



# The MIND HEALTH REPORT

Secrets to Unlocking Your Mind for Work, Love and Life

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## Build New Brain Cells And Prevent Alzheimer's

In our lifetimes, our bodies go through an inevitable cycle of growth, reproduction, and aging. During this natural progression, muscles atrophy, bones lose density, body fat increases, and the heart becomes larger due to thickening of the muscle walls. Although such changes are unavoidable, it has long been known that the aging process can be deferred, or even reversed, with the right types of exercise and nutrition.

In the case of the brain, however, medical experts did not believe that the decline could be delayed or reversed — until about 12 years ago, when encouraging evidence began to appear. The medical community now recognizes that it is possible for new cells to grow in the brain, and that both the structure and function of the brain can be improved throughout life.

To find out exactly what we can do to preserve and enhance brain health, The Mind Health Report spoke to David Perlmutter, M.D., a board-certified neurologist and fellow at the American College of Nutrition, about the latest developments in brain cell generation and maintaining a healthy brain.

Dr. Perlmutter has been enhancing the brain health of his patients, developing advanced therapeutic approaches, carrying out cutting-edge research, and contributing to the world's scientific literature on neurology for 25 years.

A leading authority on nutrition and the brain, he is the author of several books, including *Power Up Your Brain*, which provides a detailed program to jump-start optimal brain function.

“Research has demonstrated that throughout our lifetimes, we are actively growing new brain cells in the area where we actually need them most:

**Dr. Daniel G. Amen:  
Improve Your Mental  
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the hippocampus,” Perlmutter says.

It once was believed that the function of this part of the brain was to store our memories. However, more recent discoveries have identified it as a sort of mental way station that coordinates storage and retrieval of information, he says.

As the hippocampus becomes smaller, Alzheimer's or other dementia develops, tests have shown. This shrinkage correlates with loss of memory. The good news is that certain lifestyle factors can significantly improve the health and vitality of this region of the brain.

### Growth Hormone Protects the Brain

Science has determined that certain genes

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## Exercise Regenerates Your Brain

To maintain a healthy brain and help regenerate brain cells, everyone should do 30 minutes of daily aerobic exercise that raises the heart rate. In addition, do a warm-up and a cool-down. If you are inactive now, check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

To determine the heart rate to aim for, take 180 heart beats per minute, minus your age.

Age	Target Heart Rate (Beats Per Minute)	Target Heart Rate (Beats Per 6 Seconds)
40	180-40 = 140	14
50	180-50 = 130	13
60	180-60 = 120	12
70	180-70 = 110	11

To check your heart rate while exercising, it's easiest to take your pulse with your middle finger on your neck, a few inches to the right or left and slightly above your Adam's apple. You don't have to count for a full minute. Instead, count the beats for six seconds: one-tenth of your beats per minute.

control growth of new cells in the hippocampus. "We now understand how to improve the performance of those genes, and therefore enhance the process of growing new brain cells," says Perlmutter.

Genes that protect brain cells and promote growth of new ones do so by increasing production of a protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor, or BDNF. This protein acts as a growth hormone that controls development of new cells in the hippocampus and protects existing cells along with the vital connections (called synapses) between them.

Research has found that low levels of BDNF are found in Alzheimer's patients and are associated with other neurological conditions, such as epilepsy and Huntington's disease, as well as obesity. Fortunately, levels of BDNF can be increased with lifestyle changes that are realistic and achievable.

## Exercise Improves Cognitive Functions

A number of studies have shown that the right type of physical exercise increases production of BDNF. For example, a study of 120 healthy men and women between the ages of 55 and 80 used blood tests and brain scans to track the correlation between different types of exercise, levels of BDNF, change in size of the hippocampus, and memory improvement.

The study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, compared the effects of aerobic exercise with stretching and toning exercises, performed regularly for one year. Researchers found that aerobic activity that raised the heart rate increased BDNF levels and the size of the left and right hippocampus by 2.12 and 1.97 percent, respectively, and improved memory.

