



The Upbeat

November 2021, Volume 4



To all our members:

The fall season brings up back-to-school memories and feelings for many of us, even if we received our final degree a long time ago. In this issue, we invite you to take advantage of the season to focus on your continued learning and brain health, no matter what your age!

We're also introducing in this issue of The Upbeat two new regular features that we're pretty excited about. "MemberSpeak" will spotlight member voices on a particular theme each issue. We'll announce the upcoming theme's question in each issue and encourage you to send us your answer! The second new feature is "Caregiver's Corner," which will always be on the last page or inside cover of this newsletter. Please share it with any of the caregivers in your life and feel free to read it yourself, too, if you find the content of interest!

There are so many ways to keep our minds active and engaged. The National Institute of Health recommends several. Read books and magazines. Play games. Take or teach a class. Learn a new skill or hobby. Work or volunteer. The science is still mixed, but several studies suggest that keeping an active mind can improve memory and thinking ability. And the data does confirm that these types of activities help the brain to be more adaptable. After all, isn't adaptability the key to any successful journey? Here is to your successful journey!

Mark Friedman

VP Services & Operations, Assured Allies

Three Tips for a Healthy Brain



By Katelynn Dornbusch, OTD, OTR/L

Brain health is not just about memory and thinking clearly; it is essential to balance, sensation, strength, and coordination. As you age, your brain goes through many changes. To maintain your brain health, here are three simple steps you can take:



Manage Your Health

In addition to a healthy lifestyle, monitoring your blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and blood sugar are all essential to maintaining good brain health. As a result, staying up to date with your healthcare providers and appointments is crucial. If managing your health seems daunting, start by making an appointment with your primary care physician to talk about your health and any questions or concerns you might have.

Be Physically Active

One of the most important things you can do to support your brain health is to stay physically active. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that generally fit older adults get 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic activity each week, including balance and strength training. Before starting any exercise program, however, remember to first talk with your doctor to make sure the physical activity is appropriate for you.

Need some inspiration and support? Check out **SilverSneakers** (www.silversneakers.com), a wellness program for older adults 65+ that has no additional cost for individuals with eligible Medicare plans. Your local gym or YMCA/YWCA is a good bet for yoga, tai chi, or even dancing classes. There are also many free or low-cost exercise videos online. A daily brisk walk around your neighborhood is an easy way to get moving!

Stay Engaged

Staying engaged is a vital ingredient of brain health at any age. Socializing with friends, family, and community members nourishes your mind and reminds you that you're not alone. Volunteering, hobbies, and book clubs are great ways to connect with others and enjoy a sense of purpose. You can always try something new too! Your local senior center is a good resource for low or no-cost classes and activities.

Keep your Brain Healthy with Games and Continuing Education



By Angelina Portuense

Greetings! I am Angelina, an Ally at Assured Allies. Members often ask me about how to keep their brain healthy. Playing games that focus on memory, logic, and response time or continuing your education are wonderful ways to keep your mind sharp. To make it easier for you, here are some ideas to get you started!



Stimulating Games

Have fun while also giving your brain a workout! For online gaming, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) is a great place to start. Go to games.aarp.org to find free games like solitaire, mahjongg, word, and 10x10.

Lumosity (www.lumosity.com) is an online brain-training program that exercises your mind through short games designed by neuroscientists. Sign up for a free account to enjoy three games per day or subscribe for limitless play. Lumosity tracks your progress over time.

If online gaming isn't your thing, purchase a puzzle book or make a habit of doing the daily puzzle in your morning newspaper. Classic puzzles never go out of style! Crosswords work on your verbal skills, creative thinking, and recall across a broad knowledge base. Sudoku works on your logic and short-term memory.



Continuing Education

Continue your education from the comfort of your home! Universities around the world offer free online courses in a huge array of topics, from geology to watercolor art to beginning Spanish. Here are two free resources for you to check out:

- **Academic Earth** (www.academicearth.org) offers free online lectures from top universities like Harvard, Oxford, and Princeton. You can also select a course based on your interests.
- **Open Culture** (www.openculture.com) offers free online courses, audio books, movies, podcasts, and language courses. Learn ancient Greek or listen to a Jane Austin audiobook. The possibilities are endless!

If your home lacks internet access, go online at your local library. You can also ask if they have discount tickets to local museums or know of local course offerings for older adults.

If you have a favorite game or online course you've enjoyed, I'd love to know! Email me at newsletter@assuredallies.com.



MemberSpeak

What is one of your favorite school memories?

Well, I had two really good friends in high school, Annette and Beatrice. My mother worked a lot and their mothers did not, so the two mothers had the three of us. One mother would have us at one time baking something, and another mother at another time would have us doing crafts. They kind of rotated, and we all became very, very close. And of course we lost each other --- going to different colleges and getting married and all that. We lost track of each other, but [they] ...got me through high school, because things at home weren't very good.

It was wonderful, I close my eyes and see us walking to these different places. That is a good memory. These moms were just so warm and welcoming and fun! "

Shirley A., age 86.

For our next issue, we're looking for members to answer the question, "What is your favorite part of the day?"

Please reach out to your Ally to send in your answer or email us at newsletter@assuredallies.com.

