

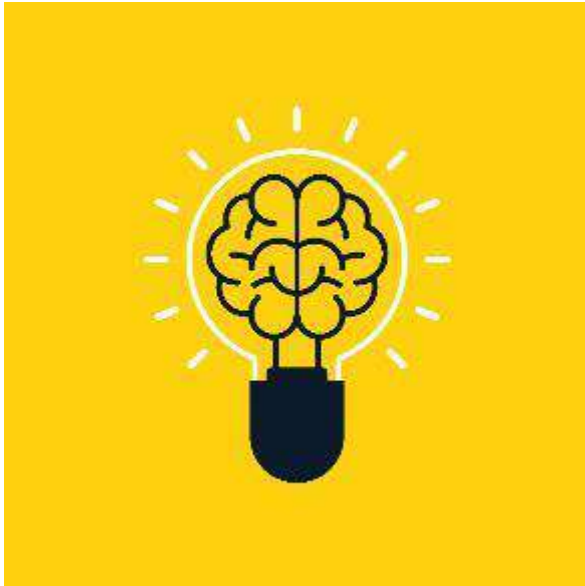


Unleash your Brain Power





Agenda



Brain quiz

Understanding the brain

Factors affecting brain performance

Techniques to improve the brain

Workplace strategies



Let's start with a quiz



We only use 10%
of our brain

True / False



How many thoughts do we have
each day?



What % of our thoughts are
repeated from the day before?



What % of our thoughts are
negative?



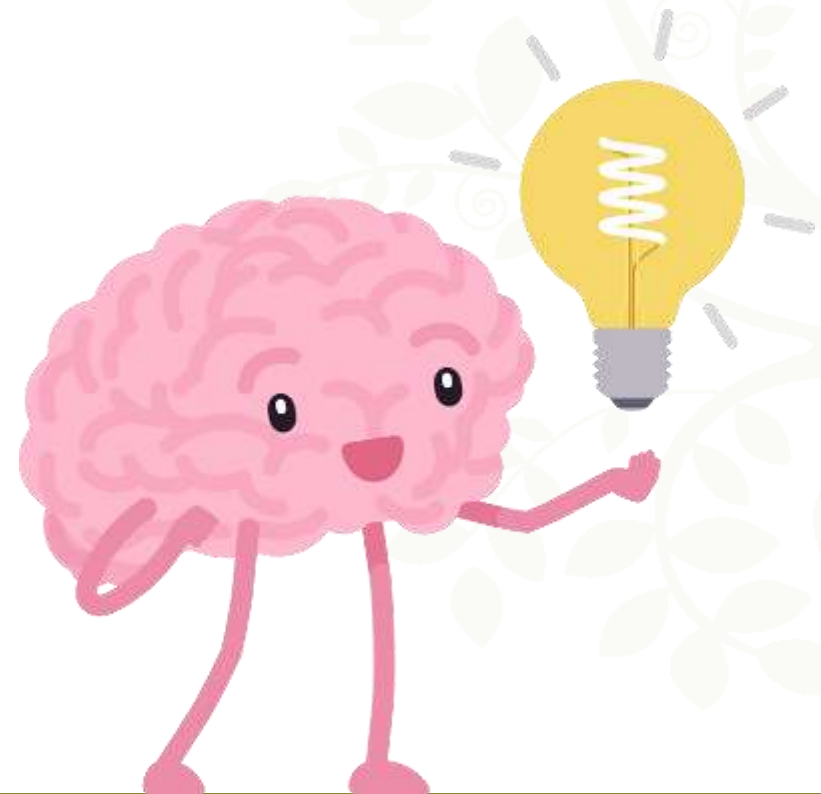
Understanding the brain



Neuroplasticity

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to reorganise and adapt by forming new connections between neurons throughout life.

- **Learning and memory:** Our brain forms new connections when learning, aiding memory.
- **Recovery from injury:** The brain reorganises to recover from injury or trauma.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Embracing neuroplasticity promotes continuous personal growth.







