

Intelect

IGNITION



Mental Growth Secrets

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Introduction

The human brain might be one of the smallest organs in the body, but it is the most powerful and the most important. It's like the CPU of a computer. It controls all the activities of the body. Once something goes wrong with it, it will affect every other body part. In fact, if something goes wrong in some parts of the brain, it can lead to complete paralysis of the limbs and even insanity. Therefore, it's vital that you do your best to protect your brain and boost its functions.

It must matter to you that your brain is working at its optimum level because your life revolves around the effectiveness of this organ. The activities in your brain are the reason you form habits. They are also responsible for the effectiveness of medications. The reason medications work in your body is because there are receptors in your brain that binds to them. Therefore, you shouldn't be passive about protecting your brain and enhancing its abilities.

In this short but educative book, we will explore the various ways you can boost the functioning of your brain. There are many benefits you stand to enjoy when your brain is functioning at its peak level. We'll highlight them in one of the chapters. Ensure that you practice every tip you find in this material because they are based on research evidence. This journey

promises to be life-changing. Therefore, ensure you have the right approach to it so that you can make the most out of it.

CHAPTER 1

BRAIN POWER AND BRAIN HEALTH 101



Chapter 1: Brain Power and Brain Health 101

Since brain health and brain power are the main themes of this book, we'll begin by exploring them. Like many similar concepts, brain power and brain health are often used interchangeably. However, they're not the same. This chapter will explain the two ideas so that you can tell the difference. It'll also help you know what exactly it is that you're trying to improve when we start digging more into the subject matter.

What is Brain Health?

The crux of brain health is the ability of a person to function well when performing daily activities, including work. This includes functions such as making quality decisions, solving problems, enjoying emotional balance, and interacting successfully with others. All of these functions are based on the ability to remember, understand, learn new things, process information, think strategically, and being innovative when solving problems. Note that brain health is not the function. Rather, brain health is the fact that your brain is in a good state that enables it to carry out those functions.

So, when your brain isn't healthy due to various reasons, which include an unhealthy lifestyle and accident, it'll not be able to carry out its functions effectively. There are many changes taking place in the brain when you think, learn, imagine, and feel. Your habits also lead to changes in the way your brain functions and can affect its performance. Therefore, you have a role to play in ensuring that your brain health isn't affected.

World Health Organization's Take on Brain Health

According to the World Health Organization, brain health is an emerging and growing phenomenon that encompasses plasticity, functioning, and recovery across the life course. When you have good brain health, you'll be able to realize your own abilities and maximize your emotional, psychological, behavioral, and cognitive functioning to cope with different life issues. Several interconnected biological and social determinants play a role in brain health and brain development from pre-conception through the end of life. These determinants are responsible for the way the brain develops, responds, and adapts to various situations.

They give ways to strategize in order to prevent issues and make progress across the life course. Brain health conditions are characterized by disruptions in normal brain growth and brain functioning. They emerge throughout the life course and may manifest as neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions. They include headache, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, neuroinfections, autism spectrum disorders,

cerebrovascular disease, brain tumors, epilepsy, cerebral palsy, dementia, traumatic injury, and neurological disorders resulting from malnutrition.

Social and health care for these conditions often requires multisectoral and interdisciplinary collaborations with a holistic person-centered approach focused on prevention, promotion, treatment, and care. They also include rehabilitation over the lifespan and the active engagement of persons experiencing the conditions and their families and carers, as appropriate.

What is Brain Power?

Unlike brain health, brain power is all about the brain's functions. It includes intelligence and the ability to think. So, what we admire about people isn't their brain health but their brain power. People with fantastic brain power are capable of handling highly intelligent activities and perform at a high level. You cannot afford to have low brain power in the modern world due to the fact that we are increasingly moving away from the days when we depend more on our muscles and strength.

The most successful people in the modern world aren't the most muscular but those that know how to maximize their brain power. These days, we are involved in many activities that require idea generation, business meetings, copywriting, and other endeavors that require you to be alert and focused. The pressure to perform at your optimum level is very high in the modern world. There are many people waiting in the queue to replace you if you

cannot produce the goods. Therefore, it is vital that you're deliberate about improving your cognitive ability.

When you have high brain power, it guarantees that you will be able to do more in a short time. Indeed, there are some people that are naturally super intelligent. Still, there are things that can be done to ensure that you can compete favorably with such people. Scientifically, brain power can be measured. It can be done by using the Brain Health Index (BHI). The BHI is a multi-faceted science-based snapshot that helps to measure the brain's performance. You can subjectively detect when your brain performance is improving. However, tests like this can help you to track changes in your brain performance in an objective way.



Fun Facts About the Brain

As we conclude this section, we'll highlight some fun facts about the brain as we prepare for further discussion regarding brain health and brain power in the next chapter. Below are some interesting facts about the brain that you will find intriguing:

Incredible Miles of Blood Vessels

The brain has more than one hundred thousand miles of blood vessels! This is striking because even the distance around the world at the equator isn't up to that. The distance is 24,900 miles. This implies that if the blood vessels in the brain were stretched out as a journey, it would take days to complete it!

It's Normal for Your Mind to Wander

It's vital that you do all you can to stay focused. However, it's not necessarily a sign of indiscipline to find your mind wandering once in a while. Research has proven that some parts of the brain are responsible for controlling activities such as daydreaming. Interestingly, these parts are always active when your brain is at rest.

Thinking Consumes a lot of Oxygen

Oxygen is the fuel of the brain. The more you think, the more it consumes. Serious and rigorous thinking, especially when you are anxious, can consume up to fifty percent. So, you should try as much as possible to cut off anxiety to preserve your brain health.