Healthy Brain Food

According to Harvard Medical School, there are four foods that are especially good at boosting brain power: leafy greens, fatty fish, berries, and walnuts. Happily, it's easy to make a delicious salad meal with all of the above! Start with a bed of salad greens on a plate (pre washed bagged salad greens make this super easy!). Add canned or hot smoked salmon (delicious and displayed with other refrigerated seafoods in your supermarket). Sprinkle on optional berries, walnuts, and any other vegetables you please. Drizzle with your favorite dressing or olive oil and vinegar. Enjoy!



Five tips for staying safe at home during the winter



By Marissa Badler, MSW, LICSW, CCM



Those of us living in colder climates are woefully aware of the perils of winter. Everyday activities like walking outside, driving to a friend's house, or even just staying warm at home become more hazardous. Here are some tips for how to stay safe in the winter:

- 1 Take steps to prevent falls:** It is much easier to fall during the winter due to the snow, ice, and fewer hours of daylight. To prevent falls outside, wear shoes with good traction, walk slowly and cautiously, and bring a flashlight. Ask someone to winterize and shovel your driveway and walkways. If you're used to being active outside, consider how you may be able to keep your body active indoors. If you're going to walk outside, know your limits and take precautions to prevent falls. Also, carry a charged cell phone in case of an emergency.
- 2 Stay warm:** Older adults are at an increased risk of hypothermia due to age-related changes in our bodies. Make sure you wear layers of warm clothes, including gloves, a hat, and a scarf. Look out for signs of hypothermia, including fatigue, confusion, problems walking, and slowed breathing or heart rate.
- 3 Drive safely:** Poor winter road conditions increase the risk of accidents. Consider "winterizing" your car (check and change the antifreeze, tires, and windshield wipers). Avoid icy roads, and wait to drive until after the roads have been cleared. Keep emergency supplies like jumper cables, blankets, extra warm clothes, rock salt, a shovel, a snow brush, water, and food in your car. And ALWAYS bring a charged cell phone with you!
- 4 Keep your home safe:** Even indoors there are cold-weather risks. Fireplaces and space heaters can cause fires, and other heat sources can leak carbon monoxide. Place smoke and carbon monoxide detectors around your home and make sure to check and change the batteries. Keep space heaters away from anything flammable, like curtains or blankets. Have your chimney inspected once a year. Know the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning, such as headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and blurred vision.
- 5 Have an emergency plan:** Winter storms can cause power outages and make it difficult to get outside for several days at a time. Have an emergency plan for winter storms. Make sure you have extra supplies at home like food, water, medications, blankets, flashlights, and candles. Consider buying a rechargeable external battery for your cell phone or other electronic devices. Create a plan with local family or friends in case you need somewhere warm to go if you lose power. You may also want to call your town or local Council on Aging to identify the warming centers in your area.

By making a plan and being prepared, it is possible to keep yourself safer during the colder months.

Caregiver Corner | Getting Smart About Smart Home Devices



By Katharine de Baun

Smart devices can help older adults live independently, but too often they don't go according to plan. Either the older adult never engages, doesn't receive adequate support, is afraid to break the device, or views it as a nuisance or even a menace. The following tips will help ensure that when you do spend the time and money to install a smart device, it makes a positive difference in their life and yours.

Assess smart home readiness

The digital divide varies wildly. Is your elder open-minded and familiar with new technology or defensive and dismissive? If they are already using a smart screen or speaker, they can download apps to control and/or voice-activate a range of smart home devices. If they aren't using a smart device at all or only within a very narrow range of function, then installing other smart devices in the home is going to involve a steep learning curve. If they rely exclusively on landlines and cable TV, consider standalone smart plugs, doorbells, and lights that operate with both a traditional (manual) and a smart interface.

Tech hurdles

High speed internet is required for most smart devices, but 22 million older Americans still lack access. If this is a problem, try [AgingConnected.org](https://www.agingconnected.org), a non-profit that matches seniors with affordable internet options by ZIP code. Best Buy also has dedicated resources to help seniors get online. Beyond access, the top three barriers to senior tech entry are cost, complexity, and security. Installation and subscription fees add to the cost of the device itself. Configuring and customizing a new device, which often pops out of its packaging with no manual, and learning how to use it can be complex. Plan ahead for all involved to achieve basic competency. Last but not least, many older adults have privacy concerns. And many don't like monitoring devices -- they feel like they're being watched. Think ahead about how you can help address their concerns.

Discuss together first

It's tempting to bypass this step, especially when considering a smart device as a gift. Surprise! Your loved one may not tell you that the digital photo frame you got for their birthday went dark a day after you set it up and was moved behind a large plant. If they're not on board with your gift in advance, this sort of tech fail is a distinct possibility.



No replacement for you

Smart devices can help keep an older person safe and provide relief for caregivers, but they should never replace human touch and care. A monitoring device, for example, still requires a person to take note and make decisions if a dangerous situation occurs.

EDITOR'S NOTE

We hope you enjoyed this edition of "The Upbeat." Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends, family and neighbors as well.

We welcome any feedback, comments, or questions you may have. Please reach out to us at newsletter@assuredallies.com. If you prefer to receive this newsletter in electronic format, contact us as well.