Factors affecting brain performance & neuroplasticity



Biological factors (factors we can't directly change):

- Age
- Genetics
- Hormones
- Brain injury & disease



Lifestyle factors (factors we can change):

- Experience & learning
- Environmental enrichment
- Physical exercise
- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Stress levels
- Social connectedness
- Technology usage





Techniques for improving cognitive abilities



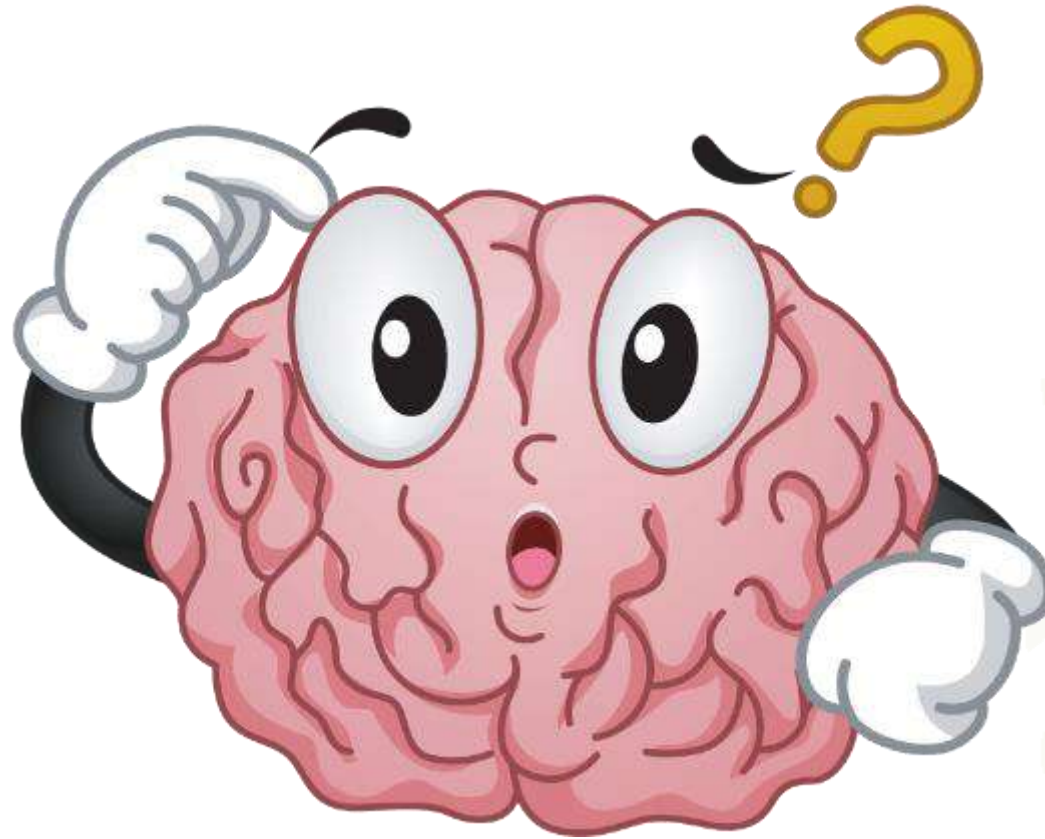
1. Improving memory

- Use **mnemonic devices** e.g., acronyms, visualisation, acrostics, rhymes, chunking, method of loci, association, story linking
- Practice **retrieval exercises** regularly
- Maintain a **consistent sleep schedule**
- Stay **mentally active** with puzzles, games, learning



Try to memorise the pictures!