Size Doesn't Matter

Some people assume that an individual will be more intelligent when he or she has a relatively larger brain. However, this isn't true. There is no scientific evidence that supports the claim that a larger brain will make a person smarter.

Jelly-Like Texture

The average adult human brain weighs around three pounds. Interestingly, it has a texture that feels like firm jelly. Have you ever wondered what it feels like if you touch the human brain? There it is!

High Blood Consumption

The brain carries out a lot of activities within a short period. Therefore, it's not shocking that it consumes a lot of blood. In fact, up to one-fourth of the blood pumped by the heart arteries goes to the brain.

Ultra-Connected

The brain works like an electric circuit. Every action carried out by other parts of the body is a product of the connections in the brain. For example, when you recall a thought, it's due to a connection in the brain.

Neuron Forest

Ten percent of the brain is made up of over 100 billion neurons. These neurons branch out to over 100 trillion trigger points. This forms a vast connection of nerve cells that experts refer to as the neuron forest.

CHAPTER 2

THE SCIENCE BEHIND BRAIN FUNCTION IMPROVEMENT



Chapter 2: The Science Behind Brain Function Improvement

Scientists have proven that it is possible to boost brain health and brain power. Of course, if it were not possible, there wouldn't have been any reason to write this book. Food and exercise, in particular, have been pinpointed by scientists as two things that have the ability to enhance brain power and brain health. In this chapter, we'll explore the scientific explanations regarding how food and exercise help to improve brain health and brain power.

The Link Between Food and Brain Health

The mantra, "we are what we eat," isn't far from the truth. Nutrition plays a vital role in various parts of our body, including our emotions and brain health. The brain is always functioning, even when you're sleeping. The implication of this is that it needs a constant supply of energy. The fuel it needs to handle all of its activities comes from the food you eat. Therefore, the content of the fuel matters. What you eat affects the function and structure of your brain. Ultimately, this affects the functioning of your body parts and also your mood.

According to the Harvard Medical School, your brain is like an expensive car that only works at its maximum when it gets premium fuel. Therefore, it's crucial that you eat high-quality foods that contain the nutrients the brain needs, such as minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants. These nutrients nourish and protect the brain from oxidative stress. Oxidative stress is a product of free radicals (wastes) that are produced when the body uses oxygen, which damages body cells. Sadly, just like an expensive car, your brain can be damaged if you use any other thing apart from premium fuel.

If you ingest substances from “low premium” fuel, such as what is obtainable from processed or refined foods, your brain has little ability to get rid of them when they get to it. For example, diets that are high in refined sugars are harmful to the brain. Moreover, they can worsen your body's regulation of insulin, which promotes oxidative stress and inflammation. Research has shown that there is a correlation between a diet high in refined sugars and impaired brain function. These foods can also worsen the symptoms of mood disorders such as depression.

If you deprive your brain of high-quality nutrition and it builds up free radicals, you can be certain that it will lead to damages that will affect both brain health and brain functions. When damaging inflammatory cells circulate with the enclosed space of the brain, it can contribute to brain tissue injury, thereby impairing brain power and brain health. According to the medical school, the field of medicine didn't acknowledge the link between food and mood, which is surprising in the light of recent studies and findings. The story is different today as the burgeoning field of

nutritional psychiatry has discovered that there are many consequences and correlations between what you eat, your feelings, and how you behave.

The Link Between Food and Emotional Intelligence

Foods can affect your emotional intelligence, which is your ability to respond in a coordinated manner rather than based on your feelings. This happens due to the activities of a neurotransmitter in the brain known as serotonin. This neurotransmitter regulates sleep and appetite. It also mediates moods and helps in the inhibition of pain. About 95% of your serotonin is produced in the gastrointestinal tract. Meanwhile, this tract is lined with a hundred million nerve cells. So, the inner workings of your digestive tract do more than digesting food. It also guides your emotions.

The functions of serotonin are guided by the billions of beneficial bacteria inhabiting your intestine. These bacteria are essential in the maintenance of your health. They are responsible for the protection of the lining of your intestines and ensuring that the intestines have a strong barrier against harmful bacteria and toxins. They also limit inflammation and improve the absorption of nutrients from food. They also activate neural pathways that travel between the brain and the gut.

Research has proven that people that eat traditional diets such as the Mediterranean diet are less likely to suffer from depression. People who eat typical Western diets are 25% to 30% more likely to suffer from a mood disorder like depression. The investigators explained that the reason for

this difference is that traditional diets are rich in vegetables, fish, unprocessed grains, fruits, seafood, and only modest amounts of dairy and lean meats. They are also devoid of refined foods and sugars, which are the staples of Western diets.

You can investigate these claims by eating only Western foods for a month and write how you felt in your journal. Then switch diets in the next month. Eat only traditional foods in the next month and compare how you feel with the previous month. You would notice that the difference is clear. So, when you eat high-quality foods, you will not only boost your brain health and brain power, but you'll also improve your emotional intelligence.

The Link Between Exercise and Brain Health

According to the Cleveland Clinic, every time you take a walk, pedal a mile, and for every lap you swim around the pool, you're boosting your cognitive abilities. Studies have proven that exercise doesn't only affect the body; it also affects your brain. According to Aaron Bonner-Jackson, a neuropsychologist, physical activities make a major difference in both body and brain functioning. So, when you're working out, don't only focus on the bodily benefit of the activity; you should also be conscious about the fact that it's beneficial to your brain health.



In a study involving 454 older adults who underwent yearly physical exams and cognitive tests for twenty years, the participants agreed to donate their brains for research when they died. They were given accelerometers to track their movement and physical activity around the clock. The study showed that those who moved more had higher scores when their memory and thinking were measured. The study also showed that physically active participants were at lower risk of suffering dementia by 31% when compared with others. Even when the investigators accounted for the participants' brain pathology, the result was still consistent.

