

HOCUS FOCUS

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It is Brain Booster Blog Blurb time again, which means it is time to focus my brain on information to share with you on how to focus your brain! There is massive information on the topic & so very much of it is in my files. However, it is not in any focused order in there, leaving me focusing on how to focus. Enough! I will just keep tossing out tidbits as find them.

With brain health, as well as with the health of other body parts, the steps to take toward improvement or prevention can be unappealing. What? Don't eat sugar? Get exercise FIVE days a week? Meditate? Often it is both overwhelming & unappealing to the point we convince ourselves it doesn't apply to us. Oh no, all that is for those that REALLY need it. It is that awareness that drove me to the file titled: "Quick quiz to assess risk of Alzheimer's". It is taken from The Definitive Guide to Alzheimer's Prevention by Julia Lundstrum, Neuroscience & Brain Educator. If you are curious, get out your pencil & take the quick quiz below.

Give yourself 1 point for each yes, 1 point for each no answer, calculate the difference, read the score.

YES's

- 65 or older-
- Parent or siblings have/had Alzheimer's
- Serious recent stressors: death, etc
- Suffered concussion or other brain injury
- Diagnosed with Lyme disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diagnosed with diabetes or pre-diabetes
- Overweight
- Less than a high school education (interesting)

No's

- Exercise regularly (30 min/day, 5 days/week)
- 8-10 servings of fruits & veggies every day
- Challenge the brain- learning new things
- Regular restful Sleep- 7-9 hours
- Engage in stress management practices: exercise, yoga, meditation, prayer, deep breathing
- Have an active social network
- Are a non-smoker

SCORE

1-6	Green, healthy brain
7-11	Yellow zone
12 & up	Red zone – need to improve scores

For more information from this document, here are two links:

<https://www.simplesmartscience.com> to sign up for a free webinar or go directly to <https://www.simplesmartscience.com/lp/definitive-guide-to-alzheimers-prevention-fb-workshop-v2/>

How did you do? Are you interested? The obvious question is: “How do I improve my score?” I recently took a “Ted Course” (yes, Ted Talks does more than talks) called: How to Boost Your Brain & Memory. It was a simple manual of exercises to do to “train your brain”. It is like any other muscle. It needs to be strengthened. It needs to be flexible. It needs to be fast. Why we just hope it will do what we want, I don’t know. (Wait, doesn’t the brain decide what we want?) Ok, now that we are confused, but focused, here are some of those simple exercises to begin. I found them kind of fun, & effective. I did some & then challenged my husband to a memory competition. He was impressed that I knew my charge card number by heart. So, I worked with him on a road trip until he knew his. I don’t recommend that one, though, as it is way too easy to make purchases online. I don’t even have to get up. Go ahead, play the brain train game. Exercises from the course, are in categories below. Really, it is all about focus.

Pay Attention to Paying Attention -

You can’t remember what you don’t pay attention to, and the easiest way to improve your memory is to focus and really notice what you want to remember later, made difficult given the distractions of today.

- Watch people in a crowded public area. Go to a restaurant, shop, park & simply watch people. Focus on one person, identify four details about their appearance or actions... curly hair, green scarf, etc. Later that day see if you can recall those four details. Continue daily, upping the number of details & number of people. Note your improvement.
- Assign yourself a treasure hunt. Decide to look for roses, flags, pink socks, whatever. Find them, take pics, write down details.
- Take a soundwalk. Listen for different sounds, identify origin starting with far-off sounds to closer. Can even follow it to its source.

Try Monotasking -

When you multitask, you’re not giving full attention to each task you’re performing, compromising your brain’s ability to create full memories. To minimize multitasking:

- Plan your day the night before. When you don’t have a plan, you allow distraction. Plan your day tomorrow, in as much detail as you like. Schedule bed, wake-up, work, meal, exercise & relaxation times. See if it helps. Do it every day for a week.

Exercise, Get up and Move -

Aerobic exercise can reduce your risk of developing dementia. Just a 30-minute brisk walk, five days a week, could be enough. You can break up the 30 minutes into ten-minute segments.

- Aim for five days of aerobic exercise. It can be the same form of exercise each day, or try different things. The goal is to boost your heart rate for 30 minutes, five days this week. Make a chart & log it for a week.

Brain-Boost Your Diet -

Research suggests that eating foods from the MIND diet, a combination of the Mediterranean diet and DASH (dietary approaches to stop hypertension), can reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease.

The MIND diet focuses on plant-based foods linked to dementia prevention.

- Eat from 10 healthy food groups & avoiding the four items below the grid.

- Document how many servings you eat this week from each of these ten recommended MIND food groups. Your goal is to reach the recommended number of servings. Research has shown that following the MIND diet is associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer’s disease and cognitive impairment.

MIND food groups	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Leafy green vegetables: at least 6 servings/week							
Other vegetables: at least 1 serving/day							
Berries: at least 2 servings/week							
Whole grains: rice, quinoa 3 servings/day							
Fish: 1 serving/week							
Poultry: 2 servings/week							
Beans: 3 servings/week							
Nuts: 5 servings/week							
Wine: 1 glass/day, or you can skip it, but no more							
Olive, coconut, avocado oil, ghee, grass fed butter							

Reduce the following:

- Butter or margarine – less than 1 tablespoon daily
- Cheese – less than once a week
- Red Meat- no more than 3 servings/week
- Fried food – less than once a week
- Pastries/sweets – how about only on your birthday? Sugar is the most damaging food.

For more information on these topics, here are links to interesting (& short) Ted Talk videos on these topics.

https://www.ted.com/talks/wendy_suzuki_the_brain_changing_benefits_of_exercise

https://www.ted.com/talks/amishi_jha_how_to_tame_your_wandering_mind

I hope you enjoyed this month’s blog blurb. I enjoyed the brain exercise. Until next time....pay attention!