

## **6 Simple Steps to Train Your Brain**

**Would you like to improve your memory, concentrate better, get more done in less time, and perform at your absolute peak? Then read this report!**

**How well our brain is working impacts our success in everything we do.** And conversely, everything we do impacts how well our brain works. Therefore, in order for us to remember things, concentrate, get more done in less time, and perform at our peak, we must regularly take steps to make sure our brain is working at its peak. This special report reviews six essential components for making sure our brain is working great. Everyone can create more success in their lives by following these simple guidelines.

- 1) EXERCISE**
- 2) DIET**
- 3) SUPPLEMENTS**
- 4) PROTECT YOUR BRAIN**
- 5) STRESS MANAGEMENT**
- 6) BRAIN EXERCISE**

## 1) EXERCISE

**Moderate physical exercise is essential to brain health.** ‘It is perhaps **the single most important thing you can do to keep your neurons healthy** over time’. (Daniel Amen, [Making a Good Brain Great](#), p122).

Perhaps you didn’t realize just how important physical exercise is to maintaining a healthy brain. Moderate exercise increases the heart’s efficiency and improves the blood flow to the brain. This increases the supply of oxygen and glucose (brain fuel) to the brain. Exercise also reduces the effect of toxic substances on the neurons, reduces the risk of diabetes, and protects short term memory including age related memory problems. It also reduces the risk of damage from stress.

Because exercise keeps the whole body healthier, it reduces the risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, and stroke. In fact studies show that exercise stimulates the ability of the brain to generate new neurons. That’s a definite plus.

Here’s a list of benefits of mild to moderate exercise (you don’t have to be a tri-athlete) that research has proven:

- Protects brain cells against toxins
- Reduces risk of cognitive impairment and dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease by about 50% in those over 65
- Preserves mental abilities after age 75 (but START NOW for this)
- Reduces risks of heart disease and stroke
- Reduces risk of diabetes
- Reduces risk of osteoporosis
- Reduces risk of depression and usually improves it
- Reduces risk of colon and breast cancer

- Reduces risk of falling
- Improves sleep

**To get the most benefit from your own exercise regimen, plan aerobic exercise at least 30 minutes, at least 3 times per week.** Even a nice walk will do it. For best results combine aerobic exercise like walking, dancing, running, bicycling, swimming with exercise that strengthens muscles such as weight lifting, swimming, cycling, doing push-ups or sit-ups, rowing, or cross country skiing. And start today!

## 2) DIET

**Remember that old saying ‘you are what you eat’? It’s truer today than ever.** Food nourishes all the components of the brain. Unhealthy food can have damaging effects on brain function while healthy foods can enhance and repair brain function. Therefore, paying attention to your diet is essential to creating a healthy brain.

**Eat a variety of whole foods,** lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein. Eat organic, unprocessed foods whenever possible. Organic foods will reduce the toxic load on your brain.

**Since your brain is about 80% water, how much water you drink each day will impact your brain.** Even slight dehydration (not enough water) can damage your brain over time. Most experts recommend at least 64 ounces of water each day. That’s about 8 glasses of water. Also, pay attention to what you drink. Drink liquids without artificial sweetener (a neurotoxin), sugar, caffeine (contributes to dehydration), or alcohol.

**In general, increase your water intake.** Drink 8 glasses of water per day at least. Try bottled or filtered water with lemon, lime or orange. Try herbal, unsweetened non-caffeinated tea. Green tea is particularly good as it enhances mental relaxation and alertness. Get in the habit of drinking often during the day to keep your body and your brain hydrated. Increase the amount if you are exercising or sweating.

**Eat a calorie conscious diet.** Studies show that a lower calorie diet actually increases longevity. Use common sense and eat the same or less

calories than you use. Figure out how many calories you need to eat each day to maintain your current weight. If you are trying to lose weight, reduce calories to below what you need each day. Do it sensibly. Starving yourself stresses the brain

**Be sure to eat fish and good fats.** Good fats are essential to your brain health. Bad fats (saturated fat and cholesterol) actually increase the risk of dementia and stroke. The weight of your brain is approximately 60% fat. The cell membranes in your brain are formed by fat. And fat effects how the brain cells function.

