



Do you find yourself often caught up in negative thought patterns that impact your mood and relationships, or struggling to focus and get clarity on things? Many studies have highlighted the benefits of developing a mindfulness practice.



WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

A state of awareness
No judgement

Noticing what's happening in the present moment
..In your mind (thoughts and feelings), body and surroundings (sights, sounds, smells and tastes)

A skill you can learn and practise

Rooted in Buddhism but you don't need to be spiritual to practise it

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Mindfulness doesn't work for everyone, but many people find it beneficial when practised regularly. fMRI scans show that changes in brain activity in subjects who have learned to meditate hold steady even when they're not meditating. Studies report benefits for:

STRESS

Reduces heart rate and blood pressure

SLEEP

Body scan technique especially helpful

RELATIONSHIPS

Increases emotional intelligence

PAIN

Changes the perception of pain and improves tolerance

COGNITION

Improves working memory, planning, decision making, creative thinking and focus

MOOD

Benefits shown in depression using MCBT – Mindfulness-based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

ADDICTIONS

Helps to manage cravings for food, cigarettes, alcohol and other substances

GENERAL HEALTH

8 weeks of practice led to a change in the expression of 172 genes that regulate inflammation, circadian rhythms and glucose metabolism

MINDFULNESS CHANGES YOUR PERCEPTIONS AND FEELINGS:

Become more self-aware, understand yourself better

Feel calmer and less stressed

Choose how to respond to your thoughts and feelings

Cope better with difficult thoughts

Positively change the way we see ourselves and our lives

Stand back from our thoughts and start to see their patterns

Experience afresh things that you have been taking for granted

Be kinder towards yourself

HOW TO PRACTISE?

Pick a regular time

Choose a technique that works for you

Simply observe your thoughts without judgment and let them go

Keep bringing your attention back if your mind starts to wander

An app or guided meditation can be helpful

SOME TECHNIQUES TO CHOOSE FROM:

Breathing meditation

Movement (yoga, walking, T'ai chi)