In another study involving 160 sedentary older people with mild cognitive impairment, the result was similar. The participants were assigned to take

part in aerobic exercise, eat a heart-healthy Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, receive health education, or combine aerobic exercise with the DASH diet. The study lasted for six months. The researchers discovered that those who followed only the DASH diet didn't improve when their executive function (problem-solving, decision-making) was evaluated. As for the group that only received health education, their function worsened. However, the participants that combined the diet with exercise showed remarkable improvement in their ability to think and memory.

As we conclude this chapter, the summary is that you need a combination of high-quality food and exercise to optimize your brain health and brain power. There's no specific thing that enhances brain power and brain health. It's often a combination of various things. In the next section, we'll explore more tips that can help you train your brain.

CHAPTER 3

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR BRAIN



Chapter 3: How to Train Your Brain

After examining how food and exercise boost brain power and brain health based on scientific findings and explanations, we'll proceed on this journey by highlighting and explaining how you can train your brain to boost its functioning. The following tips will help in this regard:

Work Your Memory

Your ability to recall events and memories is a crucial part of your brain power. The good news is that you can enhance it by putting it to good use. You can be deliberate about boosting your brain power by engaging yourself in memory activities that will task your ability to receive, analyze, and remember. In her book, *The Creative Habit*, Twyla Tharp explained how she increased her brain power by trying to remember the first twelve to fourteen corrections of her choreography performance she wants to discuss with her cast without writing them down.

This is not a feat you should take for granted because most people aren't able to remember more than three! Unlike her, you mightn't have dancers to correct. Still, you might be expected to give feedback on a presentation, or your friends might ask you to highlight the things you find interesting

about a location. Take advantage of those opportunities to flex your memory muscles.

Drink Coffee



You might have noticed that many people start their day with a cup of coffee. This morning ritual is scintillating to the taste bud, but it is far more than that. It has short-term benefits by boosting your cognitive functions until the effect wears off. The reason this impact has is that it contains

caffeine, which makes you more alert. Meanwhile, you need to be very focused and alert, especially when you're doing tasks that are tedious and repetitive.

Such tasks put a lot of demand on your reasoning and reaction time. So, ingesting a substance that can enhance your alertness goes a long way in helping you to be more effective when carrying out such tasks. Note that you shouldn't abuse this substance so that your brain will not be too dependent on it. Take it moderately when necessary to keep enjoying its impact when you need it.

Read Books

Research has proven that Intelligence Quotient (IQ) isn't a static measure. In other words, you can raise your IQ through some activities. It has been proven by researchers from the University of Edinburgh that education is the most robust, consistent, and durable method of increasing IQ. Another study showed that each year of exposure to academic content increases an individual's IQ by five points.

So, if it matters to you to increase your brain power, you should consider reading more books. Generally, reading books makes you smarter because you'll have knowledge about things that others don't. Therefore, when you talk, you'll offer unusual insight into subject matters that will make you earn the respect of others. Many successful people in the modern world are

known for their culture of reading books. There's no doubt that it's a habit that will make you smarter and wiser in your approach to different situations.

Try a Different Approach

When you do something in a particular way, your brain creates a neural pathway for it. When you repeat it at different times, your brain gets used to it and saves that pathway. So, your brain isn't developing when you're always doing things in the same way. A change in approach will mean that your brain will have to create a new pathway, which enhances its abilities. A change in approach can help you break free from a bad habit.

For example, if you have a habit of consuming alcohol whenever you come back from work stressed, your brain has documented that neural pathway. That's why you'll notice that you're not thinking through the process before you find yourself doing it. So, you can make a difference by choosing to visit a friend instead of going home directly on a day you're stressed. Of course, it shouldn't be a friend that would welcome you with alcohol. A change in approach can be all you need to break free from addictions while enhancing your cognitive abilities.

Limit Crossword Puzzles

Many people have activities that they assume will help to improve their cognitive ability, and crossword puzzles are one of them. Crossword puzzles can be fun, especially for people who find them interesting. It can help you to improve your fluency too. Most people assume that playing this game will make them smarter. However, studies have proven that this activity strains the brain instead of sharpening it.

To make it worse, research has shown that it doesn't offer much value in training the brain or preventing a disease like Alzheimer's. This doesn't mean that you should stop playing it, especially if you find it fun. Yet, don't think that it's contributing much to your ability to solve practical problems. If you want activities that can boost your decision-making and problem-solving ability, crossword puzzles shouldn't be in that list because it doesn't offer much when it comes to these aspects.

Tell Good Stories

Stories enable us to solidify memories, share moments, and interpret events. So, you can boost your brain power by telling stories about events in the past to your friends and family. It's also an effective way to relieve great moments. Try to avoid telling stories about traumatic events unless you're

very sure that you have overcome them. If you can make a joke out of a bad experience, it shows that you have moved on from it.

Turn off Electronics Thirty Minutes Before Bed

Our digital devices are meant to help improve the quality of our lives. Sadly, they have done more harm than good in the lives of many people. Many people are addicted to digital devices in such a way that they affect the quality of their sleep and increase their anxiety levels. The Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is one of the mental health issues that have been discovered as a result of excessive exposure to social media.

Studies have proven that screen media activities have adverse impacts on brain activities. So, it is better if you spend more time on exercise and spend time with your loved ones than play games or watch TV. Moving your body during exercise teaches your brain to learn new muscle skills, practice balance, and estimate distance. Try to turn off electronics and digital devices at least thirty minutes before you go to bed to ensure that you have quality sleep.

Learn New Things

Improving your skills is one of the best ways you can boost your brain power. For example, if you learn how to play a new instrument, it increases your ability to translate something you see to something you do. Your brain will have to create several neural paths during this period, which bodes well

for your brain power. Learning a new language can also have the same impact because it increases your ability to think and express yourself in different ways.

