

It has happened to us all; we lose our car keys (again!), we run upstairs only to forget why we went up, we see someone downtown that we know and cannot remember their name, and the list can go on. We laughingly call these incidents “senior moments” or “brain freezes.” We say this happens to all of us as we age, but deep down we worry. Could this be a sign of early Alzheimer’s disease, will I end up like my grandmother who has dementia and is living in a nursing home? If it is any consolation, the more concerned you are about your memory, the less likely you are to have a disease like Alzheimer’s. The people with true memory problems don’t know what they’ve forgotten.

The research is beginning to show that it is not only our genes that determine the course of our health. Lifestyle choices are now proving to be powerful predictors of healthy aging. Nearly 40 years of research demonstrated that ro-

Maintaining a Healthy Brain.

By Barbara Trimble RN, M. Ed



dents exposed to “enriched environments” had larger brains, more brain cell connections (synapses), and new brain development.

There are 3 primary factors important to the “enriched environment”:

- Socialization
- Physical activity
- Mental stimulation

A lifestyle for brain health promotion should be considered a lifelong process and one that has benefits at any age. Building a robust and healthy brain has the wonderful benefits of not only achieving health for the central nervous system, but also delaying the onset of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia.

The “Ten Tips for Brain Health,” listed here represent critical ingredients of the lifestyle and are born from the three critical factors of an enriched environment mentioned earlier:

1. **Don’t Smoke:** Smoking represents a major risk factor for cancer, heart disease and stroke. People with heart disease are at higher risk for developing dementia.

2. **Follow Your Physician’s Advice:** People with a good relationship with their physician have a better shot at maintaining good health.

3. **Exercise Regularly:** Every time our heart beats, 25% of its output goes to our brains!

4. **Reduce The Overall Calories You Consume:** The leading factor for longevity in animals is caloric restriction. While not yet proven in humans, we know we Americans tend to over consume. Follow the advice of two physicians: “Never go to bed stuffed and eat only 80% of what you intend to consume at every meal.”

5. **Socialize And Have Fun:** We Americans seem to specialize in stress, with

little understanding of how to have fun. Find more time to socialize, celebrate and laugh.

6. **Develop Your Spirituality:** Meditation, yoga, relaxation procedures and prayer have neurophysiologic bases. They help alter our existing inner balance for the better.


7. **Engage In Mentally Stimulating Activities:** New learning translates to neurophysiologic growth and to mental stimulation in the same way that aerobic exercise translates to cardiovascular health.

8. **Maintain Your Role And Sense Of Purpose:** Retirement, as we currently define it in this country, is not good for the human brain. We all benefit from actively participating in society and finding personally relevant roles and a sense of purpose.

9. **Seek Financial Stability:** Research demonstrates that having some money late in life correlates with better health. Find a good financial planner – it is never too late.

10. **Engage Family And Friends:** Developing and maintaining a social network of relationships is important from a health perspective.

These tips were developed by Paul Nussbaum, Ph.D, clinical neuropsychologist with more than 20 years experience caring for older persons suffering from dementia and related disorders.

Barbara Trimble RN, M. Ed. is Founder and President of Extended Family, a premium and comprehensive provider of support services, helping older adults stay home, while enhancing their independence, good health and engagement in life. Started in Portsmouth, Extended Family is currently expanding to new locations. For more information call (603) 834-4513 or visit their website at: www.extended-family.net. 



Put the balance back into your life, one errand at a time.

- grocery shopping
- dry cleaning delivered to home or office
- appointment setting and gentle reminders
- gift shopping services with local delivery
- memorable event planning
- your Confidential Concierge!

Janice Murray, Errand Angel
Personal Assistant & Party Planning Services

Seacoast Soirees

Graciously Serving the NH Seacoast
603-944-3944

Janice@seacoastsoirees.com

Gift Certificates available