Mindful eating

Body scan technique

Apply mindfulness to an everyday activity

TOP TIPS

FOR BOOSTING BRAIN PERFORMANCE

Brain cells consume 50% more glucose than other cells

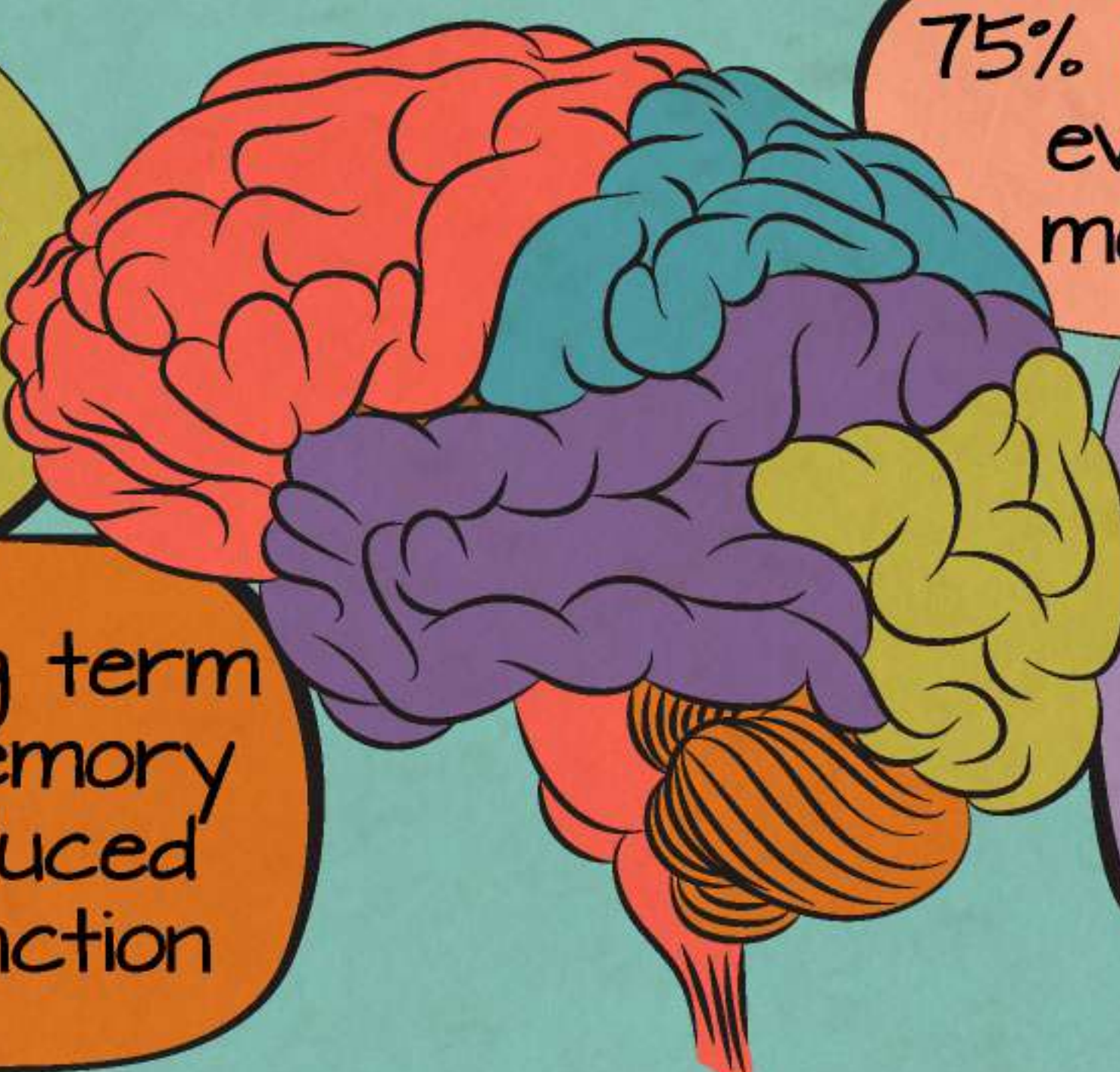
Alcohol - Long term overuse = memory issues & reduced cognitive function

Cholesterol is key to learning & memory. Approx. 25% of our total cholesterol resides in the brain

