



SENIOR MOMENTS

COMMUNITY

WELLNESS

ENGAGEMENT

A COMMUNITY SENIOR LIVING MAGAZINE PRESENTED BY THE REDMOND SENIOR CENTER

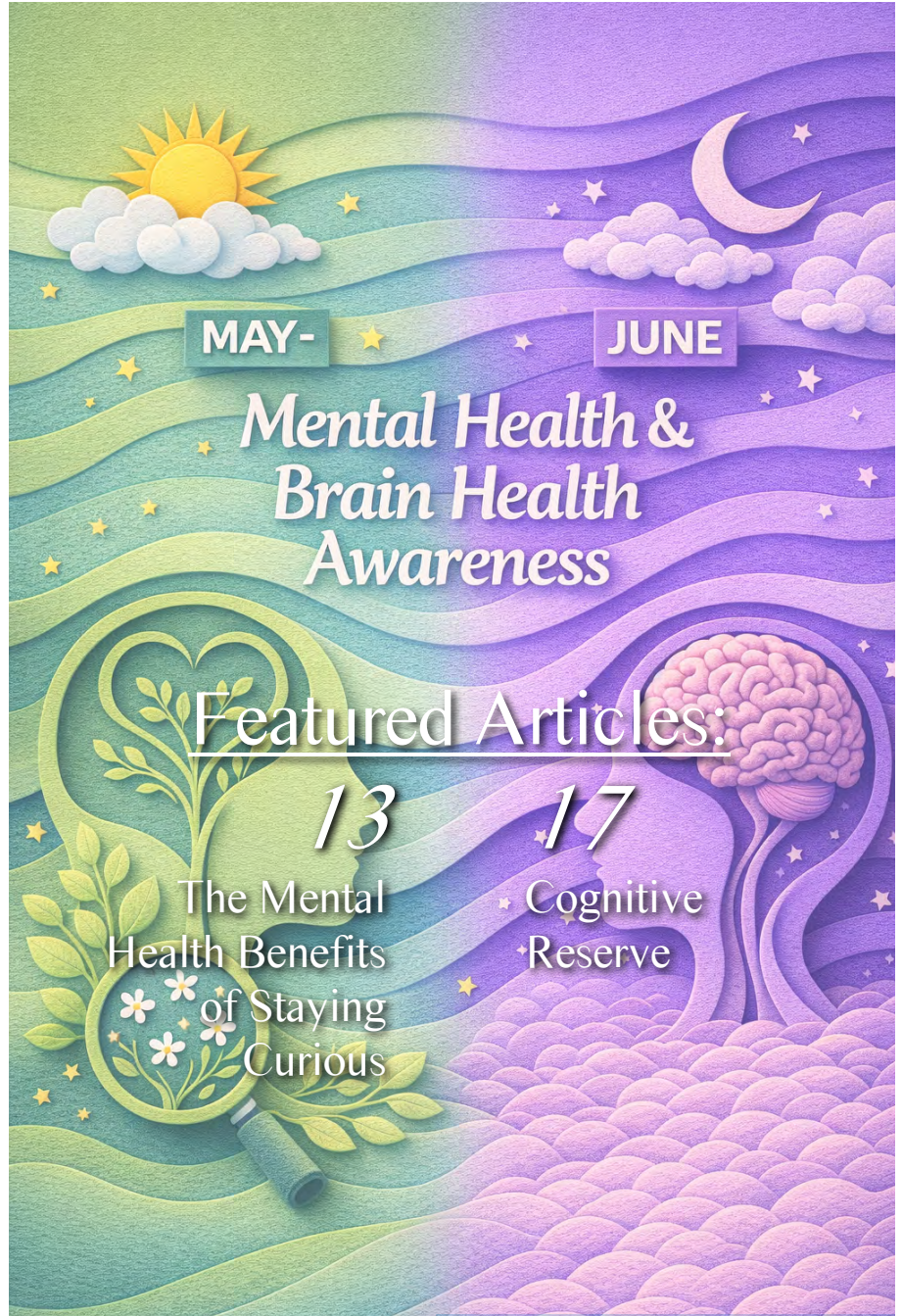
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JH Morris Productions
 Redmond, OR 97756
www.JamesHMMorris.com