However, among those doing stretching and toning exercises, these same areas of the brain decreased in size by 1.40 and 1.43 percent, respectively, and memory did not improve. In the normal course of aging, the size of the hippocampus decreases by 1 to 2 percent per year.

Elderly people who exercised for the equivalent of 20 minutes daily for 24 weeks experienced dramatic benefits compared with those who were inactive, according to an Australian study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Benefits included an 1,800 percent improvement in memory, language ability, attention, and other important cognitive functions.

In the same journal, Harvard researchers reported results of exercise among a large group of

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## Belly Size and Ideal Weight

Reducing belly fat requires regular exercise and a healthy diet. The same approach will improve the overall health of your brain.

“The bigger your belly, the smaller your hippocampus,” says David Perlmutter, M.D.

Perlmutter recommends using this simple guide to determine whether you need to lose weight:

**Ideal weight for men:** 100-107 pounds (depending on frame) for a man who is 5 feet tall, plus an extra 7 pounds per additional inch. For example, a man who is 5 feet 10 inches tall should weigh between 170 (100 + 70) and 177 pounds (107 + 70).

**Ideal weight for women:** 100-105 pounds (depending on frame) for a woman who is 5 feet tall, plus an extra 5 pounds per additional inch. For example, a woman who is 5 feet 5 inches tall should weigh between 125 (100 + 25) and 130 pounds (105 + 25).

elderly women. The benefits of long-term regular exercise were similar to being three years younger, and reduced the risk of cognitive impairment by 20 percent.

## Eat Less for Better Memory

Research has also found that simply eating less food turns on the gene that stimulates production of the brain’s growth hormone, BDNF.

“Peer-reviewed studies show that a 30 percent calorie restriction dramatically increases BDNF,” Perlmutter says.

A German study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* compared the effects of two diets on elderly people during a three-month period. One diet reduced calories by 30 percent while the other allowed unlimited food.

Those on the restricted diet experienced dramatic improvements in memory, while those eating unlimited amounts experienced a slight memory decline. Other research has found that eating fewer calories reduces the risk for Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases, stroke, and other neurological disorders.

Reducing the amount you eat by nearly one-third may seem unrealistic at first. However, when taken in context, the idea seems much more reasonable, Perlmutter says.

“When you consider the fact that most Americans consume 25 to 30 percent more calories than they should on a daily basis, it isn’t excessive,” he notes.

Compared to 1970, Americans now consume, on average, more than 500 extra calories per day, with the lion’s share coming from increased intake of sugar in refined foods and beverages. Sugary calories also have the liability of inflating appetite and increasing cravings.

Simply cutting back on these refined sugars makes it easier to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and elevate levels of BDNF, which also regulates appetite. Even people who are not overweight should aim to improve the quality of their food.

Before making any significant changes in your diet, be sure to consult with your doctor.

## Activate Your Internal Detoxifiers

Reducing calories, along with ingesting specific nutrients, also activates an internal system that produces a powerful antioxidant called glutathione. This is vital because glutathione combats free radicals — atoms or molecules with unpaired electrons that can damage tissues they come in contact with.

Antioxidants that come from food do their job by neutralizing free radicals on a molecule-by-molecule basis. For instance, one molecule of vitamin C will neutralize one free radical molecule, and the vitamin will be used up in the process.

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## David Perlmutter



**David Perlmutter, M.D., FACN, ABIHM,** is a board-certified neurologist and fellow of the American College of Nutrition. He also has certification from the American Board of Integrative Holistic Medicine and is a leader in the field of nutritional influences in neurological disorders. He is a frequent contributor to scientific journals such as *The Journal of Neurosurgery*, and author of *Power Up Your Brain* and *The Better Brain Book*. His awards include the 2002 Linus Pauling Award and the 2010 Humanitarian of The Year from the American College of Nutrition. For more information, go to [www.perlhealth.com](http://www.perlhealth.com)



By Dr. Daniel G. Amen

## Pump Up Your Prefrontal Cortex for Better Performance

Are you the type of person who always goes for the risky investment that could wipe out your savings? Do you get so distracted with multi-tasking while driving that you go miles past your exit? Are you always playing catch-up because you showed up late for work?

