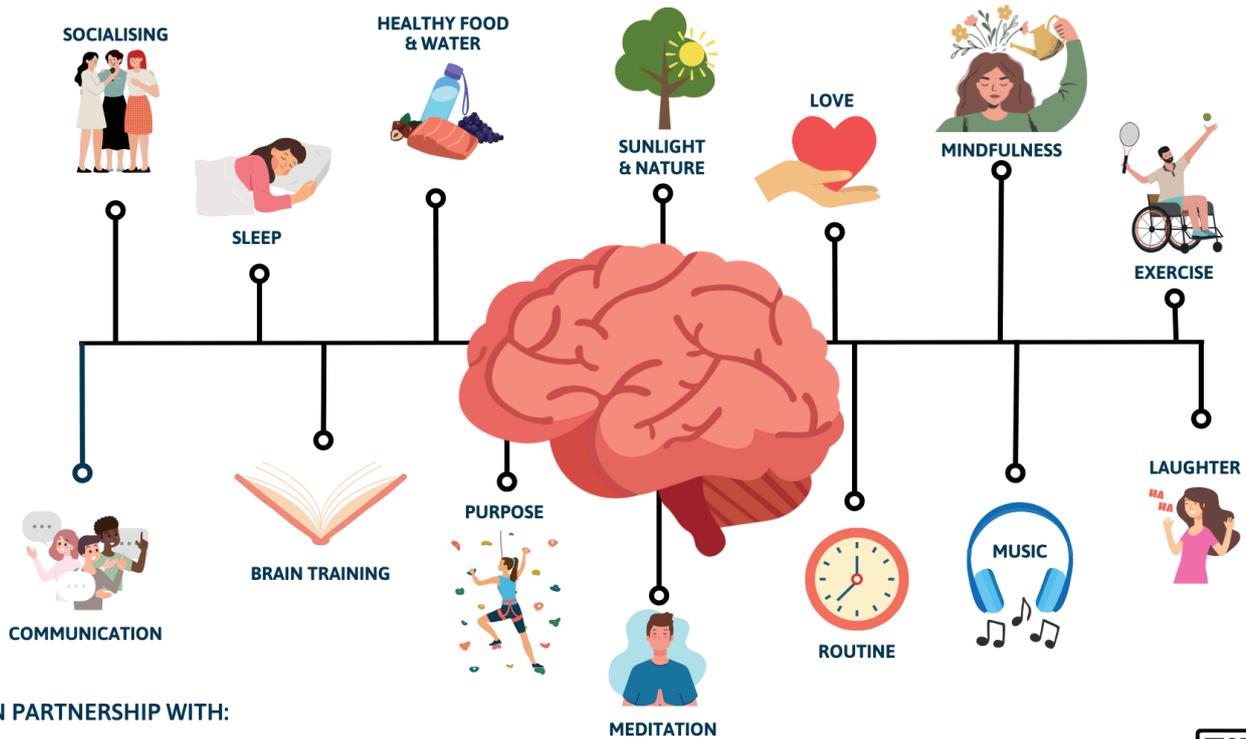


YOUR BRAIN WORKS WELL WITH...



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



Brain Health Board and supporting resources

This resource may be used alongside the Brain Health Board when talking about, reflecting upon or teaching aspects of brain health and mental wellness. At the end of the resource, you will find additional reading materials to support professional knowledge and understanding (this knowledge may not be at the appropriate level for children and young people but will support professional staff to have knowledge and confidence to discuss these aspects with them).

Socialising

The activity of spending time with friends or with other people in order to enjoy yourself.

This supports your brain by:

- **Reducing feelings of loneliness.**
- **Helping to sharpen memory and cognitive skills.**
- **Increasing your sense of happiness and wellbeing.**



Sleep

It is recommended that children aged 6–12 years old get 9–12 hours' sleep per night.

Sleep is important to your brain because it:

- **Helps your brain to grow and how well it works.**
- **Supports the parts of the brain that control attention and memory.**

A lack of sleep can cause:

- **Thinking problems**
- **Anxiety**
- **Aggressive behaviours**



Healthy food and water/hydration



Eatwell Guide

Check the label on packaged foods

Each serving (150g) contains

Energy 1046kJ 250kcal	Fat 3.0g	Saturated 1.3g	Sugars 34g	Salt 0.9g
	LOW	LOW	HIGH	MED
13%	4%	7%	38%	15%

of an adult's reference intake
Typical values (as sold) per 100g: 697kJ/ 167kcal

Choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugars

Use the Eatwell Guide to help you get a balance of healthier and more sustainable food. It shows how much of what you eat overall should come from each food group.



Water, lower fat milk, sugar-free drinks including tea and coffee all count.

Limit fruit juice and/or smoothies to a total of 150ml a day.



Eat less often and in small amounts

Per day  2000kcal  2500kcal = ALL FOOD + ALL DRINKS

Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

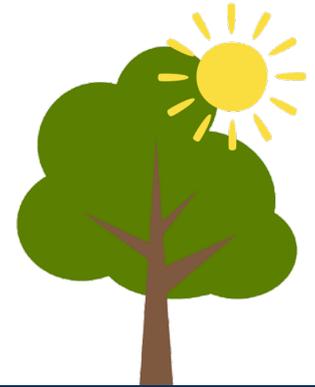
© Crown copyright 2016

It is important for children to have a balanced, varied diet to make sure they get all the nutrients and energy their bodies need to grow, work properly, maintain a healthy weight, and feel good. The Eatwell Guide is a key resource on healthy and sustainable eating developed by Public Health England, with versions also available for vegetarians and vegans.