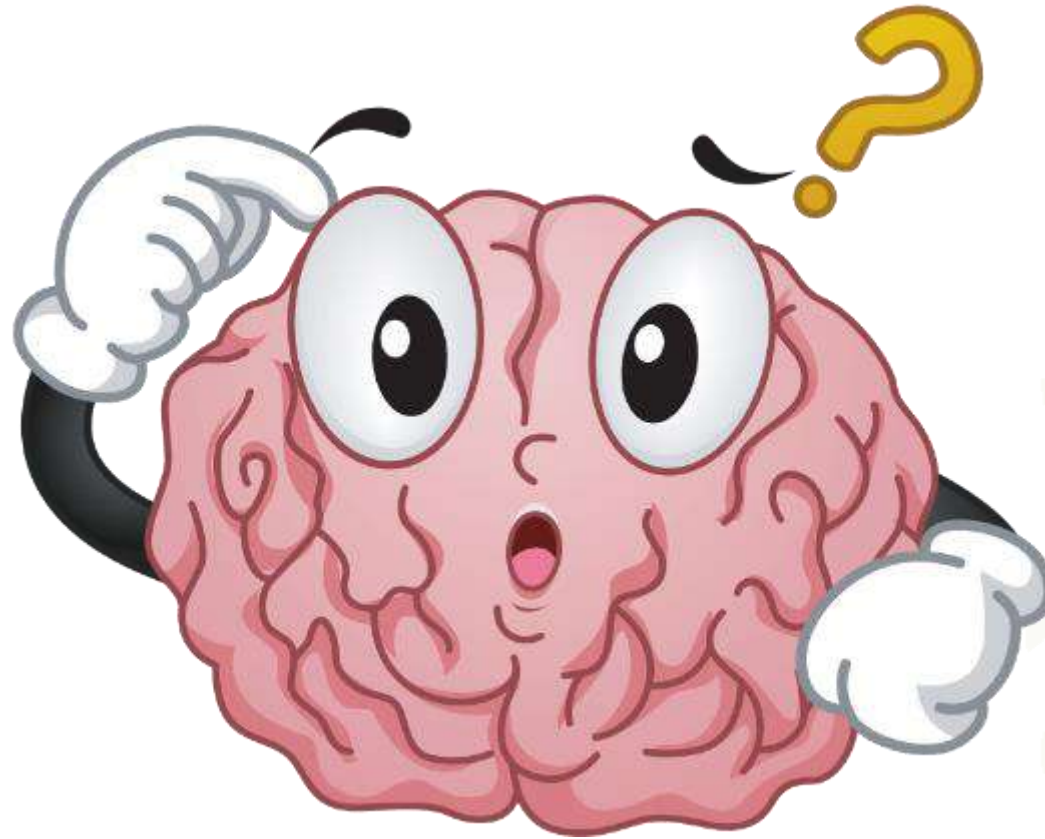


How many can you remember?



Ok try again...





How many can you remember
this time?

2. Attention & focus



- Practice **mindfulness**
- **Minimise distractions**
- Break tasks into smaller tasks
- Engage in activities that **stimulate multiple senses**
- Utilise **time management** techniques
- Set **specific achievable goals**
- **Prioritise tasks** & minimise multitasking
- **Take regular breaks**



Time management techniques

- **Pomodoro technique:** 25 minutes work, short break, repeat.
- **Eat that frog:** tackle most challenging task first thing
- **Time blocking:** allocate specific blocks of time for different tasks
- **Task prioritisation:** Eisenhower matrix (urgent vs. important), ABC method
- **Batching:** grouping similar tasks
- **Utilise productivity tools:** e.g. Trello, Asana



3. Problem solving

- **Break down** complex problems into smaller components
- Practice **divergent thinking** to find various solutions to a problem
- Collaborate with others to **gain different perspectives**
- Engage in **activities** that challenge problem solving (*i.e. puzzles, critical thinking tasks, strategic games, moral dilemmas*)



Critical thinking & riddles



- 1) **Riddle:** I'm light as a feather, yet the strongest person can't hold me for much longer than a minute. What am I?
- 2) **The island:** If you were stranded on a deserted island, what three items would you want to have with you?



4. Creative expression



- Surround yourself with **inspiring stimuli**
- Engage in **brainstorming sessions** or idea generation exercises
- Explore **new hobbies** or **creative outlets**
- **Embrace failure** and learn from experimentation.

5. Experiences & learning

- **Try new things!**
- Embrace **lifelong learning** (*classes, workshops, self-study*)
- Extract lessons from past experiences (***journalling***)
- Share knowledge with others
- Try **brain training apps!**





Easy-to-try new experiences

- Take a different route to work.
- Try a new type of cuisine at a local restaurant.
- Explore a new hobby or activity, such as painting, gardening, or photography.
- Visit a nearby park or nature reserve and go for a walk or hike.
- Listen to a genre of music you've never explored before.
- Start a journal to document your thoughts and experiences.
- Take a virtual tour of a museum or cultural landmark online.
- Try a new exercise class or workout routine.
- Attend a local event or community gathering.
- Experiment with a new recipe in the kitchen.