Printed by

The UPS Store
 946 SW Veterans Way #102
 Redmond, OR 97756

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STAYING CONNECTED

A NEW CHAPTER FOR SENIOR MOMENTS AND OUR CENTER NEWS

If you've noticed something a little different in our magazine lately, you're not imagining it. The Redmond Senior Center is entering a new chapter in how we share news, stories, and updates with our community—and we're excited to tell you what's changing and why.

For many years, **Senior Moments** has been a trusted source of information, inspiration, and connection. As our Center has grown, so has the range of information we share, from time-sensitive announcements to in-depth feature stories. To better serve our readers, we're introducing a clearer, more intentional approach to communication—one that keeps you informed while preserving everything you value about **Senior Moments**.

Introducing **Between Moments**

Our newest publication, **Between Moments**, is a bi-weekly newsletter designed to focus on timely news and announcements from the Redmond Senior Center. Its purpose is simple: to deliver important updates more quickly and more clearly.

Between Moments highlights upcoming programs, schedule changes, reminders, and Center news that you need to know right away. By arriving every two weeks, it allows us to pass along important information without delay, in a shorter and easier-to-read format. Whether it's an upcoming event or a change in Center operations, **Between Moments** helps ensure you stay informed as things happen.

Senior Moments: Evolving With Intention

At the same time, **Senior Moments** is evolving while staying true to its heart. Beginning this month, **Senior Moments** will move to a **bi-monthly schedule**, creating space to focus more deeply on the stories and topics that matter most to our readers.

Senior Moments will continue to feature thoughtful, in-depth articles centered on senior lifestyle, well-being, creativity, caregiving, and community life. With a bi-monthly rhythm, each issue can offer carefully crafted stories that encourage reflection, spark conversation, and celebrate life at every stage.

Why This Change Makes Sense

Separating timely Center updates from longer-form storytelling allows both publications to do what they do best. Important announcements no longer compete for space with feature articles, and **Senior Moments** can fully embrace its role as a lifestyle magazine for older adults.

This new approach is designed with readers in mind: quick updates when you need them, and meaningful reading when you want to slow down and explore a topic more deeply. Most importantly, it strengthens our connection with you by delivering the right type of information at the right time.

One Community, Two Ways to Stay Connected

Together, **Between Moments** and **Senior Moments** form a balanced partnership—one focused on staying informed, the other on staying inspired. We're grateful to continue sharing stories, updates, and moments with you, and we hope this new format makes it easier than ever to stay connected to everything happening at the Redmond Senior Center. ●



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- + Learn more about medication usage by providing information and education
- + Connect with resources throughout the community for additional support

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COMMUNITY CONNECTION

FOUR GENERATIONS, ONE BIG HEART

THE CARPENTER FAMILY'S VOLUNTEERING STORY

By James Morris



Five generations of volunteers: (Top row, left to right) Evelyn, Annabelle, Breanne, Kristy, and Shirley. (Front row, left to right) "Bubby," Jackson

The Carpenter family's story is a living testament to the power of kindness passed down through generations. Their warmth, humor, and unwavering commitment to helping others remind us that the most meaningful legacies are built on simple, everyday acts of love.

There are rare moments in life when you step into a room and instantly sense you're in the presence of something truly special. That's exactly how it felt when I had the privilege of joining the Carpenter family at the Redmond Senior Center in the Conference Room—a gathering that felt less like an interview and more like being welcomed into the heart of a family whose love for others has echoed across four generations.

“*I had a fellow that I knew... and he was down in the dumps. I said, get involved in Meals on Wheels. So he did. And I noticed yesterday he volunteered to pick up one of the routes.*”
—Shirley

I arrived with questions in hand but quickly realized they weren't needed. The Carpenters' stories flowed naturally, wrapped in laughter and genuine affection for one another—and for the community they have quietly, faithfully served for as long as any of them can remember.

