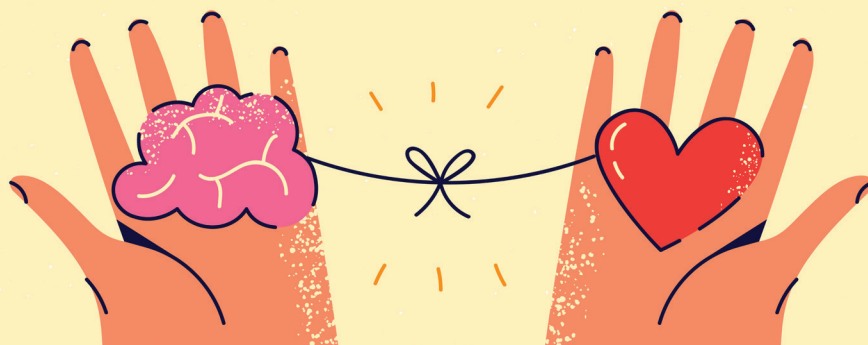


Optimizing Brain Health

Tips for Improving Brain Health



The brain in effect runs throughout the body in the form of the nervous system. The nervous system carries messages back and forth to the brain and helps illustrate how closely the body and brain are connected. How you take care of your brain, mind and body influences your entire system. Therefore, improving brain health is important for maintaining not only cognitive function but overall well-being.

The following are strategies for boosting mental wellness and brain health:

- **Exercise regularly:** Keep the mind strong with physical activity. Exercise has been shown to increase blood flow to the brain, improve mood and enhance cognitive function. Working out, taking a fitness class, walking, or swimming, all provide benefits to physical and mental energy.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Make good decisions about food. Eat nutrients that support mental balance and feeling well. A healthy diet rich in whole foods can help protect the brain against damage.
- **Get enough sleep:** Sleep is essential for brain health and getting plenty may improve energy, mood, and mental processing. Chronic sleep deprivation can impair cognitive function, so pay attention to things that disrupt good rest such as stress, caffeine, alcohol, and light from devices.
- **Manage stress:** Chronic stress can damage the brain and impair cognitive function. Practice stress-reducing techniques like meditation, deep breathing, or yoga.
- **Challenge the brain:** Engage in activities that give the brain a workout such as taking a class, learning a new skill, doing puzzles, playing a musical instrument, reading, or watching something educational. Trying something new like knitting, cooking, playing an instrument, or repairing something will not only exercise the brain but also provide a feeling of proficiency.
- **Stay connected:** Build positive relationships with people who can listen, accept and support you. Make time for lunch with a friend, schedule family dinners or write to someone you have not talked to recently. Socializing with others can help boost cognitive function and protect against cognitive decline. Participate in social activities often.
- **Protect your head:** Head injuries can damage the brain and increase the risk of cognitive impairment. Wear a helmet when engaging in high-risk activities such as cycling or skiing.

The brain-body connection has everything to do with physical and mental health. If you are interested in improving your lifestyle to address stress and depression or improve sleep and brain functioning, start small. To make a change permanent, take it nice and slow. Not sure where to start? Consider reaching out to the EAP. We are here to support you on your journey to optimizing your brain health.