

Boost Your Brain Health at Any Age!

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Your amazing brain, weighs 3 lbs. (give or take) and uses about 20% of your daily energy expenditure! This organ creates your unique lens, or filter that you see the world through. Think about the fact that your brain is allowing you to read this text right now and how fast your brain is transforming letters into words and ideas that you can put into action!

Each month, we focus on different topics related to well-being. It turns out that the activities that are good for the body (physical activity, sleep and a diet that contains limited processed foods) are also good for your brain!

Here are a few Brain Training Strategies to consider adding to your daily routine:

- 1) **Being mindful** – Mindfulness has been proven to increase grey matter in areas of the brain that allow us to problem solve, regulate our emotions, and communicate. In the same way that strength training builds muscle, mindfulness training builds a stronger more resilient brain! Learn more about mindfulness in our [Intro to Mindfulness Webinar](#) recording, [Building a Meditation Practice Webinar](#) recording, or experience the benefits for yourself with the free [5-Day Meditation Re-boot Series](#).
- 2) **Daily movement** – Physical activity has immediate benefits that can protect your brain from cognitive decline. Join fellow state employees for a [virtual fitness class](#) or go for a walk while listening to an episode of the [ERS Walk & Talk Podcast](#)!
- 3) **Prioritize nutrition** – Foods that are heavily processed with sugar, trans-fats and omega-6 oils (sunflower oil, safflower oil, and other vegetable oils) can cause inflammation throughout your entire system, including your brain. If you are a HealthSelect plan participant and want to improve your nutrition, consider checking out one of two, [no-cost healthy lifestyle programs](#).
- 4) **Sleep well** – One of the simplest ways to improve your health is to consistently get seven to nine hours of uninterrupted sleep. Learn more about sleep recommendations, common sleep disorders and strategies to improve sleep in our upcoming webinar on this topic. Register through [this link](#).
- 5) **Connect with others** – Human connection improves physical and mental health and can decrease feelings of anxiety and depression. With the increase in screen time and close to two years of wearing masks and social distancing, human connection may feel more challenging than it has in the past. If so, you may want to try making small simple connections with people standing in line next to you in a coffee shop or grocery store, smiling and saying hello to passersby on the street, or asking a co-worker you'd like to get to know better to lunch or for a walk. Over time, small acts can make a big impact on you and the culture in your workplace!
- 6) **Laugh often** – Laughter is simple and has an immediate effect on your mood because of the release of endorphins and neurochemicals that make you feel good. Laughter decreases stress hormones and blood pressure. Learn more about the impact of laughter on our brain and body in this fun [Ted Talk, "Why We Laugh" featuring Sophie Scott, Ph.D.](#)
- 7) **Learn more** about brain health in an upcoming webinar featuring neuroscientist, **Russell Frohardt, Ph.D. in a Q&A session: Ask a Neuroscientist**. Submit your questions in advance to lacy.wolff@ers.texas.gov. Register through this [registration link](#).