“We've Just Always Done It”

To understand the Carpenter family, you first need to know Shirley. The family matriarch doesn't see volunteering as a sacrifice or a duty—it's simply woven into the fabric of her life. “I was here before Meals on Wheels was here,” she told me, matter-of-factly. Long before any official program, Shirley was checking in on neighbors, taking people to doctor's appointments, and convincing her church group to deliver meals to folks who needed them. She chuckles when she says, “That's what we've done forever.” And, honestly, nobody in the room disagrees.

With that same quiet conviction, she brought her own children along on those early routes—partly because she knew how much it meant to the older folks to see

young faces, and partly because, in the Carpenter household, “all hands on deck” has always been the way.

Keeping the Chain Going

What makes the Carpenter story so beautifully extraordinary is how seamlessly this spirit of giving has passed from one generation to the next. Kristy, Shirley's daughter, describes their volunteering as something that simply happened whenever the family made it back to town. “We would come back to Oregon and visit our grandparents. Even though we moved around a lot for the military, helping out was always a thing when we came home,” Breanne, Shirley's granddaughter, chimed in.

And though Kristy laughs and says she's not really an “official” volunteer—she just tags along with Shirley—it's clear that the distinction doesn't matter. Signed up or not, the help gets done.

Then there's Breanne, Kristy's daughter, who now has children of her own—and has made it her mission to pass the torch once more. She remembers, as a kid, riding along on her grandma's Meals on Wheels route, playing the piano at the nursing home, and carrying

bingo cards. “I wanted that for my kids—to be able to see that and just help in a small way,” she says. And so, like clockwork, the chain carries on.

The kids—the fourth generation!—have just started joining in. I watched two shy teens perk up as they recalled riding along, handing out meals, and being surprised by how much it meant to the folks on their route. When someone pointed out, jokingly, that “kids can't be the one to break the chain,” the room filled with laughter—but you could tell no one here would dream of it.

“It's What We Do”—Why It Matters

Let's set the record straight: the Carpenter family doesn't do this for applause. They just plain old like helping out. Shirley talks about her past like it's no big deal: “I did volunteer work at the nursing home, playing bingo with everybody up there...” Her stories are always about the people—the lady she “just kind of watched out for,” the times she dropped off groceries, the little ones who helped carry food down long alleyways.

It's the small moments that stick out for the family. Like when

Breanne remembers seeing, as a kid, that “people live differently” and that helping even in little ways made a world of difference. Or when Shirley’s granddaughter Kelsey left her own allowance in coins on a client’s shelf as a gift—without anyone asking her. That’s the kind of stuff no program or training can teach.

It’s Not All Heavy—Plenty of Laughs, Too

Don’t get the idea this is some solemn, do-gooder crew. Spend ten minutes with the Carpenters and you’ll be doubled over with laughter. Kristy owns a packed local café (“the one with the gigantic cinnamon rolls!”), and her stories ping-pong between kitchen chaos, mistakenly adopted felines (ask her about the day a cat stowed away in their car on the route), and the time they delivered a meal to a guy dressed in a boa and full dress. The Carpenters aren’t afraid to swap stories where a sense of humor is just as important as showing up.

For them, volunteering is as much about collecting unforgettable moments as it is about serving. You’re just as likely to hear a tale about a runaway cat or surprise encounter as you are to hear about delivering food to a neighbor in need.

That Ripple Effect

It’s not only official clients or Meals on Wheels routes that benefit. Shirley tells about inviting friends and neighbors to give volunteering a

try, watching as someone “kind of down in the dumps” found both purpose and happiness behind the wheel on a delivery day. It’s like contagion in the best possible way; the enthusiasm just spreads.

And maybe that’s the biggest magic trick this family has pulled off. Their tradition spills over—not just to kids, spouses, and grandkids, but into the wider community. If you’re a neighbor or friend, don’t be surprised if you find yourself drafted for a route or a baking shift: it’s all part of the Carpenter effect.

