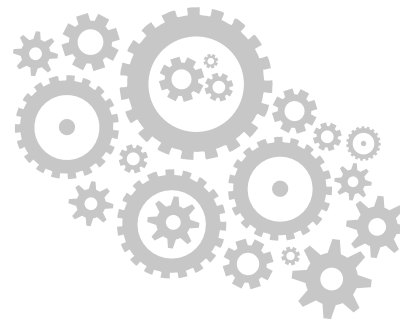
- Socialization stimulates the brain and may reduce the risks for dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Personal interaction challenges the brain to focus. Discussions involve the brain in problem-solving, analyzing, learning and memory use.
- Time with others can reduce the chance of depression, and it may lead to more happiness and fewer mental health issues.
- Social interaction connects us to our families and communities. This gives us a sense of belonging, which leads to personal self-worth, self-esteem and confidence. The more we feel involved and valued by others, the more likely we are to look for more social opportunities.
- Healthier behaviors and health outcomes can result from spending time with others. People can encourage each other to make healthier choices and to be physically active. Physical activity lowers stress and the chance of depression, improves sleep, improves healing, boosts memory and improves overall mental health as well.
- You may feel more motivated to make healthy choices in order to stay involved in social activities.
- Ultimately, healthier behaviors can result in lower rates of chronic diseases (i.e., cancer, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease). Health habits can also improve healing, strengthen the immune system, and help resist colds and flu and manage pain.

Quick Club Activity:

1. Gather supplies (i.e., pens/pencils and sticky notes).
2. Give a pen/pencil and two to three sticky notes to each participant.
3. Ask, "What benefits to social time are important to you? Write two to three benefits – one on each note."
4. As a group, share ideas. Organize the notes on a wall, grouping similar ideas. Talk about these benefits: "What are obstacles to being social? How can your group members support others in having productive and healthy social experiences?"

February Health Extras

Brainy Choices



By Gina Taylor, WVU Extension Agent, Jackson County

Fold this paper in half to hide answers. Circle your answer for each question. Unfold the paper. How many of your answers were correct?

1. **True or False:** I am at my optimal brain health, although I don't eat well or regularly exercise.
2. **True or False:** High blood pressure is a significant risk factor for stroke.
3. **True or False:** No matter if I am 20, 30, 40, 50 or 80, the choices I make today affect how my brain will function as I age.
4. **True or False:** Smoking or any tobacco use is strongly linked to heart disease and stroke, and linked to mental decline and brain function.
5. **True or False:** Foods that are good for your heart are also good for a healthy brain and may help prevent stroke.
6. **True or False:** When I forget things, like names or what I did yesterday, this could be a sign of memory loss.

— — — — — (FOLD HERE) — — — — —

1. **False** – You can try to convince yourself, but don't kid yourself about brain health. An active body and mind can improve brain health and help you avoid brain problems like stroke, dementia, confusion or memory loss.
2. **True** – High blood pressure is a significant risk factor for stroke. About three in every four people (77%) who have had a stroke have blood pressure higher than 140/90 mm Hg. A 10-mm Hg drop in systolic blood pressure (top number) or a 5-mm Hg drop in diastolic pressure (bottom number) can cut your risk of stroke death in half. So, check your blood pressure regularly and work with your health care provider to get it under control.
3. **True** – Choices you make today will affect your health as you age. Eating well, being physically active and managing blood pressure will help reduce your risks. No matter what your age, take steps to stay brain healthy and mentally sharp.
4. **True** – Smoking or any tobacco use is not only strongly linked to heart disease and stroke, but also linked to mental decline and brain function.
5. **True** – Vegetables, fruits, fish and lean meats can help reduce your risk for stroke and heart disease, and keep your mind sharp, too. Eat healthy!
6. **False** – Forgetting names of people or things does not mean you have impaired brain function. This is normal. But early signs of memory loss and mental process in some 40-year-olds can be a result of unhealthy behaviors and lifestyles in their 20s and 30s. A great reason to make good choices today and every day!

Adapted from the Brain Health Quiz at <http://brainhealth.strokeassociation.org/quiz/q7-correct.html>.

May Health Extras

How Can I Cope with Stress?

By Dana Wright, WVU Extension Agent, Mingo and Logan Counties



The effects of stress tend to build up over time. Take practical steps to maintain your health and outlook, and reduce or prevent these effects. Try these tips:

- Get help from a qualified mental health care provider if you feel you are overwhelmed or cannot cope, have suicidal thoughts, or use drugs or alcohol to cope.
- Get proper health care for existing or new health problems.
- Stay in touch with people who can give emotional and other support. Ask for help from friends, family, and community or religious groups to lower stress from work burdens or family issues, such as caring for a loved one.
- Recognize your body's response to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed and having low energy.
- Set priorities – decide what must get done and what can wait. Learn to say no to new tasks if they are putting you into overload.
- Note what you have accomplished at the end of the day, not what you have been unable to do.
- Avoid dwelling on problems. If you can't do it on your own, get help from a qualified mental health professional who can guide you.
- Exercise regularly – just 30 minutes per day of gentle walking can help boost mood and reduce stress.
- Schedule regular times for healthy, relaxing and fun activities.
- Explore stress coping programs that may incorporate meditation, yoga, tai chi or other gentle exercises.