If so, the problem could be all in your head ... in an area of your brain called the prefrontal cortex (PFC).

The PFC is the CEO of your brain. It acts like a supervisor for the rest of your brain and body. It is involved with forethought, judgment, impulse control, planning, attention, follow-through, empathy, and learning from mistakes.

When the PFC works well, it helps you think twice before signing off on that questionable investment, keeps you focused on the task at hand, and gets you to work on time. Having low PFC activity makes you impulsive, less focused, and more likely to be late.

If you want to perform at your highest level, you need to strengthen your PFC. Here are five ways to do it.

### 1. Do More Aerobic Exercise

Low PFC activity is associated with low levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine, and one of the best ways to boost dopamine is with aerobic exercise. Scientific evidence shows that aerobic exercise encourages the growth of new brain cells, boosts cognitive ability in people of all ages, and improves focus and attention.

People who have poor judgment and impulse control benefit greatly from daily aerobic exercise. I recommend burst training for a real brain boost. Walk fast (like you're late for an appointment) for at least 30 minutes every day. In addition, do four one-minute bursts when you walk or run as fast as you can.

### 2. Eat a High-Protein Diet

If you want to strengthen your PFC, avoid sugar, refined flour, and other simple carbohydrates. They tend to boost serotonin levels, which can lower activity in the PFC. Lean proteins boost dopamine to optimize the PFC to help you stay focused.

It is especially important to start your day with protein. In our society, we have it all backwards. For breakfast, we tend to eat cereal or muffins, which boost serotonin and promote relaxation, and go for the chicken or turkey at dinner. For your best brain

function, do it the other way around. Having some lean turkey or a protein-fruit shake in the morning can help you focus early in the day when you need it most.

### 3. Set Goals

The PFC is involved in planning. It needs clear direction. To pump it up, do an exercise called "The One-Page Miracle." Write down specific goals for different areas of your life, including overall health, relationships, work, money, and spiritual life. Display your One-Page Miracle where you can see it every day so you stay focused on the things that are important to you. When you focus better, you perform better.

### 4. Meditate

Research shows that meditation calms stress, enhances brain function, increases self-control, and improves focus. Meditation increases PFC activity in particular. Other studies have shown that it also improves attention and planning, reduces depression and anxiety, decreases sleepiness, and protects the brain from cognitive decline associated with aging. All of these benefits can help you make better decisions.

### 5. Practice Diaphragmatic Breathing

Patients who have trouble with decision-making tend to take shallow breaths. Shallow breathing reduces the amount of oxygen that reaches your brain, limiting its function. On the other hand, taking deep breaths relaxes muscles, relieves tension, and helps your brain function more efficiently.

As you inhale, let your belly expand. When you exhale, pull your belly in to push the air out of your lungs. This allows you to expel more air, which makes you inhale more deeply. Take 10 minutes, twice a day, to breathe this way for a clearer mind. □

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**Daniel G. Amen, M.D.**, is a psychiatrist, brain-imaging specialist, and the CEO and medical director of Amen Clinics, Inc. (ACI) in Newport Beach and Fairfield, Calif.; Tacoma, Wash.; and Reston, Va. ACI has the world's largest database of functional brain scans related to psychiatric medicine and the clinics have seen patients from 75 countries. Dr. Amen is an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry and human behavior at the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine. He is the author of 22 books and wrote and produced two PBS specials.

# Can Digestive Problems Cause a Domino Effect of Disaster?



## The Surprising Connection Long Overlooked by Conventional Medicine

If you are plagued with heartburn, gas or constipation, then you know how much poor digestion can impact your quality of life. However, you might not know that these problems may be precursors to more serious health issues with much more significant consequences. Unfortunately, this connection has been long overlooked by conventional medicine.