Research has shown that learning how to dance can help seniors reduce the risk of suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Ensure that you don't just learn something new for the sake of it. Endeavor to learn something you find interesting so that you'll not quit in the middle because you're struggling with it. So, think twice before you choose what you will prefer to learn. It should also be a skill you'll find useful.

CHAPTER 4

PERKS OF IMPROVED BRAIN HEALTH



Chapter 4: Perks of Improved Brain Health

There are several benefits you stand to enjoy when you are deliberate about improving your brain health and brain power. Some of them are direct advantages while some are products of others. Below are some of the benefits you stand to enjoy when you work towards improving your brain health and brain power.

Enhanced Body Functioning

There's no way you'll be functioning at the peak of your powers mentally that it won't affect the performance of the other parts of your body. Your brain has been active since when you were in the womb. It controls your body functions and helps you to understand and interpret the world around you. It's responsible for how you work, play, and rest. So, when it's working well, every other part of your body will definitely be functioning as expected. Your muscles and other tissues in the body will start malfunctioning when your brain is incapacitated to perform its role effectively.

One of the biggest proofs that your brain takes center stage regarding how your body functions is what happens during a stroke. A stroke occurs when a blood vessel in the brain bursts due to one reason or the other. The result of this terrible incident is a partial or total paralysis of a part of the body. If something goes wrong in the brain and it affects a part of the body, what happens when the brain is in perfect conditions? It's evident that the product of improved brain health is enhanced body functioning.

Clarity and Focus



What happens in your brain can decide whether you'll be alert or dizzy. The effects of Ginkgo biloba and caffeine show that activities in the brain decide whether you'll be in a relaxed or stimulated state. Caffeine, which is found

in coffee and cocoa products, stimulates the brain to make you more alert and focused. On the other hand, taking Ginkgo biloba supplements can put you in a relaxed state. It has this impact by altering what goes on in the brain. If a part of the brain is responsible for controlling our level of alertness, then we'll lose it if the brain function deteriorates.

Therefore, we must do all we can to ensure that our brain remains in a healthy condition. We are at risk of feeling unnecessarily tired and dizzy when the brain isn't functioning as expected. Supplements such as caffeine help to boost our alertness. However, it's because the brain is in good condition that it was able to have this impact. If the brain is malfunctioning due to a neurological condition, no amount of stimulation can make it become active. So, it's crucial that you are deliberate about protecting your brain and preserving its health.

Reduction in the Risk of Dementia

It's no news that your brain is the memory center of the body. If anything goes wrong with your brain, it puts you at risk of suffering a mental condition known as dementia. Dementia is used to describe a neurological condition that involves symptoms such as forgetfulness, impaired problem-solving ability, difficulties with thinking, impaired communication, and disturbed changes. Dementia happens gradually. It's often very mild in the early days but gets worse if not treated. At its peak, it'll prevent an individual from being able to live independently. This condition is common, especially among older adults.

It's estimated that at least one out of three people above the age of 65 are battling dementia. If you have had loved ones or the people you know fighting this condition, you'll have a better understanding of how devastating it can be. The good news is that you can prevent it by preserving your brain health. Research suggests that more than 75% of brain damage associated with dementia is a result of lifestyle. So, you can reduce the chances of battling this condition and other neurological conditions by adopting healthy habits. A healthy lifestyle reduces the risk of this disease by a third.

Reduction of Age-Related Cognitive Decline

One of the worst kept secrets in the world is that brain function reduces as you grow older. There is nothing you can do about it because your body will grow weaker as you get closer to the end of your life. Your brain power will also share in this inevitable deterioration of the body. Still, you can slow down the process by making necessary changes to the way you live. There are habits that can help you slow down the aging process and also reduce age-related cognitive decline that is associated with the latter period of life, which is common among seniors.

Some of them include exercise and healthy eating habits. Research has shown that these two habits can delay the aging process and also preserve your brain health. Apart from genetic factors, one of the key reasons some people look and act older than their age is that they have unhealthy habits

that take their toll on their mental and physical health. So, you don't have to wait until you are advanced in age before you start making the necessary lifestyle changes that can help you to preserve your brain health. Invest in your overall health now and enjoy the benefits later.

Improved Performance

Since your brain is in charge of activities such as memory, problem-solving, thinking, decision making, and other crucial functions, you can be sure that it determines your performance. So, by preserving its health, you are inadvertently ensuring that you are able to sustain your best performance. The brain isn't only vital in carrying out highly-cerebral activities. It's also important in basic daily activities. When an individual suffers from neurological disorders such as stroke and dementia, it affects their ability to carry out basic daily tasks, making them lose their ability to live alone without the support of others.

Therefore, it is non-negotiable to do all within your power to ensure that you keep your brain healthy. If you lose it, what you will lose is more than your ability to carry out activities involving a high level of intelligence. You might also lose your reflexes and other basic functions that you need to be self-independent. No one wants to be incapable of taking care of themselves. However, this is the situation some people find themselves in because some parts of their brains are not working. Don't just wish you'll not find yourself in the same condition. Be deliberate about preserving your brain health.

CHAPTER 5

HABITS THAT SUPPORT BRAIN HEALTH



Chapter 5: Habits That Support Brain Health

Your actions and lifestyle aren't neutral. They either enhance your brain health and brain function or make them worse. Below are some beneficial habits you can inculcate that can improve your brain health and brain power:

Exercise

The importance of exercise cannot be emphasized enough. We have earlier examined the scientific studies that showed that exercise plays a vital role in brain health and brain power. It has always been known that regular exercise has physical benefits such as weight reduction, keeping fit, building muscle mass, and helping you develop the kind of physique you desire. However, scientists have made it clear that it also helps in brain development.

