



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with
National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World
and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

LEADER TRAINING GUIDE

Brain Blitz

Objectives

1. Participants will recognize typical age-related and more serious mental functioning changes.
2. Participants will identify potential causes of mental confusion and forgetfulness.
3. Participants will discover and practice techniques to stimulate mental functioning.
4. Participants will utilize memory tools and techniques to trigger memory.

Ask:

1. Do you ever worry about memory loss?
2. Are you aware of activities you can do to enhance and maintain sharp mental functioning?

Say:

The adult brain – about 3 pounds and the size of a medium head of cauliflower- contains 100 billion neurons and 100 trillion synapses. Its complexity and capabilities surpass the most sophisticated computer. Humans begin to lose brain cells a few at a time in their twenties. The body also slows production of the chemicals brain cells need. With age, these changes have an increasingly greater effect on memory. Aging may change the way the brain stores information, making it harder to recall stored information.

Typical changes associated with aging include: 1) slower mental processing; 2) slower recall of information; and 3) reduced ability to focus on multiple tasks.

People who engage in intellectually stimulating activities can sharpen mental acuity and maintain it well into old age. As new skills and concepts are learned the brain sparks development of synaptic connections. The more connections, the more dense the brain and the greater the intellectual capacity.

Give out the Handout and choose the brain stimulating activities that you feel your group would enjoy. Listed below are some ideas:

✦ As a reality check after discussing the warning signs of Alzheimer's disease, ask everyone what day of the week it is, what year it is and who is the governor of South Carolina.

- ✦ After discussing the importance of good nutrition have everyone write their favorite healthful food on their handout but spell it backwards.
- ✦ Discuss the importance of drinking fluids and pass out bottles of water for everyone to drink.
- ✦ Discuss the “Use Humor” section and share your favorite short joke. Remind everyone to repeat it a couple times the next day or two if they want to remember it.
- ✦ After discussing “Maintaining a Positive Attitude” have everyone shake hands with at least two people and thank them for something. You can use the arthritis handshake – grasp the other person by the forearm rather than the hand.
- ✦ Have everyone attempt to eat their refreshments using their non-dominant hand.
- ✦ Remind everyone to breathe deeply as it is one of the most important things we can do to keep our minds mentally alert.
- ✦ Share a poem that has at least thirteen lines. Divide your group in 4 groups and have each group take turns reading the lines aloud. Have everyone read the last line together. Reading aloud engages different parts of the brain than reading silently.

In closing - give everyone a copy of the evaluation:

Ask each participant to complete one copy of the lesson evaluation which is written backwards. Allow time for discussion of activity. When finished everyone may then take their evaluation home as a reminder to challenge their brain every day.

Source: Adapted by Lana Tietjen, Clemson University, from “Brain Blitz” by Donna Martinson, Kansas State University, November 2005.



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My Personal Goals and What I Learned

(Start at the bottom of the page and work up – it’s a good change for the brain!)

8. One more thing I have to say is _____

7. Something I learned in Brain Blitz that I want to remember is _____

6. Draw a happy face by the statement you think is most true for you:

There are many things
I can do to keep my
mind sharp.

I expect that my mental
abilities will diminish as
I get older in spite of
what I do.

5. One habit I plan to adopt because it will help me maintain my mental abilities is _____

4. To manage stress I will _____

3. My goal is to eat _____ cups of fruits and vegetables each day.

2. My goal for physical activity is _____ minutes per day.

1. One clue to assess if a memory lapse is serious or not is _____



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