Growing Up With “Different” as Normal

As I take it all in, I realize the real reason the chain holds is because it’s never been forced. Kristy says she “never felt uncomfortable around older people” because helping and visiting were just part of the family scene. For her and Breanne, volunteering wasn’t something they started out of obligation, it’s simply what family does.

Those car rides, the time spent at the nursing home, the detours to drop off groceries—these are the core memories. Through them all runs a shared understanding: you show up, you pay attention to those who might need a lift, and you invite others along for the ride.

The “Chain” Is a Family Heirloom

Perhaps the sweetest part of my visit is when everyone gathers for a generational photo in the Redmond Senior Center main lobby—great-

grandma Shirley, Grandma Kristy, mom Breanne, and the newest helpers, Annabelle, Evelyn, Bubby, and Jackson, lined up in age order. Shirley is beaming, kids are goofing with each other, and you can almost see the invisible links connecting everyone in the shot.

“Where would you like us to do this?” Breanne asks, ready to haul everyone into position. The kids crack up at being told to “not break the chain.” Yet there’s something quietly important in the moment. This isn’t just a photo. It’s a snapshot of a legacy built on simple, repeated kindness—a chain tested by time, loss, and life changes, but never broken.

The Takeaway

By the end of our conversation, I’m reminded that legacies aren’t all about wealth or fame. Sometimes they’re stories told over breakfast, or tiny acts of kindness that add up through the years. Sometimes, they’re as simple as a cinnamon roll big enough for a table, or a small hand-off meal that means more than you’ll ever know.

What the Carpenter family shows is this: helping out isn’t complicated. Start small. Bring your kids along, even when they’re fidgety or rolling their eyes. Make it fun, make it part of life. And let the stories be part of your family lore.

One day, like the Carpenters, you’ll look around and realize your own chain of kindness is a heck of a lot stronger—and longer—than you ever thought possible. ●



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WELL-BEING SERIES

THE MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF STAYING CURIOUS (FOR HUMANS, NOT JUST TODDLERS)

WHY ASKING “HMM, THAT’S INTERESTING...” MIGHT BE ONE OF THE HEALTHIEST THINGS YOU CAN DO

By James Morris

Curiosity doesn’t burst into the room waving a flag and shouting, “SELF-IMPROVEMENT!” It sneaks in quietly. It shows up when you lean forward a little instead of tuning out, when you ask a question instead of nodding politely and changing the subject, or when you think, “*Sure, I’ll go to that talk—even though I don’t fully know what it’s about.*”

In other words, curiosity is not flashy. It does not require special equipment, a certification, or expressive eyebrows. It’s modest. And that’s kind of its superpower.



Somewhere along the way, many of us got the idea that curiosity has an expiration date. Children are encouraged to ask “why” approximately 400 times a day. Adults, on the other hand, are subtly encouraged to *already know things* and to stop poking around once they’ve settled into a routine.

That sounds comforting—and it is, up to a point. Familiar routines feel safe. Knowing things feels efficient. But when curiosity quietly slips out the back door, life can start to feel smaller. Nothing dramatic collapses. The calendar still fills. The days keep ticking by. Yet the edges of life get flatter, and the mind gets a little... bored in ways that don’t announce themselves.

Mental health often doesn’t fall apart all at once. It erodes subtly. And one of the simplest ways to push back is surprisingly small: staying interested in the world.

Curiosity Is Not a Personality Type (No Berets Required)

Let’s clear something up immediately. Curiosity is not reserved for people who love crosswords, documentaries, or using phrases like “fascinating.” You do not need to be scholarly, outgoing, or the kind of person who remembers dates and names.

Curiosity is not about being smart. It’s about paying attention.

It’s a habit, not a talent. It shows up when you wonder why your energy feels better in the mornings—or why it suddenly dips at 3 p.m. It

shows up when you ask someone how they ended up living where they live, instead of assuming you already know the story.

Curiosity can be quiet. It can be inward. It does not require enthusiasm or charisma. All it requires is interest.

And that’s good news, because interest is available to everyone.

