

## Use It or Lose It

Our ideas about exercise, for the brain and the body, have evolved a lot since the days when the brain was viewed as fixed and unchangeable. Back in the 1950's, people over the age of forty were discouraged because it might cause a heart attack. As recently as the mid-1970's, most scientists believed that the number of brain cells was set early in your life – around age twelve – and only decreased after that point. This belief led to the conclusion that the mental functions of the brain were fixed, and destined to change only for the worse as aging occurred and “brain cells were lost.” Today we know this is not the case. The brain is arguably the most flexible organ in the body, able to constantly adapt and repair and improve throughout our lifespan. If the brain is injured, by a stroke or tumor, for example, it can generate new cells and repair itself. But it doesn't require injury for new cells to form. The brain can also generate new cells and new interconnections in response to its environment. Unlike your height or hat size, you can make your brain change in volume and increase its efficiency by engaging in certain activities.

Of course, the opposite can also happen. The concept of “use it or lose it” has been applied for years to physical fitness, but it

applies to cognitive fitness as well. People who are mentally active in their later years are known from clinical research to be more mentally sharp, cognitively agile, and to have better memory functions. The good news is that if you've let your brain “go flabby,” you may be able to reverse the damage. In the same way that physical exercise postpones and reduces loss of muscle mass and increases physical flexibility, mental exercise sharpens memory, concentration and mental flexibility.

## Where do we start?

We are coordinating with Total Brain Health program to implement a series of “out of the box” courses and programs on memory improvement and brain fitness especially designed for our care centers.

We hope you enjoy the Wellness of the Mind portion of our E.L.I.M. Program and if you have any questions or concerns please let us know.



E.L.I.M. – Engaged in Life-Long Learning,  
Inspiration and Movement Program 2017/2018



## E.L.I.M. Engaged in Life-Long Learning, Inspiration and Movement Wellness of the Mind



## Resource Guide for Redeemer Residents and Families

*Through our E.L.I.M. - Engaged in Life Long Learning, Inspiration and Movement Performance Improvement Program we are looking at enriching the lives of our residents by attempting to improve their Wellness of Mind, Body and Spirit. Our goal is to take an individualized approach to resident's needs and desires to create a resident-centered life style.*



## Wellness of the Mind

As part of the program, we thought we would share some information on Wellness of the Mind.

Of course, like many other parts of the body, the brain does change as we get older. Around the age of fifty, people often start noticing small memory lapses (“Where did I put those keys?”) We might notice that we don’t concentrate as well as we used to or process information as speedily. While it might be embarrassing to momentarily forget the name of a coworker, it’s really a minor problem that happens to all of us. Many cognitive functions are unaffected by the aging process – creativity, wisdom, reasoning and the rules of language appear to age resistant. But learning, memory, problem solving, speed, and efficiency can be vulnerable to aging.



### It’s Never too Late to Improve Your Brain

Whether you’re forty-five or ninety-five, you can slow and in many cases, reverse the aging process if you start making some brain-smart choices now.

You just need to see it to believe it. If you’re thinking about improving your

brain’s health, the best advice can be summed up in three simple strategies:

1. Brain envy. You have to want to have a better brain.
2. Avoid anything that hurts you brain, such as drugs, alcohol, brain injuries, obesity, hypertension, poor sleep, depression and excessive stress.
3. Engage in regular brain healthy habits.

Regular brain healthy habits, of course, means making good choices, including healthy food choices, getting seven or eight hours of quality sleep each night, and daily physical exercise. It also means to have fun, learn new things and engage your brain every day. Mental workouts and other lifelong learning strategies are essential to keep your brain young, agile and adaptable.

Scientific research has shown that the biggest mental declines occur after we complete our formal schooling and after retirement. Why?

Because we are no longer exercising our brains and pushing ourselves and pushing ourselves to continue to learn and grow. No matter your age, income, IQ, or education, there are dozens of ways to help your neurons grow, stretch and branch into a younger more beautiful brain.



## New Research of Brain Training

New research suggests that regular brain engagement and training can enhance and strengthen your brain. So take time in your schedule, at least ten or fifteen minutes a day, for a fun brain workout...

How is that possible? The very act of thinking in a new and novel way triggers a physical reaction in the brain – a cascade of events, called neurogenesis, in which proteins and enzymes and stem cells all combine to grow new brain cells that rejuvenate your brain and help it to work better and more efficiently.

## Mind, Body, and Spirit

Brain training is beneficial to us in lots of ways. It can be a fun way to spend time with people. It promotes social interaction. Brain health is best supported by three pillars of well-being: Body, because physical health is closely tied to brain function; Mind, because intellectual stimulation is essential for brain health; and Spirit, because emotional well-being is essential for brain health.

Research shows that small group learning approaches add social support and encouragement that arises naturally from the team sharing, as well as, being quick and nimble in our thinking.