6. Environmental enrichment



- Incorporate elements of **nature, art, culture** into your surroundings
- Personalise your home and workspace with **meaningful objects or quotes**
- **Minimise clutter** and organise your environment

Stimulating environments

- Benefit mental health and cognition because they **boost the growth and function of neurons and their connections**; the glial cells that support and feed neurons, and blood vessels within the brain.
- You can use **fractals** in nature to calm the brain



7. Stress reduction



**LESS
STRESS!**

- Practice **stress management techniques** (*i.e. deep breathing, meditation, yoga*)
- Prioritise **self-care**
- Establish **boundaries** (learn to say no!)
- Try to build **resilience**



Cognitive training



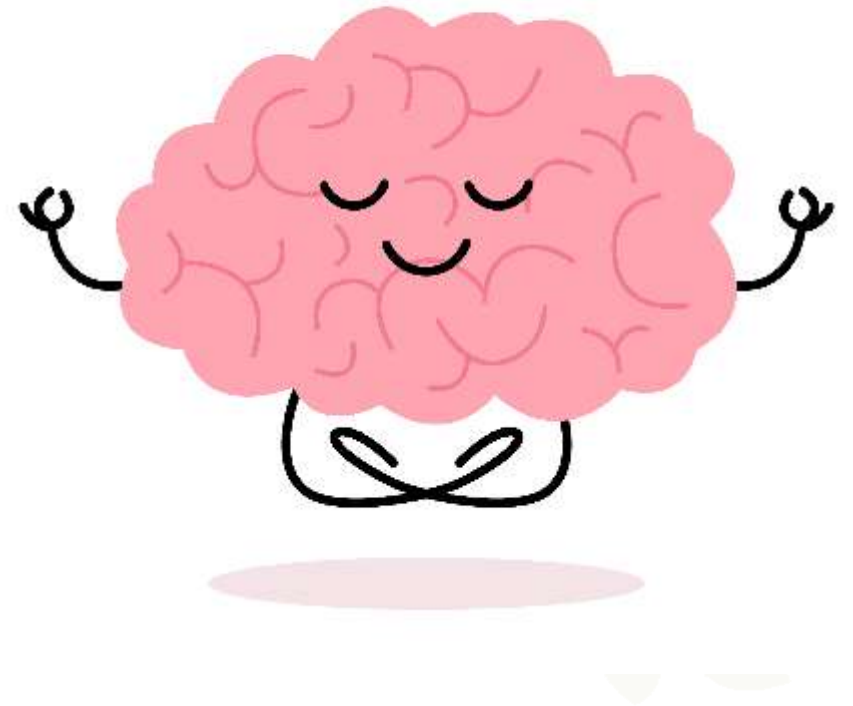
Growth vs Fixed mindset

- **A fixed mindset:** people believe that their intelligence is fixed and static
- **A growth mindset:** people believe their intelligence and talents can be improved through effort and learning



Mindfulness

- Mindfulness has been shown to change the structure of the brain
- Also changes the blood flow in the brain
- 8 weeks is enough to see a change