75% is water. Dehydration, even 2%, can impact memory & attention

The cerebrum is made up of grey matter on the outer layer & divided into 4 lobes

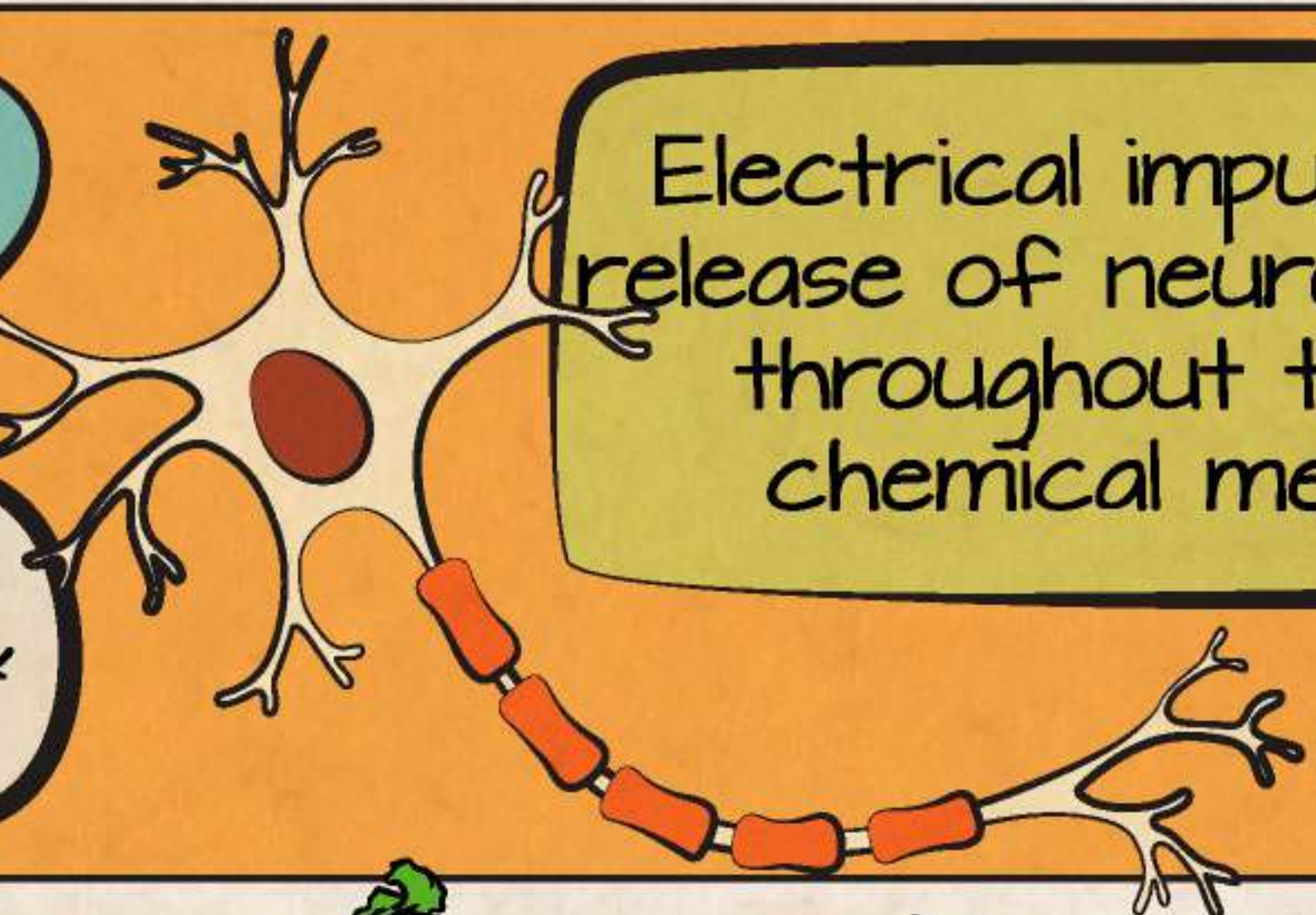
60% min is fat. Omega-3s & 6s help stabilise brain cell walls



100 billion neurons in the brain

Coordinate thought, emotion, movement & sensation

Electrical impulses trigger release of neurotransmitters throughout the body - chemical messengers



BRAIN FACTS

Multitasking is impossible:

