



THINK *Healthy*

A Brain Health Booklet

Engage Your Brain

The most complex organ in your body, your brain controls every aspect of your life, and is always changing. As we experience the world, practice new habits, and learn new information, our minds undergo what is known as “brain plasticity,” or the ability to grow and even repair connections in the brain. As you age, your lifestyle has a profound impact on your level of plasticity. Try the following tips to show a little love to your most valuable asset:



Get Moving

Engaging in 30 minutes of regular movement every day will help elevate your heart rate, increasing blood flow to both the brain and body.



Learn Something New

When you learn new things, your brain actually grows! Try a new game, learn a new hobby, or try a new activity you have never done before.



Eat Up and Drink Less

Nutrient-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein sourced from plants and fish may improve brain health. Remember that alcohol metabolizes differently in older adults and can impact brain function, so drink in moderation!



Stay Connected

Continue to do the activities you love with the people you love. Socialization has been shown to reduce the risk of cognitive change.



Get Some Sleep

Getting at least 7 to 9 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night will help keep your brain functioning at its best. Inadequate sleep can result in problems with memory and thinking.



Follow your heart

Evidence shows that risk factors for cardiovascular disease and stroke—such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes—negatively impact your cognitive health. Keep your heart healthy and protect your brain at the same time.



Creative Minds & Healthy Brains

Any given Monday, just after lunchtime, you can find assisted living and memory care residents of Eskaton Village Roseville enjoying art, conversation, and a little Frank Sinatra. Art teacher Kim De Lorenzi has been teaching art classes at Eskaton communities for the last several years, combining fine motor skills and creativity with socialization and learning. Just one of the many beneficial Life Enrichment programs at EVR, staff and residents alike say it's certainly a favorite.

Recent studies have found a significant connection between art and cognitive health. In addition to alleviating symptoms of stress and anxiety among older adults (particularly those with chronic conditions like dementia or Parkinson's), therapeutic art experiences promote the growth of new brain cells, making the brain more efficient, regardless of age.

Beyond the physical benefits, the advantages of creative pursuits are easily identified by the smiles and laughs filling the art room. Residents of all ages and abilities gather around their work stations, oil pastels of every hue clutched in hand as they study their current projects and decide where their next stroke of color will go. Besides socialization, these classes afford Eskaton residents opportunities for self-expression. "They see that they can still learn no matter their age, that they can improve over time," Kim says. "I definitely see their confidence grow."

Inventive Life Enrichment programming is only one way Eskaton is Transforming the Aging Experience. For more information, visit us at: eskaton.org/life-enrichment or contact your local Eskaton community.

Ask The Expert

Tiffany Paige - The Hummingbird Project

Tiffany Paige is a Hummingbird project manager with Sage Eldercare Solutions. Under the direction of Kari Rogenski, The Hummingbird Project is a therapeutic activity program dedicated to improving quality of life for older adults experiencing cognitive and physical change.



How does The Hummingbird Project work, and what are the objectives of the program?

Through one-on-one activity sessions, planned outings, and therapeutic activity kits, The Hummingbird Project pairs therapeutic activity specialists with clients to help them reengage in old passions and explore new interests. Our goal is to find creative ways to help our clients stay in touch with things that bring them joy and purpose, and to create situations where people are able to express and introduce themselves to their communities in new ways. The more engaged our clients are, the larger their desire to stay alive and thrive.

How does participation in The Hummingbird Project support a client's well-being?

The Hummingbird Project recognizes the strong link between staying connected to meaning, purpose and value, and staying physically and mentally healthy. Using the seven domains of wellness (creative, intellectual, spiritual, environmental, vocational, emotional, and physical) we craft a personalized experience that addresses a few of these domains during each visit. Physical wellness can mean exercise, but what about getting outside and connecting with

the actual physical world? Seeing the trees bloom and feeling the wind on your skin and enjoying a snack, really savoring the juiciness of the grapes and the flavor of the strawberries. That all touches physical quality of life, but spills over into emotional and spiritual domains of wellness, as well.

In your opinion, what are the key ingredients for a brain-healthy lifestyle?

Being physically active, eating healthy and experiencing joy are essential. Movement literally changes our physical and mental state in a positive way, and studies show healthy eating is one of the best preventative measures for cognitive decline. Studies also indicate a significant correlation between brain health and happiness, so by alleviating the four A's (aggression, anxiety, apathy, agitation) for an older adult, that person may stay healthier, longer!

To learn more about The Hummingbird Project and how to connect with a therapeutic activity specialist for you or a loved one, visit hummingbirdproject.net or call **(916) 760-7305** for more information.

Train Your Brain

Here are a few brain-strengthening exercises to get your mental muscles in tip-top shape!



Word and Number Games



Video and Computer Games



Matching Games



Playing Musical Instruments



Solitaire and Other Card Games



Basic Math Problems



Brain Teasers



Memorizing Games



Jigsaw Puzzles



Learning Something New

Mind Spa



After all that hard work, treat your brain to a mental retreat!