So, if you have been procrastinating the decision to start regular exercise or have been inconsistent, you have an added reason to be motivated now. No one wants a physically fit person that is not mentally sound. Exercise helps you to be both physically and mentally fit. So, you don't have an excuse to

delay the decision. Note that you don't have to hit the gym to do this. You can have home workout routines and still enjoy the same benefits.

Get Some Sunlight

There has been so much emphasis on the harmful effects of excessive exposure to sunlight that we might forget the benefits of this gift of nature. There is no doubt that excessive exposure to sunlight is dangerous. Still, it's also harmful when you have too little of it. When you don't have adequate sunlight, it's not good for your brain because it will not have enough Vitamin D. The danger of inadequate Vitamin D is that it inhibits brain functions and can also speed up the aging process.



So, ensure that you have enough sunlight, especially in the early hours of the day. If you're not getting enough sunlight due to the part of the world you live in, or the period of the year, you should consider taking Vitamin D supplements. However, you should ensure that you take it in moderation to avoid suffering side effects.

Play Tetris

Tetris is a common game that many people play for fun. Unknown to many people that play it, it has several positive impacts on the brain. Studies have proven that it could increase grey matter for a short period. The result of this increase is that your efficiency when performing spatially-related tasks will be enhanced. Interestingly, playing this game after suffering a traumatic experience can help your brain avoid solidifying those memories.

Therefore, people who play Tetris are less likely to have frequent flashbacks to negative memories over the long haul. If you have a phone or tablet, try to install this game and play it during your leisure period. It's remarkably easy to play. So, you won't have issues getting used to it. Still, ensure that you don't get excessive with it. Anything that isn't controlled will lead to harmful effects. So, it's recommended that you time yourself when playing it.

Have Quality Sleep

The quality of sleep you get goes a long way in determining your efficiency during the day. Don't let starting early and sleeping late become your culture. Of course, there might be situations that will require you to cut down on how much you sleep to enable you to give more to your career or any other thing that is important to you. However, you shouldn't let it be the norm.

When you have irregular sleep patterns, it will affect your brain. Your brain likes habits and patterns because it enables it to save more energy. So, you'll be doing your brain health and brain power a lot of good if you have a stable time you sleep and wake up. You'll hardly need an alarm when you have a regular sleeping pattern, which bodes well for your cognitive functioning.

Meditate

Meditation and mindfulness are increasingly popular in the West because more people are beginning to realize their importance. You cannot afford to live life at a fast pace where you don't have time to appreciate your success. More entrepreneurs and celebrities are practicing meditation because it's vital in helping them to reduce their stress levels. Studies have also proven

that it's effective in preventing age-related disorders such as Alzheimer's or dementia. You can practice meditation for just fifteen minutes a day.

However, the impact is more than what you can get from pills and supplements worth a billion dollars. It boosts your cognitive longevity and also ensures that you're not overwhelmed by stress. Studies have also proven that this practice boosts the immune system and helps to avert the risk of depression. So, apart from enhancing your brain power and brain health, it also has other benefits you can enjoy.

Build Strong Connections

In the bid to get to the pinnacle of our careers, many people are often alone and lonely in order to create enough time for their work. Indeed, you need all the focus you can get to hit your targets. Yet, it's not too good for your cognitive functions when you are often in your world without interacting with others. In these days when freelancing and remote working are rampant, many people are in danger of living in a lonely world.

In order to maintain a balance, ensure that you're deliberate about linking up with your friends and family as much as possible. If you often feel lonely, it can lead to the deterioration of your cognitive abilities and psychological health. This is because these feelings affect your blood pressure, reduce the quality of your sleep, contribute to depression, and even lower your overall wellbeing.

Eat for Your Brain

This list will not be complete if we don't mention your eating habit. We have explored the scientific studies that showed that what you eat affects your physical, mental, emotional, and social health. According to the World Health Organization, health is defined as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This shows that you cannot be termed "healthy" unless you have fulfilled these criteria.

You have to be emotionally, physically, and socially healthy to be a whole individual. Your feeding habit plays a crucial role in ensuring that your wellbeing in every area is intact. Consume antioxidants and amino acids, and vitamin E. Drinking wine in moderation can also be beneficial to improve your cognitive function. Nuts, blueberries, whole grains, and avocados will also do your cognitive functioning a lot of good. A good body without a good brain is of no use. So, eat for your brain.

Cut Down Stress

Telling you to avoid stress altogether isn't feasible due to the nature of the modern world. We are all under constant pressure to fulfill our potentials and be the best we can be, which isn't bad. However, it's problematic when

you allow pressure to overwhelm you such that it begins to affect your physiological and cognitive functioning. So, it's essential that you leverage stress management techniques that can help you release tension.

Exercise, meditation, journaling, mindfulness, and yoga are some of the best out there. Don't fall to the temptation to reduce stress by consuming food or alcohol. During those periods, it's not likely that you consider what you are doing. So, you might be ingesting content that will have a damaging impact on your brain and other parts of your body. Always ensure that you are deliberate about easing stress without resorting to dangerous tactics.

CHAPTER

6

**BEST FOODS
THAT BOOST
BRAIN HEALTH**



Chapter 6: Best Foods That Boost Brain Health

Just like your habits, the food you take can also play a role in your brain health and brain power. There are some foods that can enhance your brain power and brain health. Below are some of them:

Fatty Fish

Fatty fish must top the list of any discussion regarding the best foods that can boost brain health. Fishes such as trout, salmon, and sardines are rich sources of a crucial nutrient known as omega-3 fatty acids that the brain needs. The reason this is so important is that about 60% of the brain is made up of fat, which is responsible for its solid jelly-like texture.