**Basically, a good fat is unsaturated while a bad fat is saturated. Good fats are high in Omega-3 fatty acids** and are found in avocados, brazil nuts, green leafy vegetables, lean meats, sardines, trout, tuna, walnuts whitefish, canola oil, flaxseed oil, olive oil, and soybean oil. Saturated fats are high in Omega-6 fatty acids and are found in red meats, bacon, eggs, cheese, butter, milk doughnuts, fried foods (POTATO CHIPS and FRENCH FRIES), ice cream, margarine, steak.

**Studies suggest it is hard to get enough Omega-3's from our regular diet.** Therefore, it is often recommended that we supplement with at least 900mg of DHA + EPA per day. Although we also need Omega-6 fatty acids, we probably get plenty from our daily diet. See the section of supplements for more details.

**Several authors state that it is important to eat only wild Salmon, never Farm Raised Salmon.** Farmed raised fish is given antibiotics, lives in pens where waste can accumulate and spread disease, and often has lower levels of the healthy omega-3's. They also often contain higher concentrations of toxins and cancer-causing contaminants than wild fish. So choose wild raised fish whenever possible.

**Eat Dietary Antioxidants** to reduce the risk of cognitive impairment.

Some excellent food choices containing healthy antioxidants are:

Blueberries (I call them brain berries)	Broccoli
Blackberries	Beets
Cranberries	Avocados
Strawberries	Oranges
Spinach	Red grapes
Raspberries	Red bell peppers
Brussels Sprouts	Cherries
Plums	Kiwis

### **Balance protein, good fats, and carbohydrates**

Remember **BALANCE** is **ESSENTIAL**. You need some of each of these types of foods. Protein is an essential part of nerves cells and other structures of the brain. High sugar diets increase diabetes, fatigue and cognitive impairment. Carbohydrates with a lower glycemic index (how fast the food raises the blood sugar) let us get efficient energy and fuel for the brain without the carbohydrate fog. And we discussed the importance of good fats previously.

### **Recommended books:**

The Zone by Barry Sears

Sugar Busters! By H. Leighton Steward

The South Beach Diet by Arthur Agatston

Powerful Foods for Powerful Minds and Bodies by Rene Thomas.

Making a Good Brain Great by Daniel Amen

## **3) SUPPLEMENTS**

**Whether or not to add supplements to your diet is often debated among health practitioners.** Theoretically we should be able to get everything we need from our healthy diet. But everyone is different and has their own unique diet and health issues. Therefore the need for supplementation will vary from person to person. Before adding supplements on your own, it can be very helpful to consult with a health practitioner skilled in this area who can help you design a supplement program ideally suited to your needs.

- Talk with you holistic health practitioner about these:
- **Omega 3 fatty acids** (fish oils) are the major ‘brain health’ supplement. Daniel Amen suggests 1-2 g per day for prevention and 4-6 g per day to treat illness. Favorite brands: Coromega make by European Reference Botanical Labs ([www.coromega.com](http://www.coromega.com)); and Nordic Naturals by Dr Sears ([www.drsears.com](http://www.drsears.com)).
  
  - **Acetyl-L-Carnitine** (ACL) has been reported to improve mental focus, enhance energy, and slow aging by increasing neurotransmitters needed for memory, focus, learning, and repair to brain cells from stress. Typical dose is 500-1,500 mg per day.
  
  - **Coenzyme Q10** (COQ10) is a powerful antioxidant that helps convert oxygen into useable energy. Typical dose is 30-200mg per day.
  
  - **Ginkgo Biloba** is a powerful antioxidant that is best known for enhancing circulation, memory, and concentration. Typical dose is 50-120mg 2x/day.
  
  - **Vitamin B** affects mood and thinking and lowers harmful homocysteine levels. Typical dose is B complex with 400-800 mcg folate, 50 mg of B6, and 500-1000 mcg of B12 – daily.
  
