



Variety is the Spice of Life

How many times have we heard the old adage *variety is the spice of life*? Well, it turns out, it is true. Doing new things or old things in new ways challenges the brain and is really good for brain health.

Research has shown that the brain's capacity to learn is always there, regardless of age. However, the brain really benefits when it is pushed beyond what is easy. For anyone worried about losing vital brain skills, read on.



Tips for Brain Fitness

The brain needs "exercise" to remain fit. Research is suggesting a good way to delay aging is to continually challenge the brain. Unused parts of the brain can easily decline or stop working (so to speak). Especially good brain activities are those that require thinking **and** action.

1. Be involved in activities that require memory, use of strategy or thinking ahead, such as bridge or chess.
2. Start a new hobby, such as painting, flower arrangement, toy building, jewelry making, knitting, sewing, etc. Learn all about it and apply what you learned.
3. If you work crossword puzzles and quit when you get to the "hard" words, keep at it. Get the dictionary, and work that puzzle to the end. Push the mind a tad beyond what is easy or comfortable.
4. Join the local library. Choose a how-to book and try to do what you read. Set a comfortable reading goal. Read for pleasure and mental health. Choose topics you know nothing about, or choose topics that add to your knowledge base.
5. Learn how to use a computer. If you already know, take the next step, and learn how to do something new. If you are beyond this, teach someone else who doesn't know.
6. Become an explorer! Each month, plan a day trip to a place you have never been. Map out your plan. Delve into the history of the town or city. Explore the area. Keep a journal of your explorations.

7. Learn a new sport, such as golf, tennis, ping pong, shuffleboard, swimming, sailing, fishing, skiing, etc.
8. Learn how to play cards, chess, dominoes, table games, or if you already know how, work on becoming an expert or teach others.
9. Join a new social group, get out and meet new people.
10. Learn a new language. Or if you speak another language, teach others.
11. Learn how to square dance, line dance, ballroom dance, etc. It is fun, good for your heart, brain and body. What's not to love about that?
12. Volunteer. Read to others. Assist in a nursing home or local hospital.
13. Write a journal about your life or family history.

You get the picture. For brain health, and to delay the loss of cognitive abilities, push just beyond what is comfortable. Spice up your life with a little variety!