Interestingly, half of the fat in the brain is the omega-3 kind. So, you can imagine that your brain can only be excited anytime it sees you consuming foods that have this nutrient. Your brain needs this nutrient for essential functions such as learning and memory.

Green Tea

Green tea, just like coffee, can boost brain function. In fact, studies have proven that it enhances alertness, memory, performance, and focus. It also has other nutrients that make it a fantastic beverage for people trying to boost their brain functions. For example, it contains L-theanine, which is an amino acid that can increase the activities of a neurotransmitter called GABA.

GABA helps to reduce anxiety and puts you in a relaxed state. L-theanine has this impact because it crosses the blood-brain barrier. It also increases the frequency of alpha waves in the brain, increasing your relaxation without a sensation of fatigue. A study showed that this substance could be used to counteract the stimulating impacts of caffeine.

Oranges

One medium orange is enough to give you all the Vitamin C you need in one day. Meanwhile, your brain needs this nutrient for your brain health because it helps in preventing mental decline. Sufficient Vitamin C can also protect you against age-related mental decline and Alzheimer's disease, according to research.



Besides, Vitamin C is a strong antioxidant that can help you to fight out the damaging impact of free radicals on the brain. Vitamin C also supports brain health, which is vital, especially as you grow older. Apart from oranges, you can also get sufficient Vitamin C by eating guava, bell peppers, strawberries, tomatoes, and Kiwi.

Eggs

There are several nutrients embedded in eggs, including Vitamins B12 and B6, choline, and folate. Choline is an essential micronutrient that your body

needs to create acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter that is crucial in memory and blood regulation. Studies have also proven that a higher intake of choline can enhance memory and improve mental function.

Sadly, many people don't get enough choline in their diet. You can increase the quantity of this nutrient in your body by eating eggs. Egg yolks have choline in abundance. Besides, Vitamins B play several crucial roles in the brain. For example, they help to slow down the aging process, especially in older adults.

Blueberries

Studies have proven that blueberries have numerous health benefits. One of them is its ability to help in the maintenance of brain health. Blueberries and other colored berries provide anthocyanins, which are a group of plant compounds that have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Antioxidants prevent inflammation and oxidative stress.

Therefore, they help to slow down the aging process and prevent neurodegenerative diseases. The antioxidants in blueberries accumulate in the brain to enhance the communication between the cells of the brain. Research has shown that these fruits could help to improve memory and prevent short-term memory loss. So, endeavor to add them to your smoothie and breakfast.

Nuts

Studies have proven that incorporating nuts into your diet can improve markers of heart health. Meanwhile, there is a link between a healthy heart and a healthy brain. In a 2014 review, the authors concluded that eating nuts could improve cognition and also help neurological diseases. In another study, it was found that women who ate nuts regularly for several years had a sharper memory in comparison with people who don't.

Nuts contain several nutrients such as healthy fats, Vitamin E, and antioxidants, which explains why they have brain benefits. Vitamin E protects cell membranes from free radical damage, thereby slowing down the aging process. Of all nuts, walnuts seem to offer an additional benefit because it contains omega-3 fatty acids.

Dark Chocolate

Dark chocolate contains some brain-boosting compounds such as caffeine, flavonoids, and antioxidants. Caffeine's temporal boost of the brain to increase alertness and focus isn't new. Antioxidants are crucial in protecting the brain from being damaged by free radicals. Its flavonoids content means that it's a strong antioxidant. The flavonoids in dark chocolate help in learning and memories, as confirmed by research.

Scientists also claim that these flavonoids may enhance memory and also help in delaying age-related mental decline. A study involving 900 people

proved that people who eat chocolate frequently perform better in various mental tasks such as memory-related activities. Chocolate is also a legitimate boost booster that can make you feel good.

Pumpkin Seeds

Pumpkin seeds are full of antioxidants that protect the body and brain from the damages that come from free radicals. They are also a rich source of iron, magnesium, copper, and zinc. Zinc is crucial for nerve signaling. Its deficiency can lead to many neurological conditions, including Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and depression.

Magnesium is vital for learning and memory. When you don't have enough of this ingredient, it can lead to epilepsy, migraines, and depression. Meanwhile, the brain uses copper to help control nerve signals. So, a lack of it can lead to neurological disorders like Alzheimer's disease. Iron is important in blood production, and its deficiency can lead to brain fog and impaired brain function, according to studies.

Broccoli

Broccoli is famous for containing several potent plant compounds, including antioxidants. It's also very rich in Vitamin K, which makes dieticians recommend it because it delivers 100% of the Recommended Daily Intake (RDI) in a 1-cup (91 gram) serving. Vitamin K is a fat-soluble

nutrient that is essential in the formation of sphingolipids, a kind of fat that is commonly found in brain cells.

Some studies have shown that Vitamin K intake enhances memory, especially in older adults. Apart from Vitamin K, broccoli also contains other compounds that make it capable of producing anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects. Therefore, it is a food that will protect your brain against damage.

Turmeric

This deep-yellow spice has generated a lot of buzzes recently. It is a key ingredient in curry powder, and it has a lot of benefits for the brain. The active ingredient in turmeric is curcumin, which has been scientifically proven to have the ability to cross the blood-brain barrier. This implies that it can directly enter the brain and be of benefit to the cells there.

It is also a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compound that is capable of improving memory. It can also help in clearing amyloid plaques, which are a trademark of Alzheimer's disease. Studies have shown that turmeric can help in easing depression by boosting serotonin and dopamine, which improves mood. It has also been proven to be capable of making new brain cells grow.