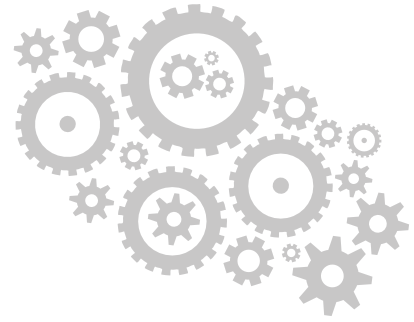
If you or someone you know is overwhelmed by stress, ask for help from a health professional. If you or someone close to you is in crisis, call the toll-free, 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.

Adapted from *Adult Stress – Frequently Asked Questions* from the National Institutes of Health

June Health Extras

Hydrate Your Brain

By Lauren Prinzo, WVU Extension Agent, Marion County



Try these fruit-infused water recipes at your events to make drinking water fun!

Blackberry Mint

- 40 blackberries
- 40 mint leaves

Tear mint leaves in half and smash blackberries to release flavors before adding to water.



Blueberry Orange Basil

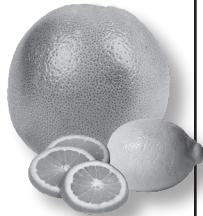
- 30 to 45 blueberries
- 3 oranges
- 9 basil leaves

Squeeze the blueberries, quarter the oranges, and tear the basil leaves in half before adding to the water.



Citrus

- Slice your choice of oranges, lemons, and grapefruit.
- Use one of each fruit for every gallon of water.
- Chill overnight in the refrigerator.



Pineapple Orange

- ¼ pineapple
- ½ orange

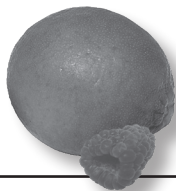
Slice the pineapple. Leave the peel on the orange slices. You may be able to add water 2 to 3 more times before the flavor is gone.



Raspberry Lime

- 40 raspberries
- 4 small limes

Smash raspberries and remove rind from limes before adding to water. Let sit overnight for maximum flavor.



Strawberry Kiwi

- 5 strawberries
- 2 kiwi

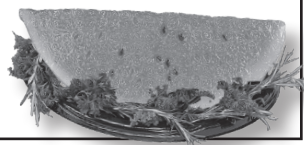
Slice the strawberries and kiwi before adding them to the water to release the flavors.



Watermelon Rosemary

- ¼ seedless watermelon
- 2 sprigs rosemary

Scoop watermelon directly into container. Add rosemary and fill the rest of the way with water. Let sit overnight.



Remember these food safety tips:

- Wash hands, containers, fruit, and preparation surfaces.
- Do not mix batches. Use it up, clean the container, and make a new batch.

October Health Extras

Checklist for Better Sleep for a Healthy Brain



By Gwen Crum, WVU Extension Agent, Wood County and
Elaine Bowen, WVU Extension Health Promotion Specialist

Keep this by your bedside.

Be active during the day.

Daily physical activity helps you relax and raises your core body temperature, which supports falling and staying asleep. Exercise at least three hours before bedtime.

Get daylight.

Get morning sunshine. Natural daylight helps your body regulate sleep. Try to get outside for at least 30 minutes each day.

Have a winding-down routine.

Follow three or four activities (i.e., warm bath, a warm drink, brush your teeth, wash your face, change your clothes, read a book) every night at the same time and in the same order. Then, your body begins to relax and anticipate sleep.

Limit caffeine.

Caffeine interferes with falling asleep and sleep productivity.

Limit naps.

Excessive napping may keep you awake later at night. A power nap (resting for 15 to 20 minutes) may recharge your mind and body.

Create quiet darkness.

Keep your bedroom dark. Have a noisy environment or sleep with a snorer? Use ear-plugs or white noise. Lights and distractions of televisions, computers and cell phones may keep you from sleeping productively.

Be technology-free.

Turn off cell phones, televisions, computers and other electronics. Make your bedroom environment relaxing and technology-free.

Control the temperature.

Cooler temperatures (around 65 degrees Fahrenheit) are best.

Before you turn off the lights, write a list of what you are grateful for.

Health Motivator Tips

Record Form



Club: _____

Club Health Motivator: _____

Please complete the form every month at your group meeting.

When it is complete at the end of the year, send it to your WVU Extension agent.

(Cut Here)

Month	Total number of members at meeting	Total physical activity minutes/Number of members who tracked	Number of days practicing brain-healthy habits
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			
Total			

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