Why Interest Is Surprisingly Good for Your Mental Health

We hear a lot about stress reduction, positive thinking, relaxation, and self-care. “Be curious” doesn’t usually make the list. Which is unfortunate, because interest does something very specific and very helpful for the mind: it redirects attention.

When you’re curious, your brain stops looping the same worries. Not because you force it to stop—no motivational speeches required—but because your attention has somewhere else to go.

Interest pulls you forward. It gives the mind a new track to run on.

This matters even more as life gets more complicated. Health worries, financial questions, family concerns, and social changes don’t magically disappear with age. They often multiply. Curiosity doesn’t erase these realities, but it does rebalance things. It reminds the mind that the world is bigger than the current worry playlist.

Think of curiosity as a gentle interruption: “*Have you noticed this instead?*”

Curiosity: A Quiet Ally During Life Changes

Life after midlife involves a surprising amount of adaptation. Jobs end. Roles shift. Bodies have opinions. Social circles change shape. Even positive transitions—like retirement—can feel destabilizing once the novelty wears off.





Curiosity doesn't pretend these changes are easy. It simply changes the question.

Instead of asking, "How do I hold on to what I had?" curiosity asks, "What's here now?"

That's not a slogan. It's a practical mindset. Curious people treat unfamiliar territory as information, not evidence of failure. They experiment. They observe what works. They adjust.

Mental health benefits when the mind stays mobile. Curiosity doesn't promise answers—but it restores movement. And mental movement is the opposite of feeling stuck.

Being Curious About People (Yes, Even the Ones You Think You Know)

One of the most underused applications of curiosity shows up in everyday conversation.

Many conversations aren't shallow because people are dull. They're

shallow because we stop asking questions. We assume we already know the answers. We also assume others won't want to share much if we ask.

Both assumptions are usually wrong.

A genuine question signals attention. It creates space for story. And people respond to that. Over time, curiosity deepens connection not by being clever, but by being present.

This matters because loneliness isn't always about being physically alone. Often, it's about feeling uninteresting—or feeling unseen. Curiosity quietly counters both.

Learning Without Grades, Gold Stars, or Pressure

For many adults, "learning something new" comes with emotional baggage. School memories linger. Performance pressure sneaks in. The joy gets drained out before you even start.

Curiosity-based learning is different. There are no grades. No benchmarks. No one is watching.

You learn because something catches your attention. You stop when it doesn't.

Later in life, this is incredibly freeing. You can attend a talk because it sounds interesting—not because you plan to master the subject. You can explore a hobby imperfectly and still feel satisfied.

Mental health thrives where there's room for play, experimentation, and uncertainty. Curiosity builds that environment naturally.

Routine and Curiosity: Not Enemies, Surprisingly

Routine and curiosity sound like opposites, but they're actually partners.

Routine provides stability. Curiosity adds vitality. Too much routine becomes rigid. Too much novelty becomes exhausting.

Together, they keep life grounded and alive.

Curiosity doesn't require a lifestyle overhaul. Small changes count. A different walking route. A new seat at a regular gathering. A class you know almost nothing about.

These tiny shifts send a powerful message to the brain: *We're still open.*

When Curiosity Takes a Nap (And That's Okay)

There will be times when curiosity feels out of reach. Fatigue, illness, grief, anxiety, these all shrink our capacity to be interested. That's not a failure. That's being human.

Curiosity is not a moral obligation. It's a resource.

When it's low, judgment makes things worse. Patience helps. Gentle exposure helps. Being around curious people. Sitting in spaces where ideas are shared. Letting interest come to you instead of chasing it down the street.

Often, curiosity returns sideways—through connection rather than content.

Why Community Spaces Matter More Than We Realize

Curiosity flourishes where questions are welcomed, not judged. Where exploration is participation, not performance.

Community programs, talks, and shared learning spaces do more than educate. They protect mental health by keeping people mentally and socially engaged. They offer

permission to be curious, something many adults quietly need.

Curiosity is easier when you're not doing it alone.