CHAPTER

7

**TOP BRAIN HEALTH
SUPPLEMENTS**



Chapter 7: Top Brain Health Supplements

Apart from food, supplements can also help you to optimize your brain functions. Natural supplements are the best because they do what you expect without putting you at risk of unbearable side effects. Here are some beneficial supplements that can help you to enhance your brain health and brain power:

Creatine

Creatine is a natural substance that is helpful in energy metabolism. It is mostly found in muscles, but small amounts of it are in the brain. It's a popular supplement you can buy in stores. Still, it is present in some foods such as eggs, fish, and meat. This supplement is crucial for vegetarians because of their choice of only eating plants.

Acetyl-L-Carnitine

Just like creatine, this supplement is produced naturally in the body. It's an amino acid that plays a crucial role in your metabolism. It's particularly important in energy production. Studies have proven that taking acetyl-L-carnitine supplements could make you feel more alert, slow down age-related memory loss, and improve memory. Most vitamin stores have this supplement.

According to some animal studies, this supplement could help in the prevention of age-related decline in brain function and increase the ability to learn. Human studies have also shown that it can be useful in slowing the decline in brain power as a result of age. It might also help to improve the function of the brain of people battling Alzheimer's and mild dementia.

Resveratrol

This is an antioxidant that occurs naturally in the skin of purple and red fruits such as raspberries, grapes, and blueberries. It's also present in chocolate, peanuts, and red wine. Research evidence shows that resveratrol consumption could prevent the deterioration of the hippocampus. The hippocampus is an important part of the brain that plays a vital role in memory.

Moreover, it could delay the decline in brain function, which many people experience as they grow older. In a study involving a small group of healthy older adults, it was discovered that consuming 200 mg of this supplement every day for 26 weeks enhances memory. You can find this supplement in stores and online if you're interested in trying it.

Phosphatidylserine

Phosphatidylserine is a kind of fat compound known as phospholipids. It can be found in the brain. Studies have suggested that taking this supplement can help in the preservation of brain health. For example, a study showed that taking 100 mg of this supplement three times a day could lead to a reduction in age-related decline in brain function.

Besides, research has shown that healthy people who take up to 400 mg of this supplement per day have improved thinking ability and memory. Despite these promising discoveries, more studies are needed to have a better insight into its effect on the brain. You'll not find it challenging to find this supplement in stores online and offline.

Ginkgo Biloba

Ginkgo biloba is a popular herbal supplement derived from the tree known by the same name. It's a potent substance that many people take to help boost their power. The good news is that there are no restrictions to its sale. So, you can easily find it in stores online and offline. Experts believe that it works by increasing the blood flow of the brain, thereby increasing brain functions such as memory and focus. There's no doubt that this supplement enjoys widespread acceptance. Studies regarding its effects and benefits have been mixed.

Some studies showed that taking this substance can help in the reduction of age-related decline in brain function. A particular study involving middle-aged people discovered that taking Ginkgo biloba supplements could help to improve memory and thinking skills. However, the results have not been the same in all the studies. Therefore, more research is needed in this regard to help have a better understanding of how people can benefit from taking this supplement. In the meantime, it remains one of the widely used supplements in the world.

Folic Acid

Vitamins B6, B12, and B9 play crucial roles in brain health, according to various studies. Still, it's not recommended that you take them unless you're pregnant or low on them. They are often recommended for pregnant

women because they help in the prevention of birth defects. It's also likely that your doctor recommends it to you if you have a high chance of suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Some studies have concluded that people at high risk of this illness could find these supplements beneficial. In the absence of a recommendation from a doctor, it's better to just stick with leafy greens.

Ginseng

Ginseng is often used alongside Ginkgo biloba. It's also a popular supplement that hails from Asia, as the name shows. Just like Ginkgo biloba, research has proven that Ginseng is a potent brain booster. However, a particular study didn't record the same result. So, more research is still needed to confirm the mental benefits of consuming this supplement. Based on personal experiences and other anecdotal evidence, Ginseng is useful in boosting memory and brain functions, in general. Still, if you're concerned about the relatively low scientific backings for these claims, then you shouldn't take it for now.

Combinations

Some reports showed that combining supplements can make them more effective. Still, never forget that supplements are chemical substances. Therefore, it's not in your best interest to experiment with them at will. You might be exposing yourself to some devastating side effects when you toy with them. Besides, some people also claim that they found supplements to be more effective when they combined them with medications. This might be true. Still, you shouldn't assume when it comes to drugs. Your doctor is in the best position to help you to decide what is best for you in this regard.

The fact that these supplements are from natural sources doesn't guarantee that it's safe to take them. They might interact with some drugs in a harmful way in your body. Therefore, never make the decision to combine a supplement with another one or with a medication without informing your doctor. Medical experts are trained to handle such situations. So, it is better to trust their judgment rather than assume that nothing will go wrong. You cannot afford to make a decision that you'll regret eventually. It might be too late to turn things around by then.

CHAPTER

8

**HOW SENIORS CAN
PRESERVE BRAIN HEALTH**



Chapter 8: How Seniors can Preserve Brain Health

Aging is inevitable. No matter how meticulous you're with practicing healthy eating habits and regular exercise, you'll still grow old. So, the best you can do is to slow down the process and ensure that you don't fall sick often during that period. This chapter will explore some common brain dysfunctions that are associated with aging and how older adults can preserve their brain health and brain power.

Common Neurological Dysfunctions Among the Elderly

There are many diseases and dysfunctions that are associated with aging. Some of these dysfunctions affect brain health and brain power, reducing the efficiency of brain functioning. Below are some of the common brain dysfunctions associated with aging:

Alzheimer's Disease

This disease is a form of dementia that progressively destroys brain cells. If it's not stopped, it can eventually interfere with a person's most basic physical and mental functions. Research on this disease is still ongoing, and

its exact cause is still unknown. Still, the good news is that it can be prevented through lifestyle changes such as good eating habits.

