

Ten Toxic Habits (*you are doing everyday*) Proven to

Damage Your Brain & Memory- Part 2

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This is the second in a series looking at ten surprisingly simple habits that are most toxic to the brain. They impair memory, reduce cognitive function, accelerate degeneration, increase risk of depression & lead to long term brain dysfunction. A few small changes taken now & continued will serve to protect your brain. Some you know – like if you read part 1 of this series. Some you don't. Perhaps some you don't want to know! But if you do, let's get at it.

Habit # 5: Multi-tasking

It is interesting, yes? We somehow take pride in being able to multi-task. We brag about it & show it off when actually, the brain is not wired to multi-task. What happens really is that we are just switching from one task to another rapidly, but every time we do, there is a cognitive cost. Studies show it reduces brain performance & efficiency by

“shattering your concentration”. It is forcing the brain to restart each time, reducing proficiency & increasing errors. Since it is a common habit, it will now take effort to STOP multi-tasking... to focus on a single task at time. Fear not, I’m here to present the road map for this feat.

- **Plan your day** – List your individual tasks in sequential order to tackle.
- **Say “No”** – to additional tasks.
- **Remove distractions**
- **Keep the workspace for WORK only** – in an interruption free space.
- **Turn off all notifications**

Habit # 6: Information Overload

Within the last couple of decades, the number & size of information highways traveling to our “in boxes” has increased exponentially. With the advent of social media, we are bombarded with images, videos, texts, emails, phone calls from wake-up to bed-down. Studies show this overload negatively impacts decision making, innovation, productivity & our sense of personal well-being. Psychologists

agree information overload leads to feelings of anxiety, overwhelm & powerlessness in addition to cognitive issues because the brain is exhausted. So, what do we do about it & how do we do it? These simple changes go a long way to reduce risk of information overload.

- **Limit the information you take in** – Avoid all media upon waking. Start the day with a clear mind. I find writing in a “gratitude” journal is a very pleasant way to begin or take a walk in the sunshine, sit in nature.
- **Take regular breaks from screens** – At least once an hour, get up & walk away, do something else for 5-10 minutes.
- **Schedule daily off-screen activities** – Read a book, exercise, sit & notice outside activity.
- **Schedule screen tasks rather than engaging randomly** – when to answer emails, check Facebook, read the news.

Habit # 7: Incorrect Headphone Use

Two main dangers exist: hearing loss from volume too high & ear infections from in-ear headphones.

Both hearing loss & ear infections can have negative effects on the brain. To prevent injury:

- **Switch from in-ear to over-the-ear or on-the-ear phones.** This both prevents the bacteria from being pushed into the ear & the sound is farther from the eardrum.
- **Volume no higher than 60%-70%**
- **Listen no more than 60 minutes at a time.** Then take a 30-minute break.

Habit # 8: Consuming Alcohol

Alcohol interferes with the brain's communication pathways, affecting balance, memory, speech & judgment. Imaging studies on patients with alcoholism show atrophy in regions responsible for short & long-term memory, balance & emotions. Excessive drinking increases stroke risk, reduces brain blood flow, accelerates dementia, causes nutritional deficiencies, triggers changes in personality or mood, contributes to mental health issues, disrupts sleep patterns increasing sleep deprivation. The solution is obvious, yes?

- **Limit alcohol intake to “moderate”** – 2 drinks per day for men, 1 drink per day for women. If limited, there are actually some health benefits!

Habit # 9: Lack of Face-to-Face Socialization

Surprisingly, social isolation has proven to be one of the greatest contributors to neurodegenerative conditions! Studies show it increases oxidative stress-induced brain damage, stroke risk, Alzheimer’s, dementia & reduces learning ability. In a world growing increasingly digital, social isolation can easily take root if efforts are not taken to grow social relationships through face-to-face activities.

- **So, get out there** - Go to club meetings, spend time with friends, family & heck, people you don’t know yet. Just once or twice a week is enough to maintain optimum brain health, cognitive function & emotional health. So, will someone please schedule the first “Pilot Night Out”?

Habit #10 is huge & a topic about which I have huge amounts of information. Therefore, it will be covered in the next Brain Booster Blog. Ok, I’ll tell you what it is: **Chronic Exposure to Toxins**. It could

actually be an entire series. I look forward to it.
Until next time....stay sharp!

*To be continued..stay tuned for part three, habit
10 of the ten habits damaging the brain.*

*Information taken from an e-book on brain health
published by Zonia.com.