

# Your Mind Matters

Preserve Your Brain Health for Your Best Life



## FEATURED ARTICLE

### April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month - Give your cognitive skills a boost

Keeping your brain in tip-top shape is always a high priority, but it's especially important for people with Parkinson's Disease (PD). Although PD is a movement disorder with its most recognizable symptoms being tremors, balance issues and stiffness, cognitive issues can arise also.

Not everyone with PD will develop dementia, although twenty to fifty percent will experience some cognitive issues and the timing and type of symptoms are different for everyone.

April is Parkinson's Disease Awareness Month, so let's boost our cognition. Start by adjusting a few lifestyle choices in ways that support a healthy and well-functioning brain, even with PD.

Here are a few ideas!

Manage your stress – Stress wears you down and makes life unpleasant, and the stress

hormone *cortisol* that's released with *chronic stress* can damage your brain and body. Try chair yoga, deep breathing or mindfulness exercises to calm you.

Manage your medical conditions – Conditions like diabetes and high cholesterol can adversely affect the blood vessels that carry blood and oxygen to the brain, which can lead to cognitive issues. Depression can affect cognition as well. Talk to your doctor if current conditions worsen or if medications should be adjusted.

Get good quantity and quality sleep – Studies show that good quality sleep is rejuvenating to the body and cleansing to the brain. Lack of sleep can make you irritable and foggy. This can impair coping skills, making it harder to manage PD symptoms, or any other medical conditions. Strive for the amount of sleep that's right for you and if you have chronic difficulty with sleep, talk to your doctor about options.

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## FEATURED ARTICLE

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Stay social – Socialization reduces feelings of loneliness and depression and can give you a challenging brain workout! People tell jokes – and you have to get the punchlines. Others rehash vacations or parties from decades before – and you have to recall them. Plus, there are ways that your brain has to work in social settings that you may not even think about – like how much eye contact is appropriate or how much personal space you should allow. This is why socialization can be tiring – it's such an effective brain-challenge!

Train your brain – Just like your body, your brain needs engagement every day to stay healthy. Play games like *Sudoku* and do puzzles. Use acronyms and associations to help you remember and engage in lifelong learning so you stay curious and learn new things every day.

You CAN do things to help your brain function at its best. Follow some of the suggestions in this article and you'll be on your way.

To find out more about brain health and supporting those with brain health issues, please go to <https://brainhealth.ceresti.com/>.

By Marilyn Abrahamson - Brain-Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health.

## TAKE CARE OF YOU

### BREATHING FOR WELLBEING

All day long, we're breathing – in and out... in and out – over and over again. But there are more mindful ways to breathe that can reduce stress, optimize focus and energy and improve how we feel overall.

It's called diaphragmatic breathing, and it can be magical! Here's how you can do it at home:

- Lie down on your back or sit comfortably in a chair with one hand on your abdomen and the other on your chest.
- Begin to breathe more deeply so that your abdomen rises and falls rather than your chest.
- Inhale slowly and steadily through your nose for 3 full seconds (count slowly)
- Hold for 1-2 seconds
- Exhale slowly, blowing slowly through pursed lips for 5 full seconds (count slowly)
- Repeat this pattern for several minutes or until you feel relaxed, yet energized.

It only takes a few minutes so try this today!

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For more information about brain health or caregiver support please visit the **Ceresti Brain Health Education portal** at <https://brainhealth.ceresti.com> and enter code **MSHO2022**.

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## MEMORY TIP OF THE MONTH

# Got a List? Try Mnemonics

*Mnemonics are memory techniques that help us remember lists by making the information more meaningful.*

One mnemonic method involves using the first letter of each word in a list to create a single word: Bananas, Apples, Corn, Ketchup (BACK).

The other method involves using the first letter of each word in a list to create a sentence: My Dear Aunt Sally (Multiplication, Division, Addition, Subtraction).

**No matter what, lists are important.** Lists allow you to stay in the moment so you don't spend time ruminating on what you need to remember.

But, you need to use your brain too, so before you go to the store, create mnemonics to remember your list and see how many items you remember.

**It's recommended you take your written list with you. Before paying, check your list to ensure you remembered everything - no one wants to get home and realize that they forgot something important. With practice, you'll be surprised at how much you remember!**



## GROW YOUR BRAIN

# Grow Your Brain - Find a Hobby

Hobbies are an incredible source of lifelong learning because you can choose activities that are fun and engaging, meaning, *you'll want to do it every day.* To make the most of it - make it **Neurobic!**

Neurobics are exercises for the brain designed to create new neural pathways in the brain by using the senses in unconventional ways. In other words, you'll want to choose a hobby that is different and new to you, so you can learn from it.

Here are some choices:

- *Learn a new gadget* - Take up photography with a new camera. Get a telescope and study the stars. Build a model airplane with little ones.
- *Grow your own garden* - Gardening engages all of your senses from running your hands through the earth, smelling the soil and the plants, tasting the herbs. It engages the parts of the brain responsible for executive functions; organization, planning, spatial awareness. There's also the physical component associated with bending and stretching to care for the plants. And, you'll be rewarded with delicious fruits, vegetables or flowers.
- *Listen to a different genre of music* - Listening to music is a wonderful way to engage many areas of the brain at one time. Studies show that it can reduce blood pressure, anxiety and even pain as well as improving mood and alertness, sleep quality and memory. To really engage your brain, try something a little different next time you listen. If you usually listen to classical music, try out some show-tunes. If you like The Beatles, try listening to Neil Diamond! There are so many new musical styles for you to try!

So, as you plan your new hobby, make a commitment to light up the neglected neural pathways in your brain!

\*All of the *Neurobic* exercises in the *Grow Your Brain* section of the *Your Mind Matters* Newsletter are based on excerpts from the book "*Keep Your Brain Alive*" by Dr. Lawrence Katz and Manning Rubin. Workman Publishing, New York.



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As a supplemental benefit of the Blue Plus SecureBlueSM (HMO SNP) health plan, you have access to a caregiver support program available through Ceresti Health at no cost to you.  
To determine if you are eligible for this program, contact: (877) 222-5055.

## MONTHLY BRAIN CHALLENGE

# Nostalgia of the 1950's and 60's



Can you guess the answers to these popular trivia questions?

1. Who was Marilyn Monroe's female costar in *Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend*?
2. Who sang the Banana Boat song?
3. What amusement park opened in California in 1955?
4. This TV crime drama starred Elliot Ness.
5. Dr. Jonas Salk created a vaccine to help prevent this disease?
6. What ranch was featured in *Bonanza*?
7. Which popular reference book for world records was first published in 1955?
8. What scientist won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952?
9. Who was Lucy's best friend and neighbor in *I Love Lucy*?
10. Who were Alice and Ralph's friends in *The Honeymooners*?

## ANSWERS

- |                                       |                         |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Jane Russell                       | 5. Polio                |
| 2. Harry Belafonte                    | 4. The Untouchables     |
| 3. Disneyland                         | 3. Albert Schweitzer    |
| 4. The Guinness Book of World Records | 8. Ethel Mertz          |
| 5. The Ponderosa                      | 9. Trixie and Ed Norton |
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