

Boost your brain power

Try your hand at these nine mental workouts to stay sharp

This New Year, when you think fit, think brain fitness. Vow to break from routine and focus on strengthening your body AND your mind. The idea of losing a step or two worries many of us, especially those who find themselves forgetting things more often than they like. In most cases, occasional lapses can be attributed to stress or multitasking, which can distract your brain, causing you to become unfocused and less productive.

The good news? While there's a lot we still don't know about the brain, research has shown that the brain is like a muscle and can benefit from activities to boost its strength, flexibility, resilience and endurance. Take a look at some simple and inexpensive ways to train your brain. Proactive measures may improve memory, creativity, attention span, problem solving and, perhaps best of all, support a long, happy and healthy retirement. **W**

Sources: *Annals of Medicine*, 2015; MacArthur Foundation Study on Successful Aging; Baltimore Experience Corps

Sleep deprivation impairs quality and accuracy of work (31%), clear thinking or judgment (31%) and memory of important details (30%).

Source: Better Sleep Council study



New territory

Clear more neural pathways by learning a new language, instrument, skill or hobby. The challenge of the unknown boosts brain resilience, as well as memory retention, coordination and high-level thinking.



Purposeful mindset

Build endurance and resilience by defining your life's purpose. A reason to wake up every morning helps you transition when life changes.