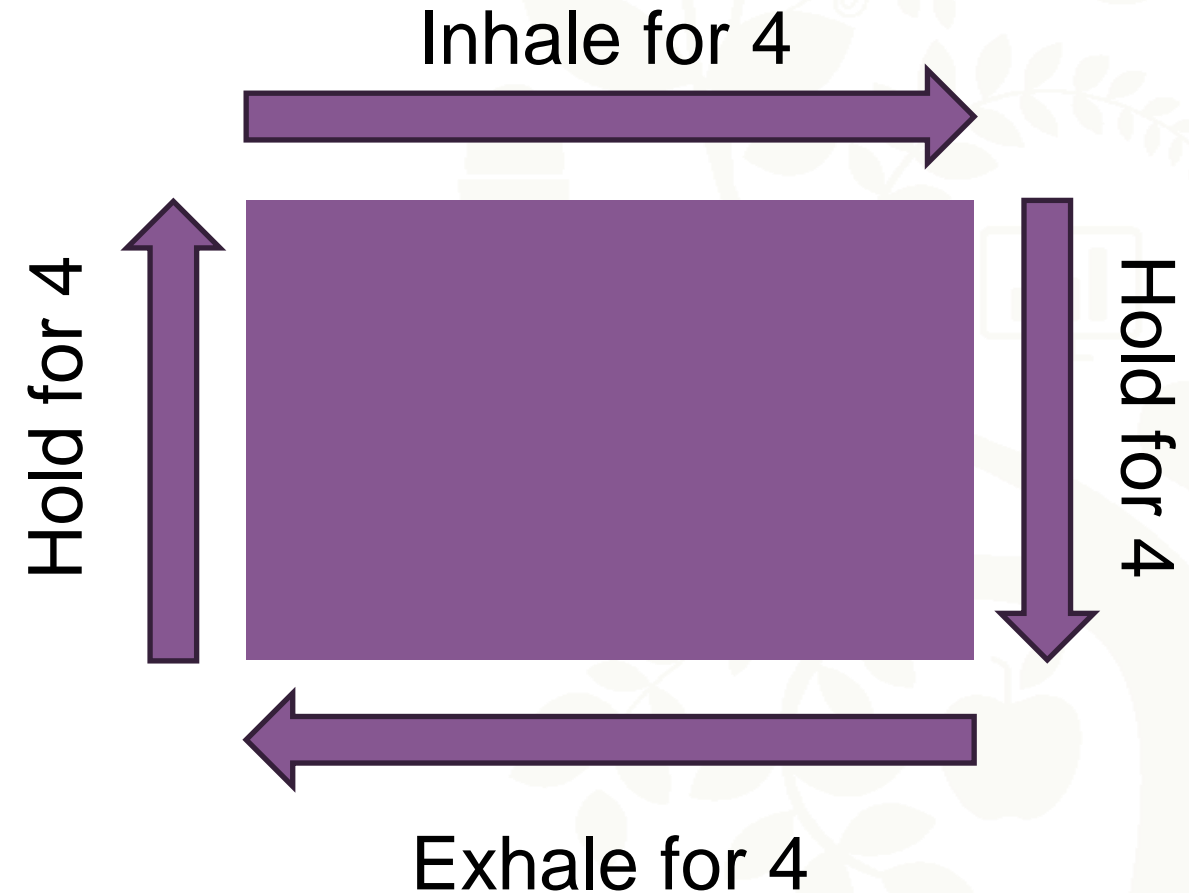




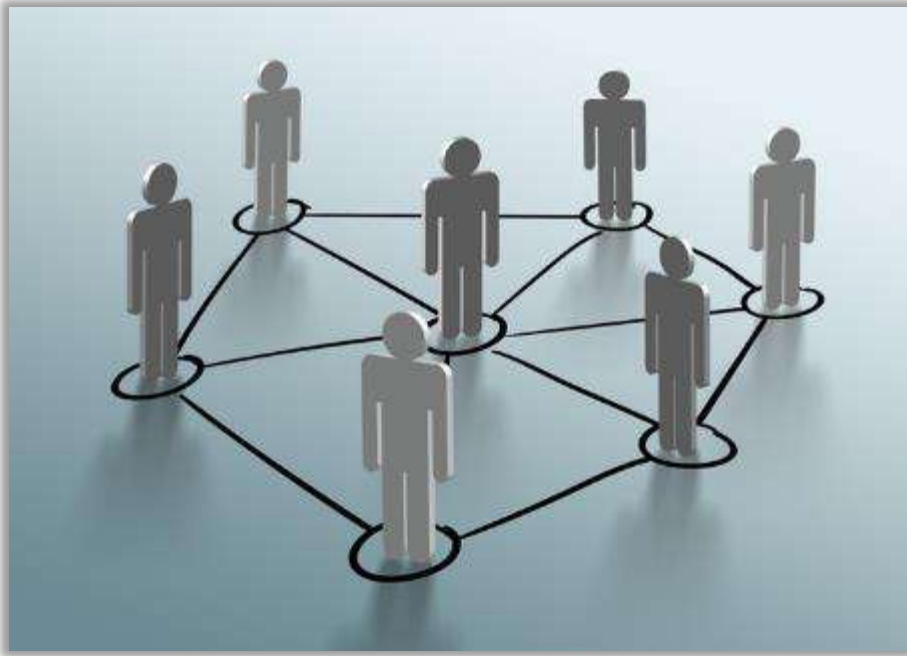
Box breathing

- 1) Find a comfortable seated position.
- 2) Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, counting to 4
- 3) Hold your breath for a count of 4
- 4) Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth, counting to 4 as you release the air from your lungs.
- 5) Hold your breath again for a count of 4 before beginning the next cycle.

Repeat the cycle of inhaling, holding, exhaling, and holding for several minutes, focusing on the rhythmic pattern and maintaining a steady pace.



8. Social connectedness



- Cultivate **meaningful relationships**
- Engage in **regular social activities**
- Volunteer
- Get a hobby
- **Prioritise quality time** with loved ones
- Utilise **social apps** (*such as Meetup*)



Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise, understand, and manage emotions in oneself and others.

Individuals with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to **navigate interpersonal dynamics, resolve conflicts, and build strong relationships** with colleagues and loved ones.