### The Truth Behind Most Digestive Problems

Most people associate digestive problems with eating the wrong foods. *But unfortunately, it's not that simple.* The fact is, poor digestion is caused by a bacterial imbalance in your intestines. Stress, poor diet, toxins and pharmaceutical drugs can kill off "friendly" bacteria, which you need for healthy digestion. When this happens, food essentially rots inside your intestines, causing problems like bloating and gas, as toxins and microbes build up in your system. This leads to numerous problems such as fatigue, weight gain, weak immunity and inflammation. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, repairing your digestive system can actually help you feel better from head to toe.

#### How Poor Digestion Affects the Entire Body

- Gas and bloating
- Aches and pains
- Skin problems
- Lack of energy
- Weight gain
- Weak immunity

### One Simple Solution

Probiotics are the beneficial bacteria that keep you healthy. Research shows that the simplest, most effective way to reinvigorate your digestion and enhance your overall health is to replenish the good bacteria in your intestines with probiotics. Yogurt and other fermented foods are good sources, however you'd have to eat substantial quantities daily to get results. According to *The Stop Aging Now Institute*, an authority on digestive health, taking an effective probiotic supplement is the most reliable, convenient and affordable way to get the benefits of probiotics, however you must be careful to choose the right one.

### How to Avoid Wasting Your Money

Probiotics are living organisms, and in order to ensure that they remain effective, they must be kept refrigerated from the time of manufacture until you consume them. Since this is nearly impossible to guarantee, most are literally dead weight by the

time they make it inside your body. To make sure you're not wasting your money, look for a probiotic made using Heat Stabilization Processing (HSP), which makes refrigeration unnecessary. The most effective formulas will also contain at least 8 billion CFU of multiple strains of probiotic bacteria, along with synergistic *prebiotic* ingredients, which help good bacteria adhere to the intestines.

### Helping Thousands Get Their Lives Back in Balance

*Stop Aging Now* has developed a breakthrough supplement called SUPER PROBIOTIC™. This advanced formula is made using Heat Stabilization Processing, so no refrigeration is required. In addition, it guarantees 10 billion CFU of the 3 most beneficial strains of probiotic bacteria and is enhanced with prebiotics for maximum effectiveness. According to leading experts, SUPER PROBIOTIC™ revitalizes digestion and overall health more effectively than any other supplement on the market. It is also very affordable. Comparable products can cost as much as \$50 per bottle, but SUPER PROBIOTIC™ is priced as low as \$12.49 per bottle!

**Try SUPER PROBIOTIC™ RISK FREE!**  
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#### Three Easy Ways to Order:

- 1. Toll-Free:** 800-627-9721 (Reference Code: PROSP11)
- 2. Online:** [www.StopAgingNow.com/Probiotic11](http://www.StopAgingNow.com/Probiotic11)
- 3. By Mail:** Complete the below order form and mail to:  
*Stop Aging Now*, Attn: Orders Dept,  
8825 Boggy Creek Road, Orlando, FL 32824



#### BEST DEAL

6 bottles + 2 FREE (an 8 month supply) - \$99.95 (\$12.49 per bottle)

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## Supplements Boost Brain Health

In addition to the nutrients in food, a program of supplements can help maintain brain health and create fertile ground for growing new brain cells. Such supplements include:

- DHA, a fat that enhances brain function. Take 1,000 mg daily, with or without food, all at once or divided into several doses throughout the day. The best source of DHA is algae.
- Alpha lipoic acid, a strong antioxidant. Take 600 mg daily of a time-release form (also called “controlled-release” or “sustained-release”) on an empty stomach or 30 minutes before meals.
- Nrf2 boosters, which help activate the protein that produces glutathione, the powerful free-radical-fighting enzyme. A formula containing these “Nrf2 activators” is available through natural health practitioners, or you can take each individually, one dose in the morning and another in the evening, with or without food:
  - Pterostilbene (pronounced “tero-STILL-bean”), a derivative of resveratrol; take 50 mg twice daily
  - Sulforaphane, a key therapeutic ingredient in cruciferous vegetables; take 30 mg twice daily
  - Curcumin (from turmeric), 200 mg twice daily
  - Green tea extract, 200 mg twice daily

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In contrast, our internal antioxidant defense system eliminates free radicals on an ongoing basis, without being used up or depleted. Glutathione is one of the substances our bodies produce to do this job. Our internal antioxidant system is much more effective than antioxidant nutrients in food or dietary supplements such as vitamin C.

