

# Six Keys to Improving your Brain Health

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*"Take heed unto thyself... I Timothy 4:16*

1. A lot of attention is given to our **spiritual** health and **physical** health.
2. Our **mental** health is just as important.
3. Our **brain** is where our physical health, mental health, and spiritual health intersect.
4. The Bio-Psycho-Socio-Spiritual model highlights the interrelation of all aspects of our being.

*"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."*

Psalms 139:14



## Brain Facts

- The brain weighs about 3 pounds.
- ~86 billion neurons.
  - "A piece of brain tissue the size of a grain of sand contains 100,000 neurons and 1 billion synapses."
- It is made up of 60% fat.
- Brain isn't fully formed until about age 25.
  - The frontal lobes (which control planning and reasoning) are the last parts to fully form.
- It's a myth that we only use 10% of our brain.

Source: 11 Fun Facts About Your Brain

## The Brain Is...

1. **Structural** – brain hemispheres and lobes
2. **Chemical** – neurotransmitters (dopamine, etc.)
3. **Electrical** – seen on electroencephalogram (EEG)
4. **Vascular** – blood vessels, oxygen, nutrients

- Parts intersect and work together.
- Out of interaction comes something greater than any of the parts.
  - Memory, thinking, emotion, sensation... consciousness.
- While we are alive, we will do **nothing apart** from our brain, yet we are **more** than our brain.
- Our undying soul is even more than that!

## What is Brain Health?

### The American Academy of Neurology (AAN)

- Brain health is the ability to maintain optimal **neurological function** throughout life, **which supports physical, mental, and social well-being.**

### World Health Organization (WHO)

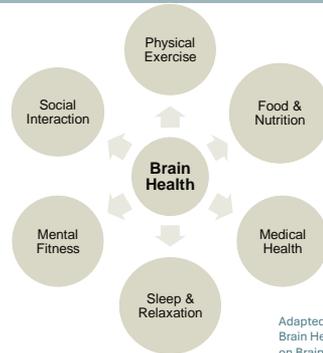
- Brain health is the state of brain functioning across cognitive, sensory, social-emotional, behavioral and motor domains, **allowing a person to realize their full potential over the life course, irrespective of the presence or absence of disorders.**

## Why Focus on Brain Health For More Information

- [What is brain health and why is it important? BMJ](#)
- [Why your brain health matters - University of Melbourne](#)

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## Six Keys for Brain Health



Adapted from the 6 Pillars of Brain Health – Global Council on Brain Health

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## Physical Exercise

**Get moving:** Regular, simple exercise can help our brain.

- Start small and build – even 5 minutes a day moves in the right direction.
- Exercise classes are particularly good as they combine social support and accountability with exercise.

**Weekly exercise goals to increase brain and heart health and to decrease all-cause mortality**

- **1a. 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity:** Activities such as brisk walking, swimming, etc. **OR**
- **1b. 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity:** Examples include running, jogging, or jumping rope. **AND**
- **2. Muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days per week:** This involves exercises that work all major muscle groups, such as resistance training, weightlifting, or push-ups.

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## Physical Exercise For More information

1. [The Brain-Body Connection – Global Council on Brain Health](#)
2. [Exercise, Stress, and the Brain – Video](#)
3. [The Surprising Brain-Health Benefits of Weightlifting - Psychology Today](#)
4. [The #1 Habit to Start Now to Reduce Your Dementia Risk](#)
5. [How to Exercise for Better Brain Health, According to Experts](#)

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## Food & Nutrition

• **Eat smart, think better:** our nutritional health has a large impact on all aspects of our bodies, including our minds.

- Learn what constitutes healthy nutrition for your brain.
  - The **Mediterranean and MIND** (Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diets are both considered brain and heart healthy.
    - Olive Oil, nuts, salmon, leafy greens, vegetables, etc.
- Seek to reduce inflammation.
- Be willing to invest in health – sometimes it takes more time, effort, and/or cost to eat healthy, but the investment is worth it!
- Cut out alcohol and smoking.

