

BRAIN BITES



Whether you're a retiring boomer, considering semi-retirement or are already retired, your Cognitive Fitness levels will determine your quality of life, as you continue to age.

Statistics say that the average life expectancy has increased by 20 years. Why live an extra 20 years if you aren't able to enjoy it? The key to enjoying greater longevity is ensuring one's physical and mental health and abilities are sound and intact. Any time is a good time to start your own Cognitive Fitness routine, an essential way to support healthy & happy longevity.

Neurogenesis, is a process of forming new brain cells, and unlike what was previously thought, it is a process that can continue throughout life, even as we age. Cognitive Fitness tools like Brain Gym® integrative movements are fun, quick and effective ways to develop new brain cells and build healthy neuro-networks. What's especially exciting is that these movements can be used to support the individual's goals and needs, as well as be adapted based on their age and physical ability. This makes it easy to implement regular daily Cognitive Fitness activities to improve one's quality of life and longevity.

Brain Gym® supports independence, learning new skills, promotes attitudinal shifts and increases feelings of overall well-being. This also includes improvement in

memory, concentration, communication, energy levels, stress management, vision, hearing, personal coping tools, restful sleep, moods, anxiety, coordination, mobility, balance to decrease falling, enhancing cognition, reducing depression.

As we age, our brain:

- needs to be exercised, just like our body
- still forms new brain cells and can change its structure and function
- finds positive stress beneficial; negative stress detrimental
- thrives on novel experiences and new challenges

Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to rewire itself. Seniors may have a tendency to get set in their ways because it's easy and familiar and familiar feels safe – I've been doing it this way for a long time and it works, so why change? As it turns out, change in the form of integrative movement can be a way to keep the aging brain healthy!

It empowers us to:

- continue to learn well into old age
- alter our behavior and performance over time
- fix damaged areas of our brains i.e. Stroke suffers, Alzheimer's, (as evidenced by the work of Edward Taub, Michael Merzenich, and Paul Bach-y-Rita, all mentioned in Doidge's book, *The Brain Changes itself*)

Here is an example of research on the "The effect of Brain Gym® on the cognitive performance of Alzheimer's patients";

At the Clinic for Neurology and Medical Rehabilitation and Geriatrics at Henriettenstiftung, in the Hanover region of Germany, groups of patients with Alzheimer's disease have been formed. Within the scope of activities in such training groups, the Brain Gym® movements from Educational Kinesiology are used in training sessions, to enhance brain function as well as to increase body awareness.

Brain Gym® study with Alzheimer's patients

Pre and post tests	Brain Gym Group	Control Group
Repeat word list	+13	+9
Conversation of numbers (words- numerical value)	+18	+8
Shopping Items	+21	-1
Repeat sequencing of #'s backwards	+1	-11
Repeat words list test 1	+79	+39
Overall	+23	+3

Of the 24 test subjects in this study, 16 showed better performance after having done the Brain Gym® exercises. Compared to the points achieved in the first test run, the points achieved in the second test run after the use of Brain Gym® were 23% higher. Among five individual tasks, the highest growth was with task 5 (repeated word lists) at 79%. The second- highest growth was with task 3 (shopping) at 21%, followed by task 2 (conversion of numbers) at 18%. For task 1 (word lists), the increase was 13%. The test results suggest that, among Alzheimer's patients, spontaneous remembering and naming of everyday things improves after Brain Gym® exercises. G. Drabben-Thiemann, D. Hedwig, M. Kenklies, A. Von Blomberg, G. Marabrens, A. Marabrens, K. Hager ©2001 Originally presented in German and English the 2001 Educational Kinesiology Gathering inKirchzarten bei Freiburg, Germany. This is from an edited English-language translation published in the Brain Gym® Journal, Volume XVI, No. 1, 2002

It's an empowering to know that we can affect our Cognitive abilities, at every age. Don't lose it, USE IT... and come out to one of our upcoming courses and find out how!

Jill Hewlett and Sharon Todd are Licensed Brain Gym® Trainers and Cognitive Fitness Experts! 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 www.brainworksglobal.com or call 905.830.6902.



Use it, don't lose it!