Perlmutter explains that the production of glutathione and other enzymes that detoxify free radicals and toxins is triggered by a protein called Nrf2, which is found in all cells. Through diet, we can take steps to activate Nrf2 and increase production of glutathione and our other built-in detoxifiers.

Key foods that activate Nrf2 include broccoli, turmeric, green tea, and coffee, and resveratrol, a nutrient found in red wine.

It is equally important to avoid ingesting toxins that are sources of free radicals. The obvious ones are pesticides and artificial additives in foods and

beverages. However, sugary foods and drinks, refined carbohydrates, and modified fats — those that are “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” — also are toxic to the brain.

“There’s nothing magic about it,” Perlmutter says. “The brain is built from the things we eat.”

Therefore, we have to eat the good things that build a brain that’s flexible and quick and able to be responsive.”

## Good Diet Keeps Your Brain in Shape

Perlmutter recommends following a Mediterranean diet that is rich in fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, seeds, and whole grains, but contains little red meat or added sugars. Ideally, a person should eat fish two or three times per week and no processed or refined foods at all. Here are some other dietary suggestions to keep your brain in great shape:

- 1) **Choose Organic Food.** In particular, choose organic versions of the produce most likely to contain high levels of pesticides: celery, peaches, strawberries, apples, blueberries, nectarines, bell peppers, spinach, cherries, kale and collard greens, potatoes, and imported grapes.
- 2) **Get the Right Fats.** Fat makes up 70 percent of the brain. Modified fats, listed as “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” oils on food labels, are processed to become rigid, prolonging shelf life but impairing brain function. Instead, consume these beneficial fats:
  - Organic extra virgin olive oil: 1 tablespoon daily, may be added to salad dressing, drizzled over steamed vegetables, combined with freshly juiced vegetables, or used as a dip or spread on whole grain bread, but it should not be heated. If you use olive oil for cooking, consume an additional tablespoon uncooked.

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## Mind Health Insights

### Juggling Languages Improves Mental Abilities

Speaking multiple languages exercises the mind. It doesn't make people smarter, but it does improve the ability to edit out irrelevant information, focus on important facts, prioritize, and work on several tasks at once.

Knowing more than one language and choosing the appropriate words for a given situation is much like mental juggling, according to research presented at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C.

In day-to-day life, the process translates into more effective mental multi-tasking.

### Expectations Influence Pain Treatment

A gloomy outlook toward medical treatment may be a self-fulfilling prophecy, according to a study that used brain imaging to visualize how a person's thoughts, feelings, and experiences can influence drug effectiveness. The study, published in *Science Translational Medicine*, drew this conclusion after giving people different expectations about the effectiveness of a pain-relief drug.

Researchers told some of the subjects that the drug would have no effect, told some that it would diminish the sensation of pain, and told some that it would make the pain worse. Those who expected the drug to be effective experienced twice as much relief as the people who expected to obtain no benefit, although the no-benefit group did get some relief. However, those who expected the drug to make the pain

worse reported that their pain was unchanged.

In the study, pain was induced in the leg with a thermal device used in research settings. Brain scans showed that different expectations of treatment results brought about changes in physical responses related to the experience of pain. Among people who were optimists, fewer pain signals from the leg reached the spinal cord and brain.

### Processed Food Lowers IQ, Increases Depression

Children who eat a diet high in processed foods rich in fat and sugar during their first three years have a lower IQ at age 8 compared to children eating a diet high in fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains. This conclusion was reached by a study that examined nearly 4,000 children, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

Diet after age 3 did not have the same impact, and researchers noted that the brain grows at its fastest rate during the first three years of life. Other studies also have shown a link between diet in early childhood and later behavior and school performance.