- 1. TAKE A BREAK** – Athletes need recovery time after a workout, and so does your brain! Find a quiet space free from distractions for an hour and focus on breathing deeply and gently. Try to do this 3 -5 times a week to give your mind the rest it needs!
- 2. PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT** – Mental exercise should be a part of a weekly workout plan, just like physical exercise. If you engage in activities that fail to interest you or bring you joy, it will be a lot harder to stick with them, so make sure whatever you choose makes you happy and keeps you engaged.
- 3. RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT** – Just like a car, putting your mind's "pedal to the metal" isn't going to keep the engine running in top shape for long. Start mental exercises slowly, increasing the difficulty level as you improve. If you are experiencing headaches or tingling sensations, these could be signs of mental fatigue so don't hesitate to put the brakes on!
- 4. 1ST PLACE FINISH** – Make a list of the gains you've made during your "brain workouts" and reward yourself for committing to mental exercise. Brag about your accomplishments to friends, family, and neighbors and be proud of the strong powerful brain you're creating!



Journey *of the Heart*



FOR MANY, DISCOVERING THEIR LIFE'S PURPOSE CAN BE A CHALLENGING PROCESS. For Linda Whiteside, Eskaton employee, artist, and humanitarian, it is a journey that has seen her in many different roles. And she's just getting started.

A woman of faith, intelligence and dedication, Linda came to Eskaton in 2010 as a volunteer through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). After relocating from Southern California to unfamiliar Sacramento, she began looking for a position that both challenged her and capitalized on her education and experience. Answering an ad posted by SCSEP (a state program that provides work-based training opportunities to seniors), Linda was placed with the Telephone Reassurance (TR) program at Eskaton, and it proved an

excellent fit. "What's really very rewarding and fulfilling is that I knew when I talked to somebody, I'd made a difference. I was able to give them what they needed in that moment, and that was very rewarding to me."

In the decade that followed, Linda worked tirelessly to improve the range and effectiveness of the TR program. Eskaton's Telephone Reassurance program serves over 600 participants annually, providing friendly and cost-free "check-in" calls to older adults who live alone or are socially isolated. "When you hear 'I don't know what I'd do without these calls, you can't imagine what they mean to me,' that's a very feel-good place to be."

Beyond the TR program, Linda is exceptionally proud of Eskaton's participation in the Senior

“We’re all creative beings, all of us. It’s what makes us human. So finding whatever it is that lights you up – that’s the ticket.”

Companions Program (SCP), a program that provides daily assistance to older adults. Linda feels the benefits are tremendous for participant and companion alike. “Our volunteers will tell you, they get as much as they give. It’s one hand helping the other.”

Like most government programs, SCP is vastly underfunded. Despite significant need, the program only has resources to support 30 or so companions throughout Sacramento County, meaning just over a hundred seniors get the assistance they require. “We’ve got to raise awareness about SCP,” Linda insists. “The program needs to be cloned everywhere.”

Even with these limitations, Linda remains hopeful. As chair of the SCP advisory council, she knows the program’s benefits far outweigh its deficiencies. “Bringing comfort is important. Allowing people to be themselves is so important. We all need that,” she says. Linda strongly encourages others—particularly seniors looking to stay active—to visit the SCP website to learn how they can contribute.

Beyond her admirable work at Eskaton, Linda continues to actively pursue her artist’s path in ceramics. A member of the Auburn Old Town Gallery, an artists’ cooperative nestled in historic Old Auburn, Linda has been exhibiting her work for over 20 years and sees no reason to hang up her apron just yet. Finding inspiration in nature and the human spirit, Linda’s art is what feeds her soul.

To read Linda’s full story, visit:

eskaton.org/age-beautiful



Brain Health Quiz

1. Doing crossword puzzles and Sudoku are good ways to challenge your brain.
2. A person’s creativity and wisdom declines with age.
3. Participating in a creative art project is a good way to improve memory, problem-solving skills, creativity, and comprehension.
4. Poor or inadequate sleep does not negatively impact your memory or thinking.
5. Drinking alcohol with your prescribed medications is dangerous and can interfere with cognitive function.
6. A heart-healthy diet full of fresh vegetables, fruits, nuts, and fish is also good for your brain.
7. Moving for at least 30 minutes a day can improve and support brain activity.
8. As you age, your body still needs at least 7 hours of sleep per night.
9. Medications (even over-the-counter) can impact your cognitive function.
10. Socializing and staying connected with family and friends have shown to reduce risk of cognitive change.

True	False



ESKATON[®]

Transforming the Aging Experience

INDEPENDENT LIVING - ASSISTED LIVING - MEMORY CARE - SKILLED NURSING
THERAPY - HOME CARE

eskaton.org



Disclaimer: The information provided is for educational and informational purposes only. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical, financial, health, social or environmental advice.