8. Look after yourself physically!



- Do **physical activity**
- Ensure you are **getting enough sleep**
- Ensure your body is getting **enough nutrition**
- **Cut out unhealthy lifestyle habits** (gradually)



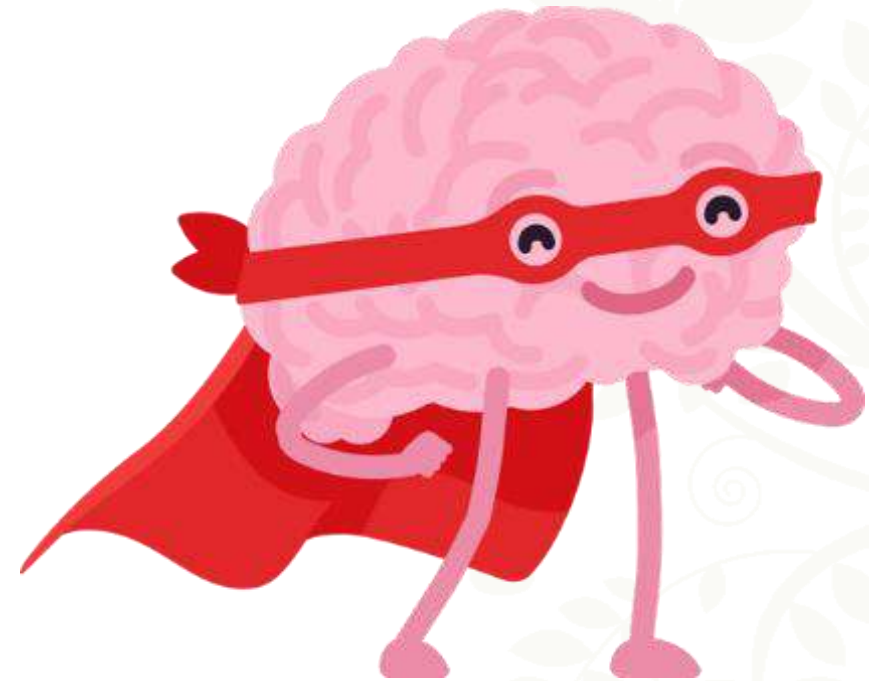
Nutrition: What it means in practice – daily habits

- **Omega 3** – oily fish
- **Probiotic rich foods** – kimchi, kefir, kraut
- **Healthy fats** – avocados, olive oil, seeds, nuts
- **Nutrient boost** – green leafy veg, whole grains (B vitamins and fibre)
- **Complex carbs for long-term energy** – sweet potatoes, legumes, starchy veg, whole grains
- **Antioxidants** – berries, herbs, spices, rainbow foods
- At least **2 litres water**
- **Protein** with every meal/snack
- Consider good quality supplements (i.e. multivitamin)





Workplace strategies for enhancing brain performance





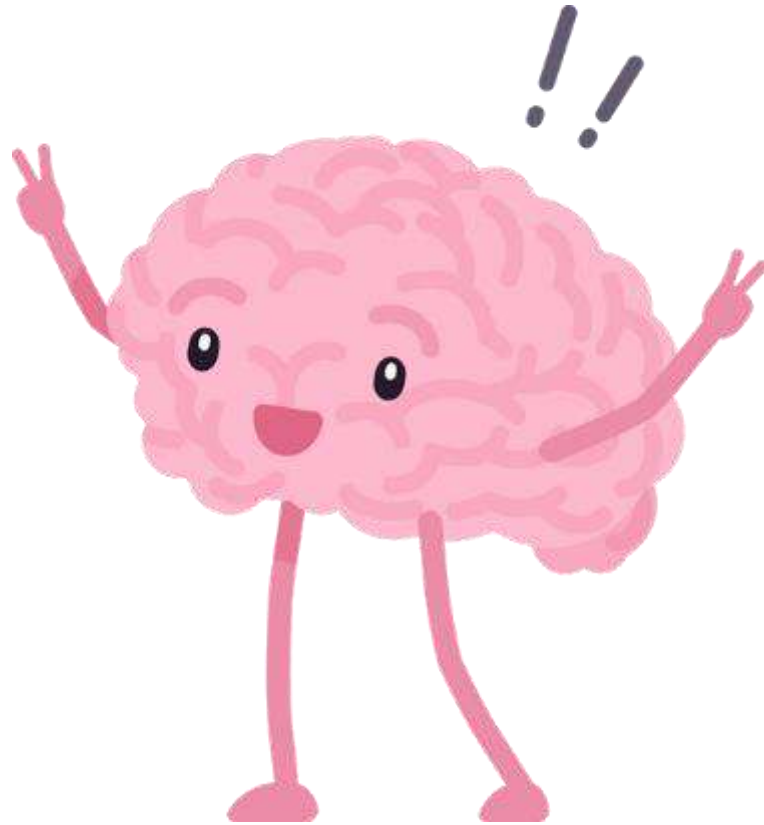
Workplace strategies for enhancing brain performance