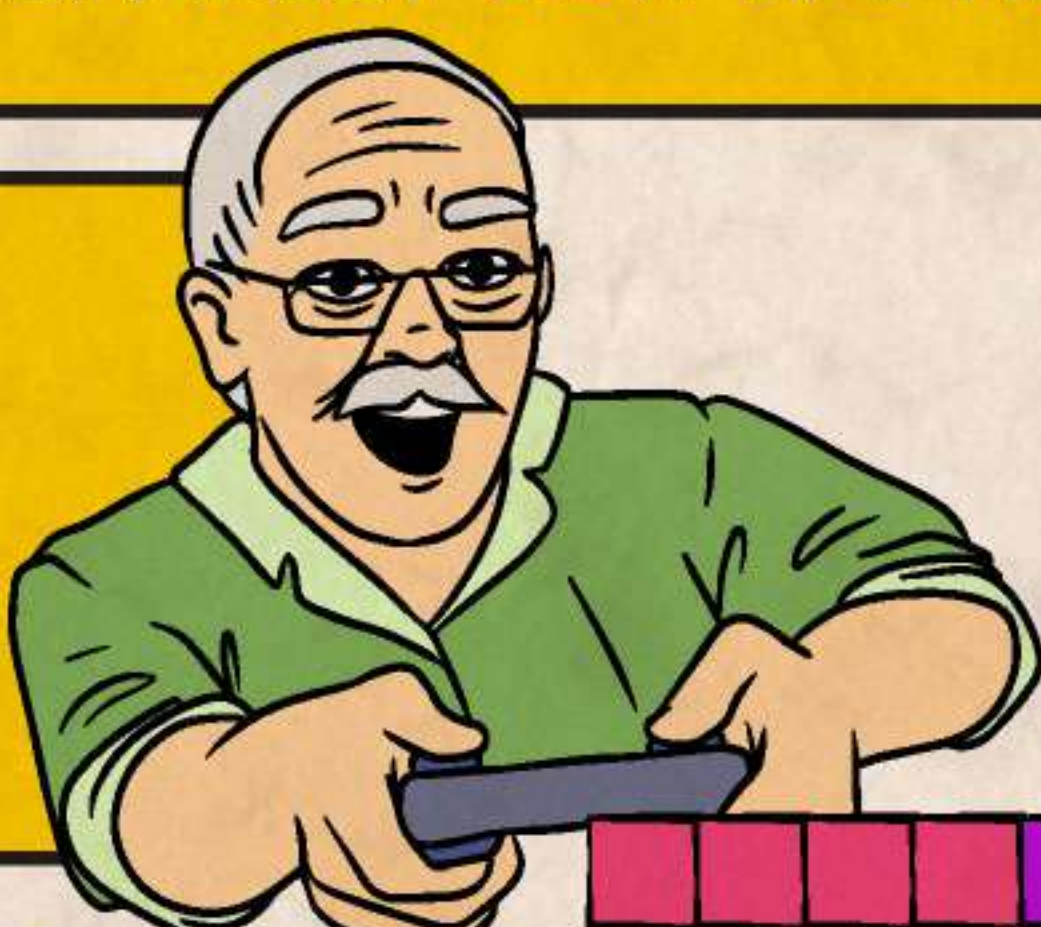
Error rate goes up 50 %. It takes twice as long to do things

Thoughts:

Your brain generates 12,000 - 60,000 thoughts per day. 95% exactly the same as the day before. About 80% are negative

Neural plasticity:

Neural connections can be forged & refined or weakened & severed. Even into old age we can learn new skills