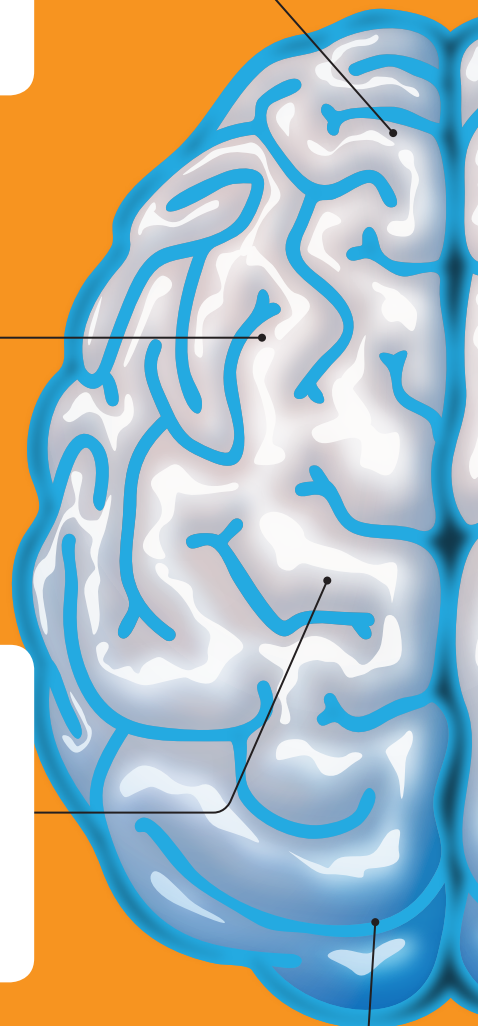
Healthy habits

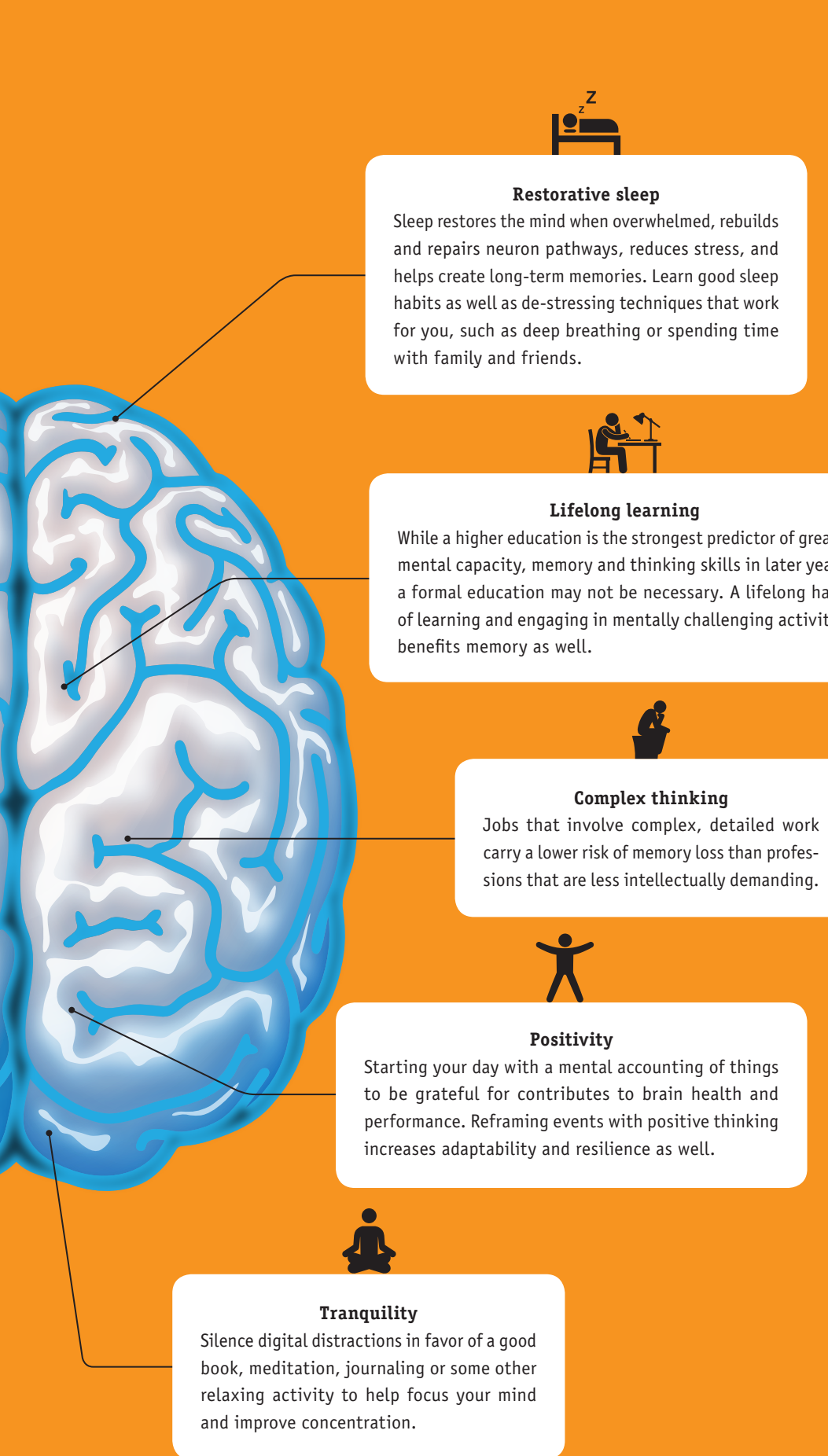
Promote a healthy body and brain through diet and physical exercise, which increases blood flow to the brain, reduces stress, stimulates adaptive capabilities and helps you focus. Aerobic exercise just twice a week could lower your risk of Alzheimer's by 60%. Bonus: A healthier body means you could stave off use of medications that could dull cognition.



Social circles

A meaningful social life, including volunteering, improves executive function and memory. Social interaction means more engagement and lower risk of cognitive impairments.





Brainbuilding

Try one of these activities to help build neural connections, brain strength and flexibility.

- Try your hand at intricate adult coloring books and physical puzzles
- Complete brain teasers, logic puzzles, Sudoku, crosswords
- Learn new skills, hobbies or languages
- Challenge yourself with brain games (e.g., Luminosity, Improve Memory and Fit Brains)
- Practice visualization
- Journal by hand
- Learn an instrument

Develop your training program

- 1 Set goals:** Identify what skills you want to strengthen.
- 2 Plan:** Create a plan that builds on the functionalities you want to improve. Discomfort stimulates growth.
- 3 Implement:** Build resilience, endurance and flexibility through challenging activities.
- 4 Repeat:** Practice helps strengthen your brain and combats atrophy.

Source: Janus BrainWorks

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