Hydrating the body is crucial; the brain and heart consist of 72% water. Dehydration can lead to headaches and in extreme cases cause the brain to shrink. Choose water, low-fat milk and sugar-free drinks for healthy hydration.

Sunlight and Nature

Doing things like growing food or flowers, exercising outdoors or being around animals can have several positive effects.



It can:

Improve your mood

Reduce feelings of stress or anger

Help you take time out and feel more relaxed

Improve your physical health

Improve your confidence and self-esteem

Help you be more active

Help you meet new people and reduce loneliness

Connect you to your local community

Help you feel more connected to nature

Provide peer support

Love

To like or enjoy something very much, or the feelings or emotions you have towards a person or a pet, can have a positive effect on our brain and mental health. Feeling loved is one of a human's basic needs.



Maslow's theory on the Hierarchy of Needs (1943) states that, socially, people need love, acceptance, and to feel we belong.



Credit: Joshua Seong / Verywell

Mindfulness

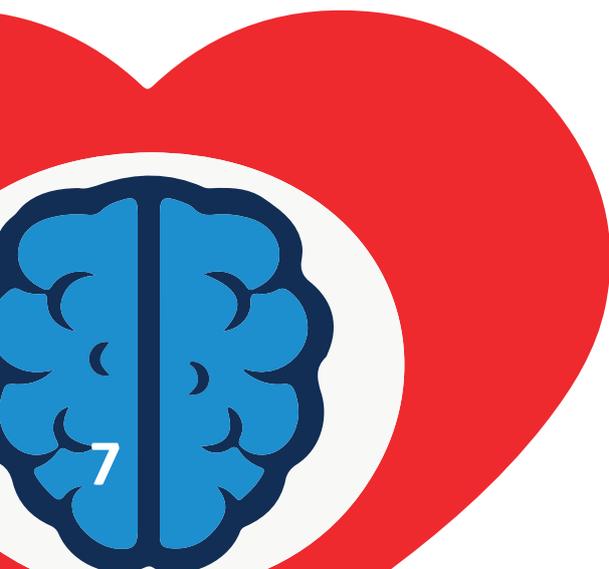
Being more aware of your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.



Exercise

Exercise and being physically active benefits health in so many ways. It preserves muscle strength, keeps your heart strong, maintains a healthy body weight, and can prevent diseases. Exercise benefits the brain too. Many studies have suggested that the parts of the brain that control thinking and memory are larger in volume in people who exercise than in people who don't. One finding is that regular exercise over six months or a year may increase in the volume of selected brain regions.

Exercise can also boost memory and thinking indirectly by improving mood and sleep, and by reducing stress and anxiety. Children and young people (5–18 years) should be physically active for at least 60 minutes every day.



Communication



Communication (talking, making sounds and gestures, creating written words) is a process that engages different areas of the brain. One area, called the prefrontal cortex, supports higher-order cognitive functions like analysing information and making decisions. Broca's area, a small part in the left area of the prefrontal cortex, supports language production and fluency, while the auditory and visual processing centres of the brain work together to decode spoken words and interpret nonverbal cues like hand gestures and eye movements.

Communication supports pathways that connect right and left brain and lead to neuroplasticity, which is how repeated communication supports the brain to 'remember' how to communicate and adapt in the future.

Brain Training

Brain training involves activities designed to challenge and improve cognitive abilities, like memory, attention, and problem-solving.

It can involve various activities, including games, puzzles, learning new skills, or engaging in mentally stimulating activities (i.e. things that make you think), like crosswords, board games, online puzzles and challenges.



Purpose



Having a strong sense of purpose can support brain health by promoting better cognitive function, stress management, and overall mental wellbeing.

It can also reduce the risk of cognitive disease such as dementia, especially in older adults. Purpose in life can lead to increased resilience, better sleep, and healthier lifestyle choices.

Meditation

Meditation is a practice that involves focusing or clearing the mind to achieve a state of calm and clarity. It can be used to reduce stress, anxiety, and improve overall wellbeing.

Meditation can involve various techniques, including focusing on the breath, body sensations, or sounds in the world around us.



Routine



Routines support the brain by reducing cognitive load, conserving energy, and enhancing focus, while also providing a sense of predictability and stability that can reduce stress and anxiety. Timetables at school create a routine and create a positive learning environment.

Diaries or whiteboard notes for days of the week help us prioritise and remember tasks. These written routines support us by reminding us what is happening each day, helping things run smoothly and reducing stress.

Music

Music supports brain function and wellbeing by stimulating various brain regions. Music can boost mood and reduce stress, improve cognitive skills, and even enhance memory. It can also help regulate emotions, provide motivation, and promote relaxation.



Laughter

Having a laugh draws people together socially in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body.

Laughter impacts the body physically by strengthening your immune system, diminishing pain, and mentally boosting mood by protecting you from the damaging effects of stress. Nothing works faster or is more dependable to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh.



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This guide has been developed by the Brain Health Boards working group between the University of Hull and P.A.U.L For Brain Injury. Version 1, July 2025.