

# Wellness Pointers

Emotional | Environmental | Financial | Mental | Occupational | Physical | Social | Spiritual

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## Brain Awareness

“The brain is a commodity used to fertilize ideas.”



~ Elbert Hubbard



EMPLOYEE WELLNESS  
Southern Adventist University

# The Ten Habits of Highly Effective Brains

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1. **Learn** what is the “It” in “Use It or Lose It”. A basic understanding will serve you well to appreciate your brain’s beauty as a living and constantly-developing dense forest with billions of neurons and synapses.
2. Take care of your **nutrition**. Did you know that the brain only weighs 2% of body mass but consumes over 20% of the oxygen and nutrients we intake? As a general rule, you don’t need expensive ultra-sophisticated nutritional supplements, just make sure you don’t stuff yourself with the “bad stuff”.
3. Remember that the brain is part of the body. Things that **exercise your body** can also help sharpen your brain: physical exercise enhances neurogenesis.
4. Practice **positive**, future-oriented **thoughts** until they become your default mindset and you look forward to every new day in a constructive way. Stress and anxiety, no matter whether induced by external events or by your own thoughts, actually kills neurons and prevent the creation of new ones. You can think of chronic stress as the opposite of exercise: it prevents the creation of new neurons.
5. Thrive on **learning and mental challenges**. The point of having a brain is precisely to learn and to adapt to challenging new environments. Once new neurons appear in your brain, where they stay in your brain and how long they survive depends on how you use them. “Use It or Lose It” does not mean “do crossword puzzle number 1,234,567. It means, “challenge your brain often with fundamentally new activities”.
6. We are (as far as we know) the only self-directed organisms in this planet. **Aim high**. Once you graduate from college, keep learning. The brain keeps developing, no matter your age, and it reflects what you do with it.
7. **Explore, travel**. Adapting to new locations forces you to pay more attention to your environment. Make new decisions, use your brain.
8. **Laugh often**. Especially to cognitively complex humor, full of twists and surprises. Better, try to become the next Jon Stewart

9. **Don't Outsource Your Brain.** Not to media personalities, not to politicians, not to your smart neighbour... Make your own decisions, and mistakes. And learn from them. That way, you are training your brain, not your neighbour's.

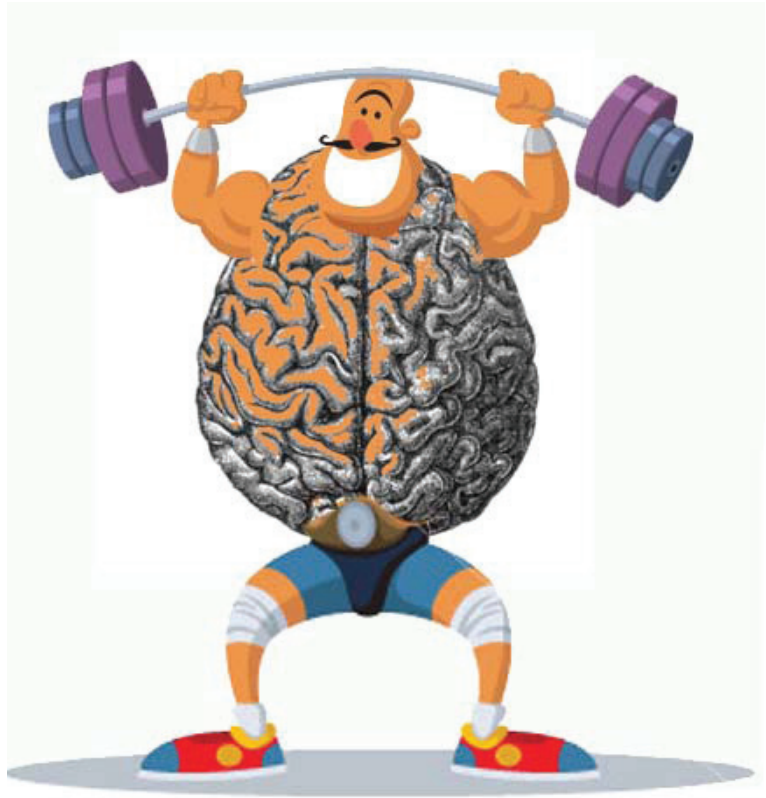
10. Develop and maintain **stimulating friendships**. We are "social animals", and need social interaction. Which, by the way, is why 'Baby Einstein' has been shown not to be the panacea for children development.

## Brain Tips:

As we get older, it may take us longer to learn and store new information, so concentration becomes increasingly important. Try to reduce distractions and minimize interferences when learning new information. Write down and verbally repeat important things, and organize objects you use frequently (like car keys), so you'll always know where to look for them.

While acute stress can actually enhance immune functioning short-term, chronic stress takes a toll on the immune system and may make our body less able to respond appropriately to health threats. If you find yourself chronically stressed out, take steps to change the situations that are causing you stress, and learn how to better manage stress with proven techniques such as exercise, meditation, deep breathing, biofeedback, or relaxation therapies.

Source: [www.sharpbrains.com](http://www.sharpbrains.com)



# What Works

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- The Question: Does physical exercise keep the brain healthy?
- The Verdict: Physical exercise isn't just good for the body—it's good for the brain. Scientists continue to debate why this is the case and what types of exercise are most appropriate. Continuing research, much of it supported by the National Institute on Aging, should help to shed light on the types and qualities of physical exercise that can help keep the brain fit. And for those of you who haven't started exercising yet, take heart: studies suggest that picking up an exercise program at any age and in relatively small doses may help.
- The Evidence: A recent article in the Annals of Internal Medicine highlights the results of a large study that "suggests that regular exercise [15 minutes a day, at least 3 times a week] is associated with a delay in onset of dementia and Alzheimer disease." Results showed that such exercise decreased the onset of dementia by 32%.<sup>6</sup> This study joins a growing body of research that points to a connection between physical exercise and brain fitness.

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# Brain Awareness Week

Brain Awareness Week (BAW) is the global campaign to increase public awareness about the progress and benefits of brain research. Every March BAW unites the efforts of universities, hospitals, patient groups, government agencies, schools, service organizations, and professional associations worldwide in a week-long celebration of the brain. Founded and coordinated by the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives and European Dana Alliance for the Brain, BAW is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary campaign in 2010.

During BAW, campaign partners organize creative and innovative activities in their communities to educate and excite people of all ages about the brain and brain research. Events are limited only by the organizers' imaginations. Examples include open days at neuroscience laboratories; museum exhibitions about the brain; lectures on an array of brain-related topics; displays at malls, libraries, and community centers; classroom workshops; and many other activities and programs.



Be a part of Brain Awareness Week 2010, March 15–21, the annual campaign to increase public awareness about the progress and benefits of brain research.