Myopathy

The symptom of this disease is a characteristic muscle weakness. This weakness is most severe in the upper arms and thighs. So, basically, it is a disorder of the muscles as a result of some parts of the brain malfunctioning. The miscommunication in the brain parts leads to the inability of the muscles to function as expected.

Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a chronic and progressive movement disorder that often leads to malfunction and death of essential nerve cells in the brain. People battling this disease can find relief through medication. In the absence of all other cheaper and less invasive options, doctors recommend surgery for such individuals. This disease can be devastating because it can make a person unable to live without the support of others.

Stroke

This isn't the kind of disease anyone wants to be associated with. Still, many people are battling this medical condition around the world. It's a dangerous and life-threatening disease that occurs when the blood supply to a part of the brain is suddenly interrupted. Warning signs include arm weakness, face drooping, and speech difficulty.

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

ALS is also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. It is a progressive disease that affects motor neurons, which also leads to the deterioration of the functions of the muscles of the body. Research on this disease is still in its infancy. In the meantime, it can only be prevented. There's no known cure for it once the disease shows its recognizable symptoms.

Myasthenia Gravis

Myasthenia Gravis is a chronic autoimmune disorder that blocks the signals from the nerves to the muscles and makes the muscles unable to move. A trademark of the disease is muscle weakness, which increases during periods of activity after you have been resting for a while.

Muscular Dystrophy

This is a group of progressive muscle disorders that has a genetic basis. The symptoms include a weakening of the muscles closest to the trunk of the body that later progresses to severe muscle deterioration and muscle contraction.

Neuropathy

This is a nerve disorder, which leads to symptoms such as weakness and numbness. These symptoms are often seen in the hands and feet. This dysfunction can be a product of systemic diseases such as diabetes. It can also be due to the side effects of medications. People suffering from this illness will find it difficult to cope with their daily activities.

Tips for Preserving Brain Health for Seniors

There's no good news in highlighting brain dysfunctions without highlighting how you can prevent them. Prevention is always better than cure. Below are some proven ways that can help older adults to preserve their brain health and brain power to a reasonable extent:

Daily Walk



Mentioning exercise might sound complicated. It's as basic as taking a thirty-minute walk. This simple and light activity has a tremendous impact on both your physical and mental health. According to the director of the Memory Disorders Program at Georgetown University Medical Center, Scott Turner, physical exercise has the greatest evidence for preserving memory and mental function, especially for older adults.

Exercise can prevent memory loss because it helps in preventing the things that lead to it, such as diabetes, obesity, stroke, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. According to research, physical activity also triggers the

release of a protein known as BDNF. This protein promotes healthy nerve cells in the brain, thereby giving your memory a boost.

Engage Your Brain

Growing older isn't the reason to stay away from activities that are brain-tasking. According to the director of the geriatric psychiatry division at Duke University School of Medicine, Mustafa Husain, mental exercise is as important as physical exercise. Activities such as playing cards, joining a book club, watching a football game with friends, or leveraging a brain-training app can also come in handy.

Go Mediterranean

Your eating habit is vital at any stage of your life. However, it becomes more crucial as you grow older. There are some things your body would be able to handle when you were younger that will be more problematic in the later periods of your life. So, if you have not been doing so, you should incorporate more Mediterranean diets such as fruits, vegetables, and fishes in your meal. Research has proven that individuals that have this eating habit are 20% less likely to have thinking and memory issues.

Maintain Social Connection

It can be lonely for older adults, especially during the periods when the “nest is empty.” In other words, the period when the children have gone to live in different places away from the parents can be lonely. Still, it’s crucial that an aging person maintains social connections in various ways in order to preserve mental function and memory. Social interactions improve your mood. Besides, depression itself is one of the causes of memory loss.

Leverage Mnemonics

No matter how much you exercise and have good eating habits, your memory strength cannot be the same as you grow older. So, it’s vital that you take advantage of memory tricks that can help you to remember faster. For example, a quick way to remember the names of all your children is by using an acronym such as JIFE is your kids are John, Ivy, Frank, and Esther. You can also post sticky notes on your computer or places you can easily see them to remind you about some important things you need to do. This approach will save you the stress of trying so hard to recall certain things. You should also try to rehearse something new you have learned to help you to store it in your long-term memory.

Go for Medical Checkups

You don't have to be sick before you go to the hospital. Have a culture of visiting your doctor once in a while for a routine checkup. This might help you to discover any brain problem on time so that treatment can start as soon as possible. If a disease is discovered on time, you have a higher chance of recovering from it. Besides, medical conditions such as diabetes, vitamin deficiency, and thyroid disease can lead to memory loss. So, if they are detected early, you might save your brain from permanent damages.

Conclusion

There's no doubt that this journey has given you more insights into how you can boost your brain health. The brain is more than an organ. It's the center that determines every aspect of your life. It's responsible for what you think is real or not. People that are delusional and in a state of hallucination are seeing images that they think are real. Why? It's because their brains are malfunctioning. Sometimes when you feel dizzy, you take coffee to stay alert.

The reason coffee has that kind of effect on you is that it contains caffeine, which is a stimulant. A stimulant activates a part of the brain that makes you more alert. The brain also plays a crucial role in your happiness. A hormone in the brain called dopamine can make you feel good or otherwise. It has been discovered by scientists that happy people have this hormone in high quantity while it's low in unhappy people. Therefore, enhancing your brain health boosts the quality of your life.

It's in your best interest to leverage the tips you have learned in this book to boost your brain health in order to enhance the quality of your life. It's of no use if you read a book like this and don't use the information in it to improve the quality of your life. As you might have noticed, you don't have to spend a lot of money to take advantage of the tips in this guide. The

supplements you need to get are all around you. This is your opportunity to make the necessary changes in your life that will make the rest of your life the best part of it. Don't miss it.