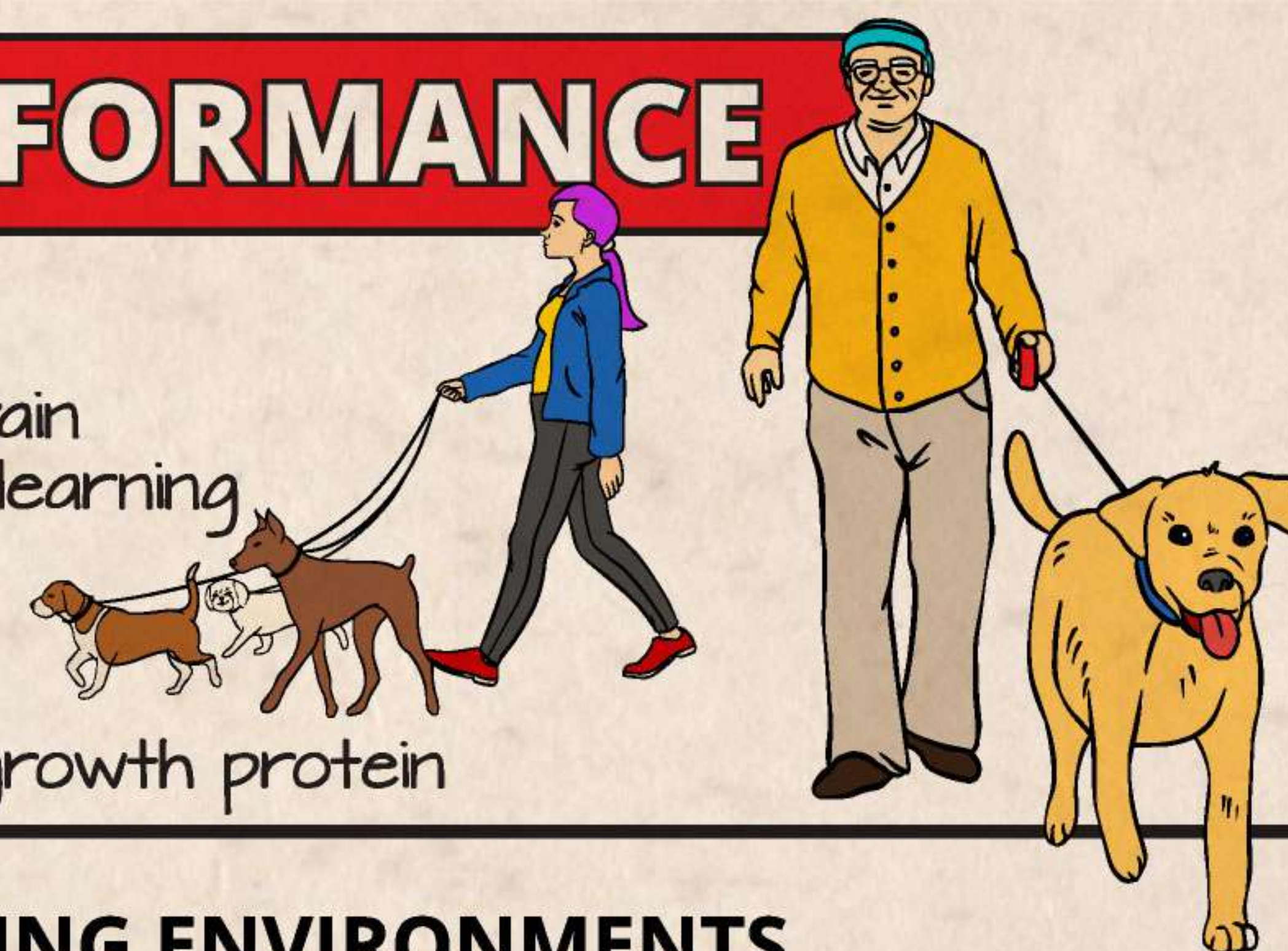
HOW TO IMPROVE BRAIN PERFORMANCE

1 PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Increases blood flow & healthy metabolism to feed the brain
Helps to regenerate neurons, leading to better memory / learning
May reduce the risk for Alzheimer's disease

STANDING / WALKING WHEN WORKING

Showers the brain with BDNF - performance enhancing growth protein



2 SLEEP

Vital for memory, learning & neuroplasticity

Chronic insomnia is associated with Dementia



3 STIMULATING ENVIRONMENTS & CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Enhance connectivity of the brain at rest, boosting memory, empathy, attention & focus

COGNITIVE & MEMORY TRAINING

Can reverse age-related decline

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Isolation is detrimental to neuron signalling and performance