Curiosity Is a Form of Self-Respect

At its core, staying curious sends a simple message: *My mind is still worth engaging.*

That's a powerful stance in a culture that often equates aging with decline. Curiosity doesn't deny challenges. It insists that interest remains possible.

Mental health depends, in part, on that insistence.

A Very Manageable Invitation

You don't need a plan. No checklist. No reinvention.

All curiosity asks is a sincere question:

- What catches my attention these days?
- What draws me in without a clear reason?
- What might I explore just because it's there?

Curiosity works best close to daily life—quiet, practical, and human.

Staying curious doesn't mean chasing novelty. It means staying in conversation with the world.

And that, it turns out, is very good for the mind—and quietly good for the heart too. ●

HOW MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING RELATE TO THE 5 PILLARS OF

1. **PHYSICAL WELLBEING:** Mental health affects your energy, sleep, appetite, and motivation for physical activity. Managing stress and emotions can improve immune function and reduce the risk of chronic illness.
2. **EMOTIONAL WELLBEING:** Prioritizing mental health helps you identify, express, and manage your emotions in healthy ways, leading to greater resilience and a balanced mood.
3. **SOCIAL WELLBEING:** Good mental health supports positive relationships. When you feel well mentally, connecting, communicating, and enjoying time with others becomes more natural.
4. **SPIRITUAL WELLBEING:** Mental clarity and peace allow you to reflect on values, purpose, and meaning. Practices like mindfulness, gratitude, and meditation nurture both spiritual and mental health.
5. **INTELLECTUAL WELLBEING:** Mental wellness encourages curiosity, creativity, and lifelong learning. A healthy mind is open to new experiences, problem-solving, and personal growth.

COGNITIVE RESERVE

BUILDING BRAIN STRENGTH AT ANY AGE
(BECAUSE WHO NEEDS A BRAIN THAT SKIPS
LEG DAY?)

By James Morris

Let's face it—aging can be a bit of a mixed bag. Sure, you get wisdom, discounts at the movies, and an excuse to shake your fist at noisy kids, but then there's that whole “Where did I put my glasses? Oh, wait, they're on my head” thing. Memory hiccups like forgetting names or misplacing your keys can feel unsettling. But here's the good news: your brain isn't a one-trick pony, and it doesn't have an expiration date.

For years, people thought the brain was like an old VCR—eventually breaking down with no hope of repair. But today's research tells a much cooler story. Turns out, the brain is more like a Swiss Army knife: adaptable, full of tools, and capable of surprising you (if you know how to use it). Enter *cognitive reserve*, the brain's secret weapon—kind of like a personal trainer for your gray matter, helping it dodge age-related potholes and stay sharp.



What Is Cognitive Reserve?

Think of cognitive reserve as your brain's GPS. When one route is blocked (thanks, construction—or, you know, aging), it finds another way to get you where you need to go. It's basically your brain saying, "No worries, I've got this."

But don't get too excited, it doesn't mean you'll never forget your neighbor's name or lose your TV remote in the fridge (hey, it happens). Instead, cognitive reserve helps your brain work around those moments like a sneaky ninja. It's all about staying flexible, forming new connections, and keeping life manageable—even when your memory decides to take a coffee break.

And here's the kicker: cognitive reserve isn't something you're just born with—it's something you build. Yep, your brain is like a gym, and every little mental workout adds up.

Why Cognitive Reserve Matters as We Age

Okay, so aging isn't all sunshine and rainbows. Processing speed slows down, multitasking gets trickier, and names of people you've known for years suddenly vanish like socks in the dryer. But here's the thing: those changes don't mean your brain is falling apart, they're just normal.

Cognitive reserve is like your brain's superhero cape. It helps you adapt to these changes, stay independent longer, and handle life's curve balls like a pro. Picture two people with



the same brain changes: one struggles to keep up, while the other sails through life like nothing's wrong. The difference? Cognitive reserve. It's the brain's way of saying, "No problem, we've got backup plans!"

Myth-Busting: "It's Too Late"

Let's squash this myth right now: it's NEVER too late to boost your brain. Seriously, your brain isn't some grumpy old man yelling, "No new tricks!" It loves learning—whether you're 9 or 90.