Among adults, research has found that processed food increases the likelihood of depression. People who ate the most processed foods were 58 percent more likely to be depressed, according to a study of nearly 3,500 civil servants in England, published in *The British Journal of Psychiatry*.

To maintain a good mental outlook, researchers recommend eating fewer desserts with added sugars and less fried food, processed meat, refined grains, and high-fat

dairy products; and eating more vegetables, fruits, and fish.

### Neurological Dangers of Denture Adhesives

Many lawsuits have been filed against manufacturers of denture adhesives claiming neurological damage was caused by zinc in such products. However, dentists may not be informed adequately about the subject, according to a report from the University of Maryland Dental School, published in *General Dentistry*.

Zinc, an ingredient in many denture adhesives, is an essential mineral for the body, but too much can cause nausea, stomach ache, and mouth irritation. Longer-term, excessive zinc intake leads to build-up in the body and creates copper deficiency because the two minerals compete for absorption.

The resulting copper deficiency can damage the nervous system and cause neurological problems. Symptoms of copper deficiency include numbness or pain in the extremities, loss of balance, paralysis, difficulty walking, and, when optic nerves are damaged, loss of vision.

The report, which reviewed dozens of studies, found that damage most often occurs when denture adhesives with zinc are used in larger amounts than recommended on packaging. The excess can stem from applying too much adhesive to dentures or multiple applications per day.

In recent years, some leading denture adhesives have been reformulated without zinc. Some manufacturers even specialize in zinc-free adhesives and fixatives, which are safer options. □

- Organic virgin coconut oil: 1 tablespoon daily in the morning. Coconut oil can be added to smoothies, spread on whole grain bread, or taken in capsules.

**3) Indulge in Power Foods.** Certain foods turn on genes that enhance our internal antioxidant system, and should be included in our daily diets. These are chief ones:

- Cruciferous vegetables, including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli sprouts, arugula, watercress, Brussels sprouts, bok choy, kale, collards, kohlrabi, mustard, turnips, radishes, and rutabaga.
- Healthy beverages such as green tea, coffee, and red wine. If you are sensitive to caffeine, avoid it. If you don't usually drink alcoholic beverages, red or purple grape juices are great alternatives to red wine.

**4) Watch Out for Allergens.** Gluten and dairy products are allergens for some people. Gluten is found in wheat and other grains. In addition, both gluten and dairy are included as ingredients in many processed foods that are not obvious sources. If you suspect a sensitivity to either one, eliminate it from your diet for a few weeks and see if you feel better, or ask your doctor for a food allergy test.

## Live a Positive Life

All of the things that increase the levels of the brain's growth hormone, BDNF, also improve neuroplasticity, which is the ability of the organ to rewire itself for more optimum function. Living a positive life with spiritual influences has been shown to be just as important and powerful as diet and exercise.

Negativity, such as we see in the typical nightly newscast, reinforces the more primitive parts of the brain that produce a "fight-or-flight" response and trigger primitive types of behavior.

"The more you are exposed to negativity, the more you're drawn to it, because you've created a brain that seeks it out," Perlmutter says. "That's the downfall of our society."

Spiritual activity, including any type of prayer or meditation, has the opposite effect. "It actually changes the function of the brain," he says. "You can enhance the accessibility and the ease with which

## Three Common Myths About the Brain

**MYTH:** We have a fixed number of brain cells and it's all downhill from our teen years.

**FACT:** We grow new brain cells every moment of our lives.

**MYTH:** We can't change the hardware of our brains.

**FACT:** The brain is very plastic and can be remolded with new connections, pathways, and networks developing every single day. The more we pursue certain actions and thoughts, the more the brain is changed physically and functionally to enhance those functions.

**MYTH:** We only use 20 to 30 percent of our brain.

**FACT:** Leading-edge neuroscience indicates this is completely erroneous. We use 100 percent of our brain tissue, but only a fraction of its overall capacity.

you're able to get to the parts of the brain that cause us to be compassionate and empathetic."