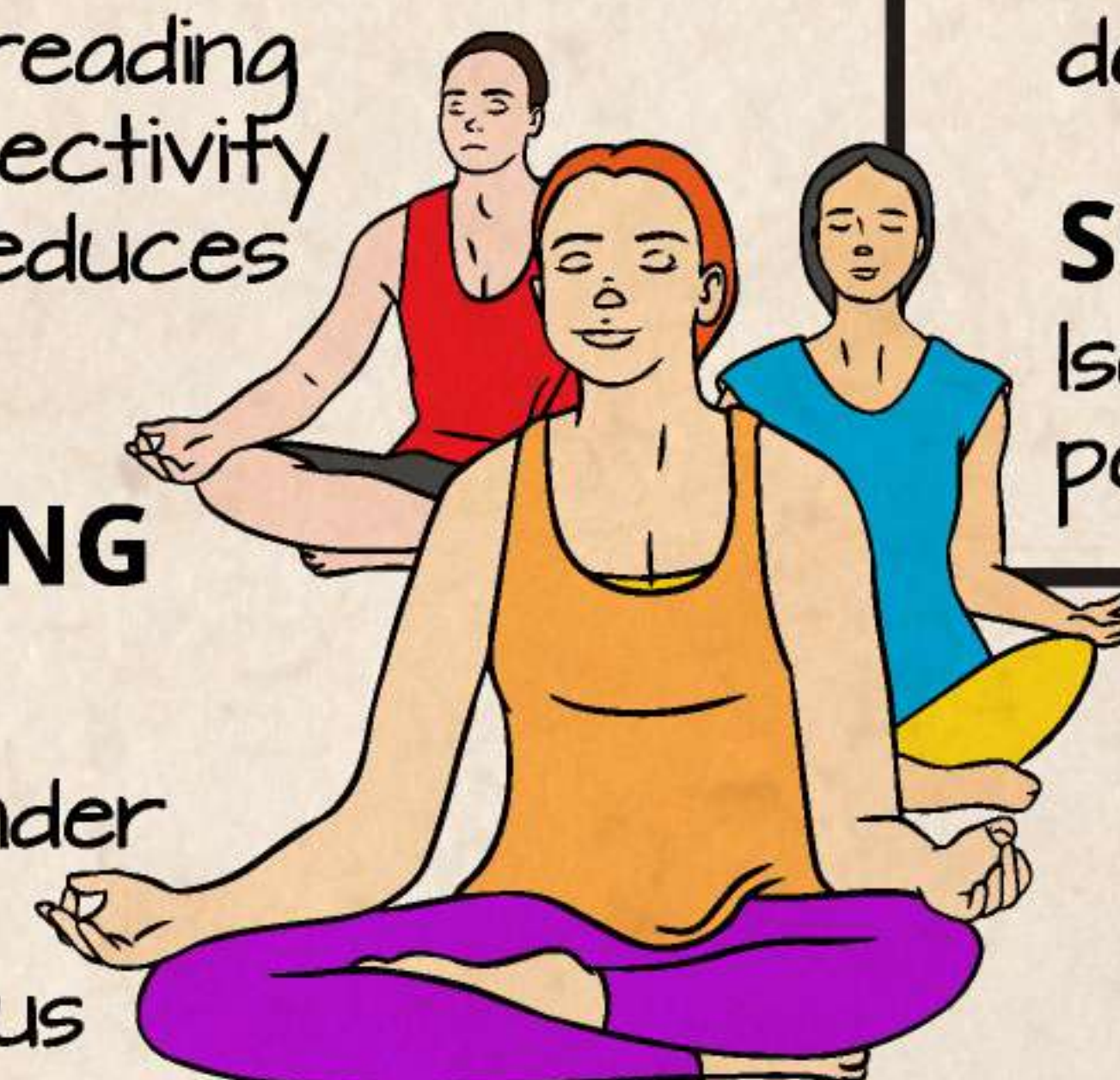


4 RELAX

Leisure activities e.g., reading fiction, enhances connectivity in the brain. Dancing reduces risk of Alzheimer's

REGULAR BREATHING EXERCISES

Help faster thinking under stress & long-term decision-making & focus



ADDRESS STRESS

Chronic stress linked to increased risk of brain disorders

MINDFULNESS

Enlarges areas of the brain & aids better connection

Benefiting regulation of emotion, compassion, coordination, learning & memory

5 INTERMITTENT FASTING

Promotes neuron growth & overall cognitive function. Decreases risk of neurodegenerative disease

Polyphenols = powerful antioxidants - veg, fruits, whole grains

- ▶ Berries - blueberries, blackcurrants, blackberries
- ▶ Nuts - chestnuts, hazelnuts, pecans
- ▶ Flaxseeds
- ▶ Vegetables - artichoke, red onion, spinach, shallots
- ▶ Olives
- ▶ Tea - black, green
- ▶ Raw cocoa
- ▶ Spices - cloves, peppermint, star anise

KEY NUTRIENTS

Omega-3 Fatty acids

- ▶ Oily fish - salmon, mackerel, herring, sardines
- ▶ Flaxseeds
- ▶ Avocados
- ▶ Walnuts

Leafy greens - kale, spinach, collards, broccoli - may help slow cognitive decline