  - **Vitamin C** helps reduce risk for Alzheimer’s. Typical dose is 250 mg 2x/day.
  
  - **Vitamin E** – helps reduce risk of Alzheimer’s disease, heart attack, stroke, and cancer. Typical dose 100 IU 2x/day.
  
  - **Multiple Vitamins** – helps balance poor diets. Take daily

#### 4) PROTECT YOUR BRAIN

**Protecting your brain is an extremely important component of optimum brain fitness.** Damage can occur in a variety of ways including obvious ones like accidents and illness. But be wary of those cleaning products and even cosmetics that we expose ourselves and our children to on a routine basis. Just think how your bathroom smells after

a shower or a cleaning. Many of those fragrances and chemicals act as neurotoxins to our brain. One author calls this 'chemical brain injury'.

**Do WHATEVER YOU CAN TO AVOID the following threats to your brain.**

- **Physical trauma.** This occurs when you hit your head. Usually we don't consider a hit on the head as that big a deal. But the brain is floating inside the skull. When you hit your head your brain smashes up against the other side of the skull and then bounces back and hits the same side as the original hit occurred. We typically discount it unless there was evidence of a concussion. And even then, not much is done to treat the injury. My work with Neurofeedback where we look at and correct the electrical function of the brain has taught me that even a seemingly minor hit on the head can effect how the brain functions for many years.

**Therefore, ALWAYS WEAR A HELMET when you or your child is biking, skiing, skateboarding, or four wheeling. And ALWAYS wear a SEAT BELT** when driving or riding in a car. Protect your head from accidental head injury. I know a man whose front fork of his bicycle broke as he was flying down a hill. He fell on the front part of his head and his face. His face was covered with road burn and subsequent stitches, scabs, and scars. Thankfully he was wearing a helmet which took the brunt of the impact to his head. He didn't even have a headache. The helmet cracked, but without it, his skull would probably have been fractured.

One of my clients was in a car accident. He was not wearing a seat belt and suffered a traumatic brain injury that left him in a coma for four months. Eventually he awoke but had numerous severe deficits due to the brain injury. He will suffer the effects of this injury for the rest of his life and probably never be able to hold a job or support himself. The seat belt might have prevented this.

- **Emotional trauma and STRESS. Chronic emotional trauma and stress can damage the brain over time.** Chronic stress impacts our concentration, cognitive function and memory, mood, and sleep. Therefore it is extremely important to learn and use stress management skills, and to learn to regulate our emotional response to stress.

There are many ways to manage stress. Remember, it's not the stressor itself that damages the brain. It is how you respond to the stress that does the damage. So it is very important that you examine the sources of stress in your life and get help to learn how to manage them. Some options include: talking to a friend, counseling, exercise, meditation, journaling, resolving the stressor, etc. Make sure you give this a priority. See the section on stress management.

- **Toxic Exposure. Toxic exposure may not be what you think.** Yes, there are obvious toxic exposures such as industrial chemical spills and such. But a significant source of toxic exposures may include many medications, caffeine, alcohol, pesticides, environmental toxins, cleaning chemicals, and cosmetics. Thin out the number of cleaning chemicals you use in your home and use natural, non-toxic alternative. Limit the use of products with fragrances which can often act as neurotoxins. Eat organic foods to limit exposure to pesticides and other toxins present in non-organic foods. You get the idea.

- **Sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation is often considered to be present when a person regularly gets less than 7 hours per night for most people.** This varies from person to person. One study showed that people who regularly get 6 hours per night function as poorly as those who have been awake for 24 hours in a row.

Think about how much sleep you get on a consistent basis. Too little sleep impairs memory, concentration, and learning. It also increases irritability and anxiety. It slows the brain down and the Electroencephalograph (EEG) actually shows more sleep brainwaves (delta) in the awake brain of a person with less sleep.

## 5) STRESS MANAGEMENT

**In order to create success in your life it is imperative that you learn to reduce and manage stress.** First take some time to identify sources of stress in your life, particularly chronic stress. Chronic stress puts our brain into survival mode which is damaging to our brains and our health long term.



