

Brain Bites - How's Your Holiday Spirit? Do you have a Cognitive Fitness plan for 2010! December 2009

Category – Cognitive Fitness/positive attitudes

In our full and fast-paced lives, it's vital to be able to slow down and be in a state of positive emotions in order to function, complete our responsibilities, and achieve our goals.

Although our intentions are good, and we'd ideally like to be emotionally present during the holidays to celebrate the spirit of the season, this can be exceptionally challenging at times.

While being in a constant good mood isn't likely or realistic, it is worth taking time to learn strategies to cultivate and maintain a positive perspective as best we can.

Research shows that there are many benefits of being in a positive emotional state.

Did you know

- Optimists live 8 to 9 years longer than pessimists.
- Those who are happy at age 18 make \$25-30,000 more income at age 35.
- Researchers examined photos in a yearbook. 25 years later, the ones who had genuine smiles (with crow's feet crinkles) had fewer divorces and more marital satisfaction.
- Positive emotions have unique adaptive values of their own. Negative emotions narrow one's response to "fight or flight."
- Positive emotions broaden the range of responses, leading to behavioral flexibility and emotional growth.
- Playfulness inspired by joy builds friendships — squirrels that played together will risk their lives to save each other from predators.
- Over time, positive emotions build personal resources and increase well-being. Thus, positive emotions are not just a marker of well-being, but they also produce it for the future.
- Positive affect is the single most important active ingredient within human flourishing.
- Negativity is important as well, to keep us grounded and to avoid a Pollyanna syndrome, but people tend to flourish when their positivity to negativity ratio is 3:1 or higher. When there is a low level of positive emotion, people tend to get stuck.

These statistics are derived partially from the Authentic Happiness Coaching course and the book Authentic Happiness by Martin Seligman

Positive emotions build resilience, allowing people to bounce back faster from negative experiences. Resilience buffers against depression, a mental illness which is high in our society.

Thankfully, with the advances of research, the general population has a greater awareness of how of the impact of Neuroplasticity relates to brain function. There is a broader understanding of ways individuals can train themselves to be more resilient and become empowered through mind-body cognitive fitness programs like Brain Gym®.

In Brain Gym® there is a simple and effective 5-step process called a Balance which supports people in achieving daily life and long term goals, using the Brain Gym® integrative movements.

“In the Action Balance for positive attitudes, we learn to notice our responses to stress and the environment, such as our level of tension, any feelings of anger, fear, or frustration, and any subsequent effects on our physical posture and emotional state. We restore equilibrium and learn to “read” a situation without regressing into a survival response. The ability to stay calm and positive – our “pause-ability” in the face of fear – allows us to think, function, and learn instead of being stopped or inhibited.” *Brain Gym® 101 Manual, Dr. Paul E. Dennison & Gail E. Dennison, Brain Gym® International.*

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are both Licensed Brain Gym® Trainers. Their company, Brain Works Global Inc., train clients on how to maximize their learning potential while working in conjunction with their individual goals.

They provide keynotes, in house training, and sponsored events to a wide range of organizations, schools and the community. For more information go to <http://www.brainworksglobal.com> or call 905.830.6902.