

A number of studies have indicated that people who are mentally stimulated have a much lower chance of developing debilitating memory disorders such as Alzheimer's. Senior citizens who regularly engage in activities that allow them to exercise their minds are also at a reduced risk of developing memory problems. What this shows is that there is a connection between mental stimulation and the development of diseases which effect the memory.

Mental stimulation can come in a variety of different forms. Those who are socially active tend to have higher levels of memory, while individuals who suffer from depression or low self-esteem will be at a greater risk for developing Alzheimer's. Keeping your brain fit is just as important as keeping your body fit.

Studies have consistently shown that individuals who were 75 years of age who regularly read books and played games each week were much less likely to get dementia. The brain is a part of your body, and you must exercise it if you want to have a sharp memory. The connection between mental stimulation and memory is strong. The good thing about exercising your mind is that it can be done for free, or at an extremely low cost.

Here are 10 tips to help you maintain optimal brain health.

**1. Exercise Your Mind** – The brain is a muscle. Like a muscle, it too must be used and exercised, lest it atrophy and become feeble. 20 minutes, 3 times a week is enough to keep your thinker in tip top shape.

**2. Healthy Diet** – Food comprises the building blocks of your body. All your cells are made of things you've eaten, broken down, and recombined into organs, blood, and bone. You literally are what you eat. Therefore it stands to reason that you should eat healthy foods and less of the junky, bad things. Include plenty of anti-oxidants and a variety of vegetables.

**3. Learn Something New** – As you learn and think new things, your brain forges new synapses and pathways, similar to how muscles rebuild themselves better and stronger when you exercise. Pick up a new language and learn challenging new vocabulary, or initiate a new hobby, like playing an instrument.

**4. Get Enough Sleep** – Without proper amounts of sleep (6-8 hours per day), the brain can no longer function at optimal capacity. Sleep is the brain's (and the body's) time to recharge.

**5. Devise a Memory Strategy** – Mnemonics, or a pattern of associations used to remember something, are a great tool for improving your memory. If you always forget Reed's name, but you clearly remember his red hair, you can think about red and Reed together. When you see his hair, you'll remember his name.

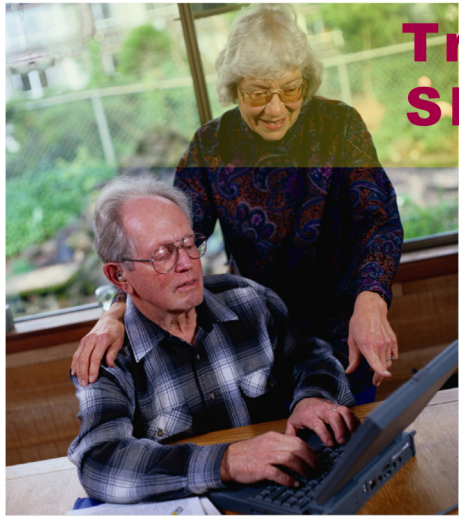
**6. Socialize With Others** – We are social creatures. We are meant to interact with one another, and we have large segments of our brain dedicated to processing social interactions. If we neglect those interactions, we are neglecting a part of our brain as well. Simple conversation can stimulate the brain and fill you with revitalizing energy. *(continued on next page)*

**7. Organize Your Space** – Whether it's at the office or at home, devising a layout for your things and sticking to it is a great way to exercise the mind. When we all have so many things to keep track of, it can be a daunting challenge. Organizing your things helps you remember where things are and makes the brain work in a different way.

**8. Limit Television Viewing** – TV can be great sometimes. However, when we watch TV, we frequently veg out. The brain puts itself on standby. Over time, this inactivity of the mind can lead to mental degeneration. Instead of watching TV, read a book or sit in a park and enjoy nature. The list of alternatives is endless. When you do feel the urge to watch TV, be sure to surf the channels. Viewing a variety of content keeps the brain actively processing with each channel flip.

**9. Access New Information** – There is always something new to learn. If you find yourself curious about something, look it up, learn about it. Knowledge is power!

**10. Solve Brain Teasers** – What better way to exercise the mind than to engage in activities designed to challenge it. Do crossword puzzles or Sudoku, perhaps even a word jumble.



## Tricks and Aids for Improving Short and Long-Term Memory

There are some tricks and aids you can use to improve your ability to remember things:

- Repeat things. Saying things out loud will strengthen your memory for them. You get feedback by saying them out loud too, which will help you remember the information.
- Envision the information. If you can imagine what the item is that you are trying to remember, you'll likely to retain it. Visual images are the easiest type of information to

remember.

- Create an association. Associate the information you're trying to remember with something you that's familiar to you. For example, if you've met someone new who looks like a friend from high school, try linking the new person's name with your friend's name.
- Become emotionally involved. This can improve your memory of certain information. If you create a funny or unusual association, you are more likely to remember it.
- Sleep on it. We often solidify memories over night. Give yourself some time to develop recall for new information.
- Limit size. It's easier to remember small chunks of information, so memorize small pieces of information at a time.