

The #1 Activity for Brain Health Will Surprise You

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If David Letterman had a reverse order Top Ten list for keeping an active mind, it would be funnier than this, but not as useful:

10. Don't smoke at all or drink to excess. But I won't whine if you have a little wine.

9. Eat a healthy diet. You know the drill – lots of fruits and veggies and whole grains, and go easy on the fats, sugars and red meat. But don't get overly stressed about it. Studies seem to show that eating in a pleasant atmosphere with companions you enjoy is as important as eating the right foods.

8. Treat yourself to pleasure. For some, the top two are chocolate and sex and the order is debatable. For many, their primary pleasures are not readily attainable. Don't despair. Anticipating pleasure can have the same positive effects on your brain as attaining it. Interesting, no?

7. Look at life with wonder. Stay curious. Einstein said, "Never lose a holy curiosity." Always be interested (and the side effect is that others will find you interesting).

6. is similar to 7. Variety is the spice of life, or put another way, **the brain craves novelty.** I'm not saying you shouldn't keep doing crossword puzzles if you enjoy them, but the brain has many other parts that need stimulation.

5. Fun fuels the brain. Do something that amuses you at least once a day.

4. Laugh; this may seem like a repeat of 5. but there's difference: your sense of humor is the most creative part of your brain, because it forces you to look at life from a different angle. Unleash your creativity.

3. Be of good cheer. At least one study has shown that you can add as much as seven years to your life by having a positive attitude toward aging. Even if you don't add that many, you'll enjoy the years you have more.

2. Surround yourself with friends. Isolation is the enemy. Chat with someone you value and who values you back – *every* day.

1. Move your body – walk, run, swim, bike, stretch, dance, do your own thing; just keep moving. *Nothing* is better for your mind.

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