



Brain Health

Prioritizing Self-Care

As we navigate one of our most active seasons, it's essential that we recognize the importance of maintaining our brain health and well-being. We know this time of year may bring increased responsibilities, and as a practice, we want to ensure everyone has the tools and resources they need to thrive both professionally and personally.

Brain health plays a crucial role in our overall wellness, affecting how we think, feel, and act. It directly impacts our ability to make healthy choices, cope with stress, and maintain the energy and focus needed to excel in our roles. When we prioritize self-care, we're not only investing in our own well-being but also modeling healthy practices for our teams and contributing to a more positive work environment.

To support you during our peak renewal season, we've compiled a few valuable resources:

10 Brain-Health Boosting Habits - Simple, evidence-based practices you can incorporate into your daily routine, including expressing gratitude, practicing mindfulness, staying physically active, and setting healthy boundaries.

30-Day Self-Care Challenge - A structured approach to building sustainable self-care habits, with daily activities designed to support your emotional and brain wellness over the course of a month.

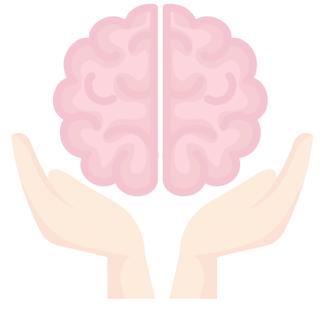
Additional Support - We also encourage you to explore Cottingham & Butler's free and comprehensive brain health resources available to all employees at www.cbmicrosite.com/cottinghambutler, which include:

- Coaching and therapy sessions with licensed professionals
- Medication management with psychiatrists
- Digital content and more!

Remember, taking care of yourself isn't selfish—it's essential. Small, consistent steps toward better brain health can make a significant difference in how you feel and perform. We're here to support you not just in achieving our business goals, but in maintaining your well-being along the way.

10 Brain-health Boosting Habits

Amid the hustle and bustle of everyday life, brain health can be a critical concern for many Americans. Brain health plays a huge role in your overall health and well-being. It affects everything, including how you think, feel and act, and helps determine how you make healthy choices and cope with stress. Because it's such a crucial component of your wellness, focusing on maintaining or improving your brain health is important.



Here are 10 ways to boost or prioritize your brain health everyday:



Express gratitude.

Taking five minutes daily to write down the things you are grateful for can help you appreciate the small joys in life, shifting your perspective and improving your outlook.



Practice mindfulness.

Focus on the present moment for a few minutes each day, acknowledging your thoughts and feelings without judgment.



Get moving.

Engaging in regular physical activity for at least 30 minutes most days of the week can benefit brain function, reduce anxiety and improve self-image.



Eat healthily.

A balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats can fuel your body and mind.



Get a good night's sleep.

Fatigued individuals typically experience drowsiness; mood changes; loss of energy and appetite; headaches; and a lack of motivation, concentration and alertness.



Spend time outdoors.

Getting outside can greatly improve your mood. Regular access to nature has also been connected to a lower risk of depression and improved concentration.



Engage in hobbies.

Make time for activities that bring you joy and fulfillment. Hobbies can provide an outlet for creativity, reduce stress and foster a sense of accomplishment.



Limit screen time.

In today's digital age, spending excessive time glued to screens is easy, especially on social media. Set boundaries around your screen time, especially before bedtime.



Connect with others.

Meaningful connections with friends and family are essential for brain health resilience. Try to make time for face-to-face interactions, phone calls or video chats.



Set boundaries.

Healthy boundaries, such as saying no when necessary and prioritizing your own needs, are vital for preserving your brain health and preventing burnout.

By incorporating these habits into your routine, you can take proactive steps to boost your brain health. Remember, small changes can make a significant difference over time. Contact a primary care doctor or a brain health professional if you or a loved one needs brain health guidance.

30-Day Self-Care Challenge

When we think of getting healthy, we often think of eating better and exercising more. But our emotional well-being is just as important as our physical health!

When you're ready to start your challenge, your mission is simple: **Practice one self-care activity** each day for 30 days in a row. Follow the guide below for ideas, or stick with what you know works for you. Either way, the goal is to focus on your emotional and mental wellness by taking care of your heart and mind.

Let's get to it!



Check off all the days when you practiced a self-care activity.

Click the squares on the left side of each day, or print this out and fill them in by hand.



1 The best way to start improving your mood is to take note of how you feel. **Jot down how you feel today** (or even every day). Over time, you may see patterns in how you feel a certain way, where, and around whom.



2 Why is self-care important to you? Maybe you want to feel more connected to your feelings. Maybe you want to feel more present in relationships. Maybe you're working through something from your past. Whatever it is, **write it down** to remind yourself what's in it for you.