**Eliminate sources of stress whenever possible.** Once you know what your stressors are, look at options for reducing them. Perhaps you have a stressful job because your boss is angry and disrespectful. Talk to your boss about options for change, or talk to human resources about transferring to another job under a different boss, or post your resume on line and get another job. Putting up with chronic stress can be deadly. Do something about it.

**Manage your stress.** There are lots of ways to manage stress that we cannot eliminate. All of them involve taking care of your self to help lower your stress hormones and push the reset button on your stress levels. Here are some excellent options:

- **Meditation** – Meditation helps you escape from the daily grind and the stressful thoughts that go with it. Going within helps to calm and center you. Plan to meditate for 15 minutes per day or at a minimum, 10 minutes per day. Here are some great guided meditation CDs:

Wayne Dyer, Getting in the Gap

Andrew Weil, Breathing: The Master Key to Self Healing with Andrew Weil, M.D. (Sounds True, 1999)

- **Music** – Studies show that listening to certain types of music can be therapeutic. Listen to your favorite songs. Or try some of these:

Don Campbell, Mozart as healer: Classical healing for the New Millennium

Andrew Weil, Self-Healing with Sound and Music)

- **Exercise** – Exercise is a well researched and highly effective option for lowering stress hormones and making your brain more resilient to stress. Exercise your brain and body daily. See the section on exercise for more recommendations.

- **Social supports** – Talking about how you feel can help you sort out your feelings. Feeling understood and supported by others will help you deal with stress. Therefore make sure to talk to your friends and family about what you find stressful. Don't expect them to fix it. It will be helpful to you even if they simply listen.

- **Time management** – Most people today are overextended and try to do too much in too little time. Time pressure is a chronic source of

stress for many people. Therefore, look at how you manage your time and make adjustments in your schedule. Do only what time permits. Figure out what is most important. Set priorities. Get help with things that others could do for you. And remember, multi-tasking can increase stress, anxiety, attention deficits, and memory loss. A great resource for time management is: [7 Habits of Highly Effective People](#) by Steven Covey.

- **Massage** – A massage can help you experience a deep state of relaxation. This helps you push the reset button on your stress hormone levels. Incorporate a massage into your routine at least every six weeks if not monthly.
- **Neurofeedback** – This cutting edge brain training technology has been approved by the FDA for Stress Management.

## 6) BRAIN EXERCISE

Exercising your brain keeps it healthy, mentally sharp, and improves cognitive function, concentration and memory. Here are some great ways to exercise your brain.

- **Sing** – Singing improves blood flow to the brain and stimulates the area of the brain involved in memory. It can also lower your stress levels as you breathe rhythmically and deeply. Chances are you will feel better after you sing.
- **Learn a musical instrument** – Studies show that learning to play a musical instrument teaches the brain new patterns and stimulates wide areas of the brain. It is often cited as a way to keep your brain healthy. It creates new neuronal pathways and sharpens the brain.
- **Learn a foreign language** – This is another activity that stimulates the brain, and improves memory and cognitive function. Remember, practice makes perfect applies to brain fitness as well.

- **Do Puzzles and play games** – These mental aerobics workouts help stretch, tone, and strengthen the brain. Do exercises that challenge you without stressing. Resources for games, puzzles, mental exercise: [www.brainbashers.com](http://www.brainbashers.com)

[www.greylabyrinth.com](http://www.greylabyrinth.com)

[www.aarp.org/fun/puzzles](http://www.aarp.org/fun/puzzles)

Sudoku puzzle books

Crossword puzzles

- **Do Neurofeedback (NF) Training** - NF is scientifically proven to improve cognitive function, concentration, mood, addictions, learning disabilities and sleep. Besides helping with these issues it is being used by professional athletes, performers, executives and others to improve peak performance. It is also approved by the FDA for Stress Management. Typical treatment involves 20-40 sessions. Visit [www.TheBrainLady.com](http://www.TheBrainLady.com) for more information.

- **Do Physical Exercise** – Physical exercise is an essential component of brain exercise. See the previous section on exercise for more detail.

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