- 1) Create a brain friendly work environment:** ergonomic, natural elements, flexible work arrangements
- 2) Encourage regular breaks and mindfulness:** scheduled breaks, meditation, wellness programs
- 3) Foster culture of continuous learning and development:** training and development opportunities, knowledge sharing, recognition & feedback
- 4) Incorporate brain activities:** quizzes, collaborative mind mapping or problem solving



Putting it into practice – what strategies are you going to focus on?





Further info...

Books

How to Build a Healthy Brain –
Kimberley Wilson

The Change Mindset – Andy
Craggs

Websites

The Association for NLP:
<https://anlp.org/>

Food for the Brain:
<https://foodforthebrain.org/>

Apps

Lumosity
Impulse
Elevate
Peak
MindPal

Cognitive training ideas

7 Brain Exercises to Strengthen
Your Mind:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/brain-exercises-to-strengthen-your-mind-2795039>

Engage Your Brain: GCBH
Recommendations on Cognitively
Stimulating Activities

https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/health/brain_health/2017/07/gcbh-cognitively-stimulating-activities-report-english-aarp.doi.10.26419%252Fpia.00001.001.pdf



Additional Resources

MINDFULNESS

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 judgement 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, Tai chi)
- Mindful eating
- Body scan technique
- Apply mindfulness to an everyday activity

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RECIPES FOR SUCCESS

Angela Steel

22 Tasty, healthy and easy recipes

The recipe section from 'Eat Your Way to the Top' - In full colour

Muddy pear granola

This delicious granola is made with pear and topped with raisins. It's perfect for breakfast or as a snack. The granola is made with whole grain oats, almond flour, and a variety of nuts and seeds. It's also topped with fresh pears and raisins.

Ingredients

- 200g plain flour (or oat flour)
- 100g almond flour
- 100g raisins
- 100g almonds
- 100g walnuts
- 100g pecans
- 100g cashews
- 100g pistachios
- 100g hazelnuts
- 100g macadamia nuts
- 100g pine nuts
- 100g sunflower seeds
- 100g pumpkin seeds
- 100g flax seeds
- 100g chia seeds
- 100g hemp seeds
- 100g coconut oil
- 100g maple syrup
- 100g honey
- 100g vanilla extract
- 100g salt

Method

- Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F). Grease a large baking tray with cooking oil.
- Put the flour, almond flour, and raisins in a large bowl and mix thoroughly. Add the nuts and seeds and mix again. Add enough maple syrup or honey to bind the mixture. Spread the mixture onto the baking tray and bake for 30-40 minutes until golden brown.
- Let the granola cool, then stir in the dried fruit. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

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TOP TIPS FOR BOOSTING BRAIN PERFORMANCE