Helping others or just giving a kind word, for example, actually access different parts of the brain than negative thoughts and images.

"It's been said that to teach a child not to step on a caterpillar is probably more important for the child than it is for the caterpillar," Perlmutter says.

To make sure that you are accessing the best parts of your brain, cultivate these habits:

- Start each day with prayer or meditation.
- Avoid exposing yourself to negative news in newspapers, on radio and TV, and online, especially in the morning.
- Do at least one thing each day to help someone else, without expectation of any direct reward.
- Associate with people who have a positive impact on you and others.
- Seek out joy and positivity in all aspects of your life, including work, personal relationships, hobbies, and other recreational activities.

The combination of living a positive life, following the spiritual practices of your choice, avoiding toxins, eating a beneficial diet, and getting daily exercise can transform your life and eventually our entire society.

"If everybody just did these things, we'd all be in great shape," Perlmutter says. □

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## Ask the Doctors

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**The Mind Health Report editors seek out top doctors across the nation to provide answers to your mind health concerns. Please include your full name, city, and state when submitting. If you have a question, please e-mail it to: [mindreport@newsmax.com](mailto:mindreport@newsmax.com).**

**I know that opium and cocaine can alter the brain in powerful ways. Are there any holistic approaches to treating these addictions besides the use of medications such as methadone?**

— Russ, Baltimore, Md.

**Dr. Gant responds:** Psychotropic drugs achieve their effects by mimicking the brain's "feel-good" chemicals, called neurotransmitters. For example, cocaine mimics dopamine, which is the "euphoria" transmitter that affects the experience of pleasure and pain. Opium-based drugs mimic enkephalins and endorphins, which are powerful natural pain relievers.



When a drug is used too much, the brain begins to make less and less of the natural neurotransmitter. Eventually, the neurotransmitter becomes so depleted that a drug user depends solely on the artificial chemical to achieve the effect that was once achieved by natural chemicals, and addiction is born.

Reversing the process entails stopping completely or tapering off the drug and supplying the brain with the necessary amino acids, fatty acids, vitamins, minerals, and nutritional cofactors to resynthesize the natural neurotransmitter again.

The exact nutrients depend upon the individual situation, but are available in combinations to help restore natural production of specific neurotransmitters. Nutrients also frequently are administered intravenously. I always test patients to determine their individual needs.

**Charles Gant, M.D., Ph.D.**, is in private practice at National Integrated Health Associates in Washington, D.C. He is a

frequent lecturer throughout the United States, and is the author of *End Your Addiction Now*, which describes specific protocols for beating addiction.

**I'm aware that fish oil is good for the brain. Which oils that can be used for cooking or in salads can benefit the brain?**

— Mary Ann, Dallas, Tx.

**Dr. Keenan responds:** Omega-3 oils are the most important ones for brain health. Although fish oil is the best source, there isn't a way to use it practically for cooking or in salads. Flaxseed and walnut oils contain a plant form of omega-3 fat, and can be used in salads. Although not everyone enjoys the taste of flaxseed oil, many people add it to smoothies for a health benefit.



For cooking, it's important to consider "smoke point," the temperature at which an oil degrades and produces harmful by-products that can cause oxidative damage and promote cancer. Because of its very low smoke point (about 220 degrees F), flaxseed oil should not be heated. Unrefined walnut oil and extra virgin olive oil (beneficial for vascular and brain health) have smoke points of about 320 degrees F, and can withstand pan frying on a low heat.

For grilling and deep frying, I recommend Malaysian palm oil, also called red palm oil. Of all the culinary oils, it contains the highest level of antioxidants, which reduce age-related damage to the brain. And it has a very high smoke point of about 470 degrees. When used for basting or in marinades, red palm oil neutralizes carcinogens generated by grilling meat.

Always store oils in a tightly sealed container, away from light and heat, or keep them in the fridge.

**Joseph Keenan, M.D.**, served on the faculty of the University of Minnesota and has been researching the role of nutrients in human health since 1987. He is the author of more than 50 scientific articles on the subject.

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