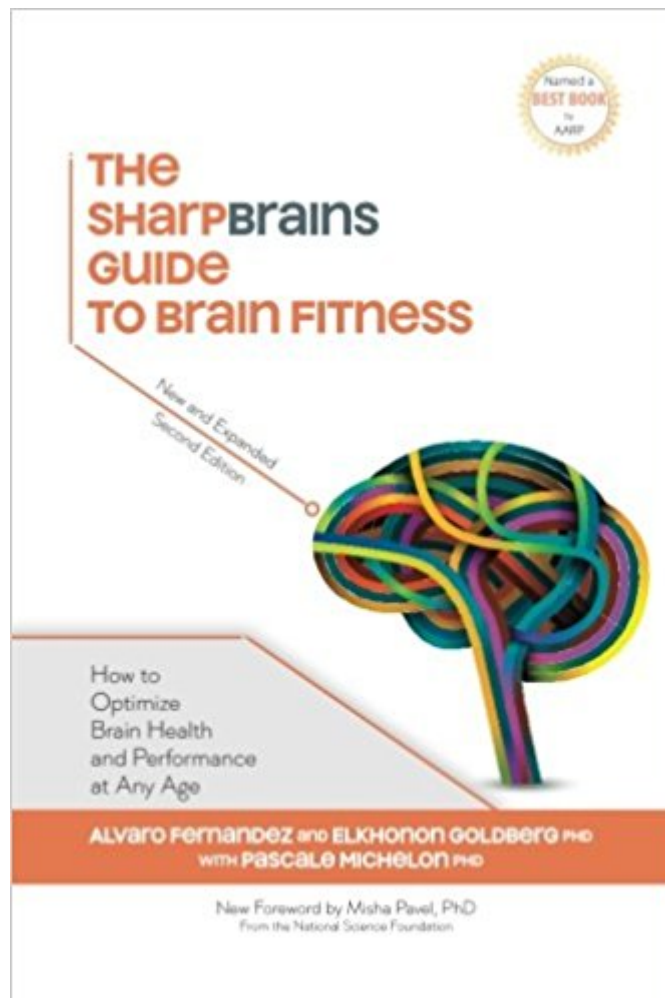




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# The SharpBrains Guide To Brain Fitness: How To Optimize Brain Health And Performance At Any Age



## Synopsis

"Using charts, drawings, and up-to-date scientific studies, they present the case that any brain, at any age, can change for the better...The authors suggest myriad activities to help the process along...(This is) A stimulating, challenging resource, full of solid information and practical tips for improving brain health." -Kirkus Reviews

Modern life places extraordinary demands on our brains. Not only do we live longer than ever before, but we must constantly adapt to complex and rapidly evolving personal and professional realities. Yet, we often ignore our most precious resource to do so: our brain. The SharpBrains Guide to Brain Fitness cuts through the clutter of misconceptions, superficial and conflicting media coverage, and aggressive marketing claims, to help readers discover what really works, and what doesn't, to improve brain health and performance at any age, to delay or prevent cognitive decline, and become smarter consumers of both media coverage and scientific research in the process. With useful, pragmatic and personalized tips and suggestions that are easy to implement, the SharpBrains Guide offers a groundbreaking new approach for self-assessing current brain fitness needs and identifying the most relevant and evidence-based methods to preserve and enhance brain function throughout life. Whether your goal is to become more resilient, enhance memory, ward off Alzheimer's disease, or simply improve mental focus to perform better at work, this how-to guide shows you exactly how to "use it or lose it." • This new and much-expanded edition of the guide AARP named a Best Book on Brain Fitness combines a user-friendly tutorial on how the brain works with advice on how to choose and integrate lifestyle changes and research-based brain training. Featuring an independent analysis of hundreds of scientific studies published in the last 10 years, the book also includes in-depth interviews with 20 leading scientists who often challenge conventional wisdom and prevailing brain health thinking and care. A thought-provoking, practical and captivating read, the SharpBrains Guide makes the fascinating and complex subject of brain function and neuroplasticity easy to digest with its common sense approach. It's time to rethink, and to truly apply, "use it or lose it." • PRAISE FOR THE BOOK "One of those books you cannot ignore. Insightful, to the point, actionable. A book for leaders, innovators, thought provokers and everyone who wants to act and live smarter and healthier, based on latest neuroscience." • Dr. Tobias Kiefer, Director Global Learning & Development, Booz & Company "A great start for making sense new brain science and for taking active steps towards smart health, at the individual level, and Smart Health, at the societal level." • Misha Pavel, PhD, Program Director for the National Science Foundation's Smart Health and Wellbeing

Program "This is the book you need to begin to think differently about your brain and actively embrace the exciting and promising reality that your brain's health is the cause of the century." •Sandra Bond Chapman, PhD, Founder and Chief Director, UT-Dallas' Center for BrainHealth "An essential reference on the field of brain fitness, neuroplasticity and cognitive health" •Walter Jessen, PhD, founder and editor, Highlight Health "A much-needed resource to help us better understand our brains and minds and how to nourish them through life." •Susan E. Hoffman, Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UC Berkeley

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Using charts, drawings, and up-to-date scientific studies, they present the case that any brain, at any age, can change for the better...The authors suggest myriad activities to help the process along...(This is) A stimulating, challenging resource, full of solid information and practical tips for improving brain health." \*Kirkus Reviews\*