HOW TO IMPROVE BRAIN PERFORMANCE

- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**
Exercise boosts blood flow and healthy metabolism to feed the brain: helps to regenerate neurons, builds up better memory / learning. May reduce the risk for Alzheimer's disease.
STANDING / WALKING WHEN WORKING
Shows the brain with BDNF - performance enhancing growth protein.
- SLEEP**
Vital for memory, learning & neuroplasticity.
Chronic insomnia associated with dementia.
- STIMULATING ENVIRONMENTS & CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**
Enhance connectivity of the brain of rest, boosting memory, empathy, attention & focus.
- COGNITIVE & MEMORY TRAINING**
Can reverse age-related decline.
- SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**
Isolation is detrimental to neuron signaling and performance.
- MINDFULNESS**
Enhances neural cell of the brain & acts better connection. Breathing regulation of emotion, compassion, concentration, learning & memory.
- INTERMITTENT FASTING**
Promotes neuron growth & overall cognitive function. Decreases risk of neurodegenerative disease.
KEY NUTRIENTS
Damage to fatty acids: Omega-3 fatty acids, Omega-6 fatty acids, Omega-9 fatty acids, Omega-10 fatty acids, Omega-11 fatty acids, Omega-12 fatty acids, Omega-13 fatty acids, Omega-14 fatty acids, Omega-15 fatty acids, Omega-16 fatty acids, Omega-17 fatty acids, Omega-18 fatty acids, Omega-19 fatty acids, Omega-20 fatty acids, Omega-21 fatty acids, Omega-22 fatty acids, Omega-23 fatty acids, Omega-24 fatty acids, Omega-25 fatty acids, Omega-26 fatty acids, Omega-27 fatty acids, Omega-28 fatty acids, Omega-29 fatty acids, Omega-30 fatty acids, Omega-31 fatty acids, Omega-32 fatty acids, Omega-33 fatty acids, Omega-34 fatty acids, Omega-35 fatty acids, Omega-36 fatty acids, Omega-37 fatty acids, Omega-38 fatty acids, Omega-39 fatty acids, Omega-40 fatty acids, Omega-41 fatty acids, Omega-42 fatty acids, Omega-43 fatty acids, Omega-44 fatty acids, Omega-45 fatty acids, Omega-46 fatty acids, Omega-47 fatty acids, Omega-48 fatty acids, Omega-49 fatty acids, Omega-50 fatty acids, Omega-51 fatty acids, Omega-52 fatty acids, Omega-53 fatty acids, Omega-54 fatty acids, Omega-55 fatty acids, Omega-56 fatty acids, Omega-57 fatty acids, Omega-58 fatty acids, Omega-59 fatty acids, Omega-60 fatty acids, Omega-61 fatty acids, Omega-62 fatty acids, Omega-63 fatty acids, Omega-64 fatty acids, Omega-65 fatty acids, Omega-66 fatty acids, Omega-67 fatty acids, Omega-68 fatty acids, Omega-69 fatty acids, Omega-70 fatty acids, Omega-71 fatty acids, Omega-72 fatty acids, Omega-73 fatty acids, Omega-74 fatty acids, Omega-75 fatty acids, Omega-76 fatty acids, Omega-77 fatty acids, Omega-78 fatty acids, Omega-79 fatty acids, Omega-80 fatty acids, Omega-81 fatty acids, Omega-82 fatty acids, Omega-83 fatty acids, Omega-84 fatty acids, Omega-85 fatty acids, Omega-86 fatty acids, Omega-87 fatty acids, Omega-88 fatty acids, Omega-89 fatty acids, Omega-90 fatty acids, Omega-91 fatty acids, Omega-92 fatty acids, Omega-93 fatty acids, Omega-94 fatty acids, Omega-95 fatty acids, Omega-96 fatty acids, Omega-97 fatty acids, Omega-98 fatty acids, Omega-99 fatty acids, Omega-100 fatty acids.

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Good Mood Choc-Berry Smoothie

This delicious smoothie is made with chocolate and raspberries. It's perfect for breakfast or as a snack. The smoothie is made with whole grain oats, almond flour, and a variety of nuts and seeds. It's also topped with fresh raspberries and chocolate.

Ingredients

- 100g plain flour (or oat flour)
- 100g almond flour
- 100g raisins
- 100g almonds
- 100g walnuts
- 100g pecans
- 100g cashews
- 100g pistachios
- 100g hazelnuts
- 100g macadamia nuts
- 100g pine nuts
- 100g sunflower seeds
- 100g pumpkin seeds
- 100g flax seeds
- 100g chia seeds
- 100g hemp seeds
- 100g coconut oil
- 100g maple syrup
- 100g honey
- 100g vanilla extract
- 100g salt

Method

- Preheat oven to 180°C (350°F). Grease a large baking tray with cooking oil.
- Put the flour, almond flour, and raisins in a large bowl and mix thoroughly. Add the nuts and seeds and mix again. Add enough maple syrup or honey to bind the mixture. Spread the mixture onto the baking tray and bake for 30-40 minutes until golden brown.
- Let the granola cool, then stir in the dried fruit. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

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More salmon with peas and quinoa

This delicious dish is made with salmon, peas, and quinoa. It's perfect for breakfast or as a snack. The dish is made with whole grain oats, almond flour, and a variety of nuts and seeds. It's also topped with fresh salmon, peas, and quinoa.

Ingredients

- 100g plain flour (or oat flour)
- 100g almond flour
- 100g raisins
- 100g almonds
- 100g walnuts
- 100g pecans
- 100g cashews
- 100g pistachios
- 100g hazelnuts
- 100g macadamia nuts
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Research

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