3 **Talk it out.** Think of someone in your life who supports you, then reach out to them to share how you're feeling. You might text your best friend to tell them how happy you are, or call a family member to work through something that's making you sad or angry.



4 When you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, you can calm yourself with some simple deep breathing exercises. Try this **4x7x8 breathing technique** and see how it works for you.



5 Expressing your emotions is important! But it's not always appropriate to cry in a meeting or yell in front of your kids. **Find a place where you feel free** to express yourself. It could be in your car, on a solo walk, in therapy, or with a trusted friend or loved one.



6 Our thoughts affect our feelings. A regular **mindfulness meditation** practice can give you more freedom to choose which thoughts to focus on, and which ones to let go. Mindfulness can also prevent stress from building up! Give it a shot today.

30-Day Self-Care Challenge



7

Don't feel like talking or meditating? **Physical activity** is a great way to work through emotions. Take out your anger with a powerful workout, dance in your joy, do some stretches to work through boredom, or try another activity that connects your body to your feelings.



8

Your best shot at an emotionally balanced day happens before you even wake up! Getting a healthy amount of sleep is an important foundation for mental clarity and mood.



9

Music can evoke emotions for many people. Set some time aside today to **listen to a song** that means a lot to you and "gets you in your feelings"—anything that helps you process whatever is on your mind today.



10

If you want a balanced mind, it helps to have a **balanced plate**. Use this guide to make sure you're giving yourself proper nutrition. After all, your brain needs vitamins and nutrients just as much as the rest of your body!



11

What things make you happy? Do you like to build things or craft? Maybe you find joy in gardening or yard work. **List out a few activities that make you happy**. Keep that list handy so you can remind yourself of some options when you need more cheer in your life.



12

Stress is a really common emotion. But you can work through it. Here are **8 ways to better manage stress** in your life.



13

Remind yourself of your achievements by writing them down. Quitting tobacco, losing weight, raising kids, paying off debt, getting an education—these are just a few examples of amazing things you may have accomplished. When you start to doubt yourself, review your list.



14

Want to try mindfulness, but don't feel like sitting and meditating? This **mindful walking activity** might be just what you need. Engage your mind and body together with this short guided exercise.



15

"I'm no good at this; I should just give up." Sound familiar? All-or-nothing thinking can convince us to throw in the towel before we've finished the fight. Here are some helpful steps to **reframe all-or-nothing thinking** so you can stick with your goals.

30-Day Self-Care Challenge



16



You're halfway through! What's working so far? **Write down** which self-care tactics have gone well for you, and repeat them moving forward.

17



Did you know going for a walk can improve your mood and **lower your risk for depression**? **Take a walk today** to ground yourself and lift your spirits.

18



Remember: No feeling lasts forever. If you feel a good feeling today, take a moment to be grateful for it. And if you feel upset or down today, rest assured that it will pass.

19



Feeling too anxious or stressed to fall asleep? These **5 bedtime journaling prompts** can help clear your head so you can rest peacefully.

20



It's important to stay informed. But watching or reading too much news every day can really weigh on our hearts and minds. Today, **try limiting your news intake** to just once, or even none!

21



Clenched jaw? Furrowed brow? Tight shoulders? Sore back? We store our emotions in our bodies, and it's important to let them out. Try a simple **progressive muscle relaxation** exercise to release some tension and soothe your body.

22



One way to feel more positivity is to help spread it. **Show someone some kindness today.** You could pay them a compliment, tell them something you admire about them, or even just do them a favor.

23



Making changes is hard. That's why it's common to want to give up on our goals—even 30-day challenges like this one! But when you recognize that fatigue, you can work through it. Try these **7 steps to overcome burnout.**

24



Getting outside and experiencing nature can have a big impact on our mental well-being. Today, schedule a little time for a neighborhood stroll, some scenic sightseeing, a picnic in a nearby park, or even just a restful moment sitting in your own backyard.

30-Day Self-Care Challenge



25

Many of us turn to food when we're feeling angry, lonely, bored, or even happy. Emotional eating is common, but it can lead to a complicated relationship with food. If you rely on treats and food for emotional support, here are some tips to **break free from emotional eating**.



26

Stay hydrated! You might be surprised how much a lack of water can impact your mood. Depending on your health needs, aim to drink about **3 liters (or 12 cups) of water each day**. (People who have been diagnosed with chronic kidney disease or heart failure should check with a doctor first.)



27

Ready for a more advanced skill? Try **feeling time move through you**. This meditation is a powerful way to help calm and center yourself.



28

Getting more in tune with our emotions can bring up a lot for people. If you feel like you could use more guidance from an expert, consider **reaching out to a licensed therapist or counselor** for more support.



29

Almost done! Finish strong with this guided **loving kindness meditation**. This is a great exercise to fill yourself with positivity and gratitude.



30

Congratulations, you've completed the challenge! Do you notice any changes after completing this challenge? You may have surprised yourself!



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