

brain exercises

Description

Gentle Reader,

Brain exercises are instructive to any of us who experience lapses of memory or feel muddled in our thinking. May I share a recent posting by Dr. Jamie Mc Manus, Chair of Medical Affairs at Shaklee? Her comments help with life in general but more specifically with understanding the role of exercise in brain health.

If you are looking to banish “brain fog,” forget your forgetfulness, and even support a better mood, then look no further than your running shoes. Exercise, it turns out, is an outstanding way for you to protect (or even enhance) your brain’s health.

Exercise is so powerful at helping the brain, scientists are suggesting that exercise can decrease cognitive decline, and it may even help you [recover some function that you might feel you have lost](#). So, if you find yourself searching everywhere for your keys, struggling to remember names, or just feeling that you aren’t as sharp as you once were, then your first stop should be your local gym.

Personally, it would be outdoors that I would go searching for help, preferring a walk in the fresh air to the gym. But a walk it is, no matter where, that will help unclog the brain.

When you are looking to keep your brain fit and functional, then make sure you include both physical and mental exercise.

Physical exercise

For optimum brain health, you need both [regular](#) and [moderately intense](#) **brain exercises**.

Regular exercise means doing something aerobic (such as walking, jogging, swimming, or biking) at least 3-4 times a week (more is better) and moderate-intensity exercise is the type of exercise where you push yourself to new limits. For example, when walking, instead of a leisurely stroll, try to push yourself and pick up the pace. The key here is to breathe a little hard, but not hard enough that it is difficult for you to carry on a conversation.

Regular exercise improves circulation throughout the body, including the brain. More blood means more nutrients and oxygen-rich blood going to your brain. Laboratory studies have demonstrated that exercise [influences the synthesis and release of several neurotransmitters](#) (such as norepinephrine, serotonin, GABA, and acetylcholine) and enhances the production of a growth factor called [brain-derived neurotrophic factor \(BDNF\)](#).^[i]

Exercise is good for the whole body and it helps to [maintain healthy blood pressure](#), improves energy, helps [lower stress and anxiety](#), improves mood, is good for heart health, and helps you maintain a healthy weight—all of which are beneficial for YOU and your brain.

Mental exercise

Your mental capacity is no different from the rest of your body: you have to use it or lose it.

Part of creating your own brain fitness program is to [stimulate your brain](#) on a regular basis. When you do this, you increase and strengthen neural connections inside your brain, a process known as neuroplasticity.

What can you do to stimulate your brain?

Social engagement, crossword puzzles, completing challenging tasks, trying brain games or anything new, doing something differently, all stimulate your brain. You can even try brushing your teeth or eating with the opposite hand.

Just like the rest of your body, your brain needs your attention to keep it performing well throughout your whole life.

Shaklee's new [MindWorks](#) comes with a free delivery of mind bending exercises from [Cognifit](#). If you really want to stretch your brain muscles, try it. Or the popular Lumosity which I have been playing around with for a couple months. I've been thinking about learning Swedish so I can read a book about the Swede Finns who came to this country around 1900, including my great grandfather, great uncles and my grandparents, all of whom are mentioned and pictured in this book. It is frustrating to not be able to read Swedish. Shall I try it and exercise my brain?

Use the comment section to tell me what your favorite **brain exercises** are.

Be well,

Dr. Jamie

[Jamie McManus, M.D., FAAFP](#)

[Chair of Medical Affairs, Health Science, & Education](#)

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