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## Food & Nutrition For More Information

1. [Brain Food – Global Council for Brain Health](#)
2. [Association of Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay and Mediterranean Diets With Alzheimer Disease Pathology.](#)
3. [Association between alcohol consumption and incidence of dementia in current drinkers: linear and non-linear mendelian randomization analysis](#)
4. [Inflammation and Brain Health | Harvard Medicine Magazine](#)
5. [Can preventing inflammation improve heart and brain health? | Michigan Medicine](#)

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## Medical Health

### Control medical risks:

- Be willing to grow in your understanding of various medical conditions as needed.
- Engage in regular, proactive check-ups/physicals with your healthcare provider.
- Learn the medical history of your extended family.
- Key numbers to know and manage:
  - Blood Pressure
  - Blood Sugar
  - Cholesterol
  - Weight

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## Medical Health For More Information

1. [Hearing Matters for Brain Health – Global Council on Brain Health](#)
2. [Blood Pressure and Your Brain - Harvard Health](#)
3. [Your Brain and Diabetes – CDC](#)
4. [Life's Essential 8 - American Heart Association](#)
5. [Higher cardiovascular risk score linked to lower cognitive function - American Heart Association](#)

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## Sleep & Relaxation

- **Rest well:** A good night's sleep has a key influence on our brain, mental acuity, and overall health.
- Most adults need between 7-9 hours of sleep.
  - Consistently getting less than 6 hrs. or more than 9 hrs. of sleep is detrimental to brain health.
- Consistent sleep deficits have a large impact on mental and physical health.
- Deal with sleep common sleep conditions and disorders (i.e., insomnia and sleep apnea).
- View sleep and relaxation as fuel sources for the things you care about (instead of as optional or expendable).
- Learn Christian forms of meditation and mindfulness.

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## Sleep & Relaxation For More Information

1. [The Brain-Sleep Connection – Global Council on Brain Health](#)
2. [Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep – NINDS](#)
3. [Why Sleep Is Important for Brain Health – American Brain Foundation](#)
4. [Sleep Hygiene and Solutions to Common Problems – ACCFS](#)
5. [The Pause App – Christian app to help with quieting your mind](#)
6. [Self-Calming Skills – breathing and relaxation skills, Christian meditation tools from ACCFS](#)

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## Mental Fitness

- **Your mind - use it or lose it:** Our brain is like a muscle and needs to be treated as such.
- Mental exercise, like physical exercise, is important to keep our mind sharp.
- Simple activities (Crossword puzzles, Sudoku, etc.) encourage mental fitness.
- Play and listen to music; enjoy the arts experiences.
- Seek things that challenge the mind to process, remember, shift, calculate, and connect information.
- Be a lifelong learner!

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## Mental Fitness For More Information

1. [Simple, low-cost, low-tech brain training - Harvard Health](#)
2. [Engage Your Brain – Global Council on Brain Health](#)
3. [Doing multiple types of activities improves cognitive health - Harvard Health](#)
4. [Brain-boosting activities to exercise your mind | Kaiser Permanente](#)

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## Social Interaction

- **Stay connected:** Our relationships with others have a large impact on our brain, health, and wellbeing.
- Healthy, intimate relationships can encourage our overall health and growth.
- Some of us can build relationships more easily than others – it is not about the number of relationships but the quality of them.
- In recent studies, over half of US adults report feeling like no one knows them well.
- Social isolation is toxic for human beings! *According to one study loneliness has the same impact on health as smoking 15 cigarettes.*

The Connected Life, Todd Hall

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## Social Interaction For More Information

1. [3 ways to build brain-boosting social connections - Harvard Health](#)
2. [The Brain and Social Connectedness – Global Council on Brain Health](#)
3. [Affective Neuroscience of Loneliness: Potential Mechanisms underlying the Association between Perceived Social Isolation, Health, and Well-Being – Journal of Psychiatry and Brain Science](#)
4. [Social Connection and Brain Health - Memory and Brain Wellness Center](#)

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## Resources for Homework

- **BRAIN CARE SCORE (McCance Center for Brain Health)**
  - <https://www.massgeneral.org/neurology/mccance-center/about/brain-care-score>
- **SIX PILLARS OF BRAIN HEALTH (Global Council on Brain Health)**
  - <https://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/global-council-on-brain-health/six-pillars-interviews/>
- **BRAIN BASICS: KNOW YOUR BRAIN (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)**
  - <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/public-education/brain-basics/brain-basics-know-your-brain>

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