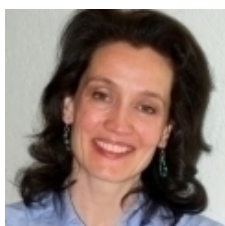


Remember – your brain needs to continually be stimulated

By Mandy Kendall

I seem to be spending a lot more time these days running up and down the stairs going back to fetch something I've forgotten. Don't get me wrong, the exercise is doing me good, and I'm not finding the car keys in the fridge (yet), but I am a little concerned about my brain's seeming inability to multitask.

So, I decided to spend a little time looking into what can be done to keep the old gray matter ticking over.



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As we age, if we are not careful, our bodies will generally start to decline. Our brains are no exception, but like a muscle, the more we use it, the longer it will remain stronger and fitter.

Studies have shown there are numerous ways to help stave off the “senior moment syndrome” as well as much more chronic and devastating diseases like Alzheimer's, and it seems the earlier you start the better.

Daniel Amen (physician, psychiatrist, teacher, and author from Southern California) has scanned more than 70,000 brains and is a huge advocate for brain health. His studies show that as

weight increases, brain size decreases, and that brain damage can be caused by abuse of bad foods and toxic substances (and alcohol is included in that category too I'm afraid). The good news is that brain function can be dramatically improved by following a few simple steps.

Be kind to your brain – Limit toxic substances. I know it might be easier said than done, but when I think about my brain deteriorating, it makes it a lot easier to say no to more wine.

Feed your brain – If we asked ourselves “is this good for my brain” before eating something, most of us, if we were being honest with ourselves, would know whether we should be eating it. Try and aim for maximum nutrition with minimum calories. Researchers found that seniors whose blood had high levels of nutrients found in fish, fruits, nuts and leafy greens were less likely to suffer from memory problems and brain shrinkage which can be an early indicator of Alzheimer's.

Rest your brain – As well as a good night's sleep, your brain will thank you for an occasional rest throughout the day. Meditation is a great catnap for the brain and doesn't need to take long to be beneficial. There are plenty of apps you can download onto your phone or iPad to guide you.

Increase your brain size – Studies are showing that decreasing midlife obesity can reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia in old age as well as increasing the size of our brains. So now we know that as well as helping our hearts, weight loss also helps our brains.

Exercise your brain – Socializing, learning something new, changing routines, using your left hand if you are right handed (and visa versa) and being creative with craftwork all help to flex your brain muscle.

Watch less TV – A study showed that children's brains showed more activity when they were sat in front of a blank wall

compared to when they were watching TV. Enough said.

If you're interested in learning more about how to protect your brain I can thoroughly recommend Amen's book "Use Your Brain to Change Your Age".

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.