Sure, building cognitive reserve earlier in life is helpful, but even small efforts later on can make a massive difference. You don't need to reinvent the wheel or enroll in rocket science classes. Everyday moments—like learning a new skill

or chatting with a friend—are your brain's favorite snacks.

How to Build Cognitive Reserve (Without Breaking a Sweat)

1. **Learn New Things**
Your brain loves novelty—it's like giving it a shiny new toy. Learning something unfamiliar (even if it's tricky) helps build fresh pathways.
Try:
 - Taking a cooking class (bonus points if it involves eating).
 - Learning to play the ukulele (or at least pretending you're the next Hawaiian sensation).



- Figuring out how to set up your TV remote without calling your grandkids.

Remember, it's not about being perfect, it's about trying. Your brain's motto is basically, "Fake it till you make it."

2. Get Social (Yes, Even if You're an Introvert)

Talking to people is like CrossFit for your brain—minus the sweaty gym selfies. Conversations require listening, thinking, responding, and sometimes even dodging awkward questions like, "So, when are you retiring?"

Social engagement boosts memory, sharpens attention, and keeps loneliness at bay. And hey, laughing with friends is basically brain yoga.

Hot tip: Senior centers—like the Redmond Senior Center—are goldmines for social brain workouts. From group games to educational talks, they've got your back (and your brain).

3. Do Stuff You Actually Enjoy

Brain games are fine, but let's be real—if they feel like a chore, you're not going to stick with them. Instead, pick activities that bring you joy *and* make your brain flex.

Ideas:

- Reading juicy novels (bonus if they involve plot twists).
- Playing strategy games (chess or Scrabble, anyone?).
- Painting, writing, or telling stories (because who doesn't love a good yarn?).

4. Move Your Body, Move Your Brain

Exercise isn't just for your waistline—it's brain food. Movement increases blood flow, boosts oxygen delivery, and keeps your brain's memory center happy.

Good news: you don't need to run marathons. A simple walk, some chair yoga, or a little tai chi can do

wonders. The Redmond Senior Center even offers gentle exercise programs—because your brain doesn't care if you're doing Zumba or just shaking it out to your favorite tunes.

Everyday Cognitive Reserve: You're Probably Already Crushing It

Here's the best part: chances are, you're already building cognitive reserve—without even realizing it.

When you:

- Attend a Well-being Series talk
- Join a group activity
- Take on a new hobby
- Volunteer to help others
- Laugh with friends over coffee

—you're giving your brain a big ol' high five.

At the Redmond Senior Center, the Well-being Series is all about empowering seniors to build cognitive reserve while having fun.

And June's Brain Health Month? It's basically a party for your brain, complete with education, engagement, and plenty of feel-good vibes.

What Cognitive Reserve Is NOT

Let's clear this up: cognitive reserve isn't about being a genius or acing IQ tests. It's not reserved for people with fancy degrees or high-stress jobs. And it definitely doesn't come from pressure or fear (because let's face it, stress is the enemy).

Instead, it's about staying curious, connected, and engaged in ways that feel meaningful to *you*.

Recognizing Normal Memory Changes

Before you start panicking about every misplaced item, remember: normal aging means occasional forgetfulness. Forgetting where you left your keys? Totally fine. Forgetting what keys are for? That's the time to consult a doctor.

If memory changes start messing with your daily life, relationships, or safety, don't freak out—just talk to a healthcare provider. Cognitive reserve won't replace medical care, but it can help your brain bounce back better.

Small Steps, Big Wins

Building cognitive reserve doesn't mean overhauling your life. Start small:

- Learn one new thing.

- Call a friend for a chat.
- Take a 10-minute walk.
- Attend a Well-being Series session.

Consistency beats effort every time.

Final Thoughts: Your Brain's Still Got It

Cognitive reserve is proof that aging isn't about decline—it's about resilience. Brain health isn't some mystery, it's woven into how we live, learn, and connect.

