



## March 2022 Health Yourself Boost Your Brain Challenge

### Food for Thought...

- One out of three cases of Alzheimer's can be prevented through lifestyle changes
- Brain impairment can start 20-30 years before symptoms begin
- You can build a better brain- with improved memory, cognitive function, and mood- at any age!

"Think of a historical building that still stands... Had it not been cared for throughout the decades, the wear and tear of weather and constant use would have certainly caused its deterioration and dilapidation. But with routine maintenance and occasional renovations, it not only withstood the test of time, but is likely celebrated for its beauty, significance, and prominence. The same holds true for your brain, which is just another structure of different components and input needs for general maintenance and upkeep." Sanjay Gupta, *Keep Sharp*

Join Health Yourself this spring in a quest to unlock your brain power- now and well into the future!

**When:** February 28- April 3

**What:** 5 weeks of habits designed to spark better brain health for a lifetime of staying sharp

**Why:** There are things we can do today to improve our quality of life and that of those around us far into our future

**How:** Just use the following weekly logs to focus on 'brain boosting' habits. Each one is a little different to keep you on your toes!

**HY points and prizes:** Active participation throughout the challenge will earn employees 15 points toward the reward and enter them in prize drawings. For 5 bonus points, employees can complete a free course from AlzU.com. Simply join for free, take their initial 5 minute survey, and begin a course of your choice. Submit proof of completion to claim these points.

**Return your completed challenge** to Jess Brown by April 11 to qualify for points and prizes.



## Boost Your Brain Challenge Cheat Sheet:

Here are some tips to help you achieve the most success with our weekly habit logs.

- **Move more:** Most of us want to aim to get about 30 minutes of cardio exercise a day. But if you have been completely sedentary, start with 10 minutes a day of burst exercise (30 seconds of maximal effort and 90 seconds of recovery) and work up to 20 minutes. If you already get 30 minutes, can you add on a little extra or change up your movement?
- **Magnify your muscles:** ideally you'd get 2-3 days of strength training in a week. Don't forget to stop to notice how strong you feel afterwards! No need for a gym membership- check out the many [bodyweight](#) options online.
- **Pick your portions:** begin on the conservative side of your first portion of food in a meal, make sure you are drinking enough water, and then reassess whether you are still hungry after eating slowly and mindfully. Can you stop when your stomach feels about 80% full?
- **Slash your sugar:** some added-sugar bombs include.... Packaged sweets, beverages, sweetened yogurt, sauces, cereal, and packaged fruits.
- **Hone your hydration:** Make sure you are drinking water throughout the day to produce clear to light yellow urine.
- **Plan like a pro:** avoid poor food choices by having nutrient dense meals and snacks prepared or planned.
- **Fill up on fiber:** Consuming fibrous foods will not only keep you full, improve digestion, but also benefits heart health... and what's good for the heart is good for the brain since both systems rely upon healthy vascularization.
- **Love to learn:** Choose activities that involve complexity, learning new skills, and expanding your mind- not just with 'brain games' and crosswords. Joining a class, reading materials outside of your professional interests, learning a new language, are great places to start.
- **Sleep soundly:** improve the quality of your sleep by setting aside at least 7 hours for restful sleep- in a dark, quiet, and cool location. Go to bed and get up at roughly the same time each day, and set aside the last hour of your day for something calming and without screens.
- **Slash the salt:** in research that combined the DASH diet (notably low in sodium) and the Mediterranean diet, those following these dietary guidelines measurably prevented cognitive decline and reduced their risk for Alzheimer's disease.
- **Connect to protect:** intentionally engage in relationships and community. Examples might include calling old friends, making exercise dates with local peers, participating in programs that allow you to learn or pass along skills, volunteering, and even going out of your way to connect with strangers in everyday life.
- **Relax and restore:** engage in activities that help you relax during waking hours- like meditation, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, decluttering your environments, allowing time to daydream, reading, or even watching or listening to a funny show. Whatever you choose, make sure to avoid multi-tasking while doing it!





## Boost Your Brain Challenge: Week 1

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Did you know... More than anything else, exercise is considered the best behavioral activity to trigger biological effects that help the brain. Make movement the foundation of your brain boosting activities and see how you feel.*

[illegible]

*Did you know... our brains are 73% water. Even just 2% dehydration affects attention, memory and other cognitive skills. A little bit of water throughout your day goes a long way!*



*Did you know... marketed 'brain games' do little to stimulate brain function compared to truly cognitively stimulating activities- like learning a new language, attending and participating in a class, learning how to cook or paint, or taking up a new musical instrument.*

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