"There are so many gems in this book...I have to say I wish I had read this awesome guide when I was much younger." \*Scientific American\* "The SharpBrains Guide to Brain Fitness boils down the current explosion of new research in this area to specific advice." \*CNN Money\* "Nice to see the new

book, *The SharpBrains Guide to Brain Fitness*, where all of the relevant information is in one place. "An essential reference on the field of neuroplasticity and cognitive health." \* Walter Jessen, PhD, founder and editor of *Highlight Health* \* "One of those books you can't ignore. Insightful, to the point, actionable." \* Tobias Kiefer, Director Global Learning & Development, Booz & Company\* "A must-read for everyone with a brain." \* Gloria Cavanaugh, former President of the American Society on Aging\* "Kudos for an excellent resource!" \* Elizabeth Edgerly, Ph.D., Chief Program Officer, Alzheimer's Association\* "A masterful guide to the brain training revolution." \* P. Murali Doraiswamy MD, Professor of Psychiatry, Duke University \* "A much-needed resource to help us better understand our brains and minds and how to nourish them through life." \* Susan E. Hoffman, Director, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UC Berkeley\*

This book is a readable and thought-provoking introduction to the field of "brain training" or more broadly "brain fitness." The authors clear away a number of misconceptions about brain fitness, and provide thoughtful guidelines for keeping your own brain well-nourished and robust at any age. They identify three primary aspects of 'brain fitness' including: promoting growth of neurons ("neurogenesis"), enhancing the connections between neurons ("neuroplasticity"), and keeping the brain active to stave off the harmful effects of aging or disease (building "cognitive reserve"). They also identify other factors in brain health including nutrition, oxidative damage and how to minimize it, and maintaining vascular health. The main body of the book consists of short chapters on activities or lifestyle changes that the reader can adopt to promote all these areas of brain fitness. A large number of topics are discussed including exercise, sleep, stress reduction, lifelong intellectual enrichment, computerized brain training programs, endeavors that involve novelty, variety, and challenge, the Mediterranean diet, supplements, social engagement, and meditation. Overall, an excellent - detailed yet readable - overview of how to optimize your brain health. I also enjoyed the authors' debunking of a number of common misconceptions about brain fitness, including the idea that taking Ginkgo Biloba and doing a daily crossword puzzle will stave off Alzheimer's disease. Turns out that to develop the "cognitive reserve" that preserves brain function, you need novelty and a variety of challenges because that's what prompts the brain to create new synaptic connections ("neuroplasticity"); there is little gain in terms of increased brain fitness to doing your one millionth crossword puzzle, for example. Finally, the authors do a great service to readers by emphasizing throughout that different people have differing needs and priorities according to age and life

circumstances, so everyone's brain fitness program should be somewhat individualized. Consider: an elderly person wanting to preserve "working memory" and processing speed; an adolescent diagnosed with ADHD; an adult in mid-life coping with an overload of stressful demands. All these individuals have different priorities and the authors suggest individualized strategies for brain fitness. A major plus of this book is that the authors are careful not to make claims unwarranted by the current state of research. They are not trying to sell you a dietary supplement or computer program and therefore they come off as unbiased in their recommendations. They also include interviews with brain experts at the end of each chapter; these interviews help to reveal the extraordinary breadth and scope of current brain fitness research. Another book that I found very enjoyable and informative on the topic of understanding your own individual brain and maximizing its effectiveness is David Rock's "Your Brain at Work."

This book is an important guide for improving our brain health through lifestyle strategies. The material is well presented and the interviews are informative. But I believe the book errs greatly in dismissing out of hand the value of supplements known to improve brain function. This is an unfortunate position in a book that is otherwise right on target regarding the benefits of lifestyle strategies of exercise, diet, mental activity, and stress reduction. The recent MEND study at UCLA (published in *Aging*) provided compelling evidence that lifestyle therapies, including several brain-health supplements, can reverse the symptoms in early Alzheimer's disease. For more information about the benefits of nutritional supplements that can support brain health and our immune systems, read "The Better Brain Book" and "Grain Brain" by Dr. David Perlmutter, who is both a neurologist and nutrition expert.

If you're looking for a way to kick-start a more brain-healthy lifestyle, then turn off the TV and read this book. As someone who teaches a brain health course to older adults, I was somewhat skeptical of the new book, *The SharpBrains Guide to Brain Fitness*. There are so many books out there on this topic that I was wary of reading yet another book that would tread on the same ground. Nonetheless I purchased the book and am delighted that I did so. This is a wonderful book that would be useful to both professionals in the field as well as individuals with an interest in improving their own brain health. It is written at a level appropriate for people with no prior knowledge of brain function or brain fitness information, yet it also provides a comprehensive, up-to-date and thoughtful review of the most pertinent research on the topic. Given the depth of the information provided, this is a surprisingly easy read. Relative to other literature on this topic, I found the first chapter on brain

function and anatomy to be one of the most lucid and helpful overviews I've seen yet. There is some built-in redundancy in the book (e.g. "chapter highlights" and interviews with contributors that follow each topic discussion) that serves as a helpful tool for integrating and recalling so much information. Much of the book provides an opportunity to look beyond the simplistic and somewhat misleading popular "headlines" to a much more thoughtful understanding of what the research actually does or does not show. There is an extensive reference section at the end for more scholarly readers who want to examine the original research. But for individuals who just wish to improve their own brain health, this book also provides a reliable road map on how to get started. I intend to revise our adult education curriculum on brain health using information from this book and will be encouraging all participants to read the book as well. Although I consider my own lifestyle to be fairly brain healthy, this book has inspired me to make some changes to my brain fitness program--for example, in an effort to add "novelty, variety, and challenge" to my mental stimulation activities, I've set a goal of memorizing one poem per week (two weeks and two poems down thus far!). I might even try playing some of the video games for which this book shows there is some evidence of a positive cognitive effect, which would certainly add novelty to my current routine. Regardless of where you are in your own path toward brain fitness, The SharpBrains Guide to Brain Fitness will serve as an excellent resource.

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