So, join us this June for Brain Health Month at the Redmond Senior Center. Your brain deserves a little TLC—and maybe a good laugh while you're at it. ●

BRAIN HEALTH AWARENESS

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RESOURCE GUIDE: MENTAL HEALTH & BRAIN HEALTH AWARENESS

This two-month Well-being Series at the Redmond Senior Center is your invitation to explore, connect, and thrive! Below you'll find handpicked national and local resources for both Mental Health Awareness and Brain Health Awareness months—perfect for seniors, caregivers, and anyone seeking support or information.

Mental Health Awareness Month

I. National Mental Health Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Education, support, and advocacy for those affected by mental illness. Senior-friendly resources and a HelpLine.

nami.org

1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Resources and support for mental health and substance use, including for older adults.

samhsa.gov/communities/older-adults

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

24/7 confidential support for anyone in crisis, including seniors.

988lifeline.org

988

Institute on Aging Friendship Line

The only 24-hour crisis line for adults 60+ and those with disabilities. Offers emotional support and crisis intervention.

ioaging.org/services/all-inclusive-health-care/friendship-line

1-800-971-0016

Mental Health America (MHA)

Information, screening tools, and resources for older adults.

mhanational.org

1-800-969-6642

Eldercare Locator (U.S. Administration on Aging)

Connects seniors and families to local services, including mental health support.

eldercare.acl.gov

1-800-677-1116

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Brochures, fact sheets, and videos on mental health topics for older adults.

nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/older-adults-and-mental-health

—

National Council on Aging (NCOA)

Behavioral health info and evidence-based programs for seniors.

ncoa.org/older-adults/health/behavioral-health/

—

CDC – Mental Health

Mental health info and resources for older adults.

cdc.gov/mental-health/caring/index.html

—

PEARLS Program

Evidence-based program for older adults with depression.

sprc.org/resources-programs/program-encourage-active-rewarding-lives-pearls

—



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MAKING HOME SAFE FOR A LOVED ONE WITH DEMENTIA A ROOM-BY-ROOM GUIDE

By James Morris

Caring for someone with dementia is a journey filled with love, patience—and a few unexpected hazards. But don't worry! With a few smart tweaks, you can transform your home into a safe, comforting space that supports your loved one at every stage of dementia. Let's walk through the house together and make it safer, one room at a time.



Start With a Safety Mindset

Before you grab the toolbox, take a slow walk through your home. Try to see it through your loved one's eyes. That patterned rug? It might look like a hole. A mirror? Could be a stranger staring back. The goal is to reduce confusion, prevent accidents, and create a calm, familiar environment.

Here are a few golden rules:

- **Light it up:** Bright, even lighting helps reduce shadows and confusion. Add nightlights in hallways and bathrooms.
- **Declutter:** Clear walkways and keep surfaces tidy. Less clutter means fewer tripping hazards and less visual overload.
- **Use contrast:** Make important features stand out—like painting door frames a different color or using bright tape on stair edges.
- **Label everything:** Use simple signs or pictures on doors and drawers to help with orientation.
- **Secure hazards:** Lock away medications, cleaning supplies, sharp tools, and anything that could be dangerous.

Now, let's go room by room.

Entryways & Outdoor Areas

The front door is where safety starts.

- **Install locks and alarms:** Place locks high or low on doors to prevent wandering. Door alarms or chimes can alert you if someone tries to leave unexpectedly.
- **Light the way:** Motion-sensor lights outside and in entryways help prevent falls and confusion at dusk.
- **Fencing:** A secure fence with a locked gate can allow safe outdoor time without the risk of wandering off.
- **Make it recognizable:** Use a bright door color or a unique decoration to help your loved one identify their home.

Hallways & Stairs

These areas are prime spots for falls—but they don't have to be.

- **Handrails:** Install sturdy handrails on both sides of stairs.
- **Mark steps:** Use bright or glow-in-the-dark tape to highlight stair edges.
- **Clear the path:** Remove rugs, cords, and clutter. Keep hallways wide and open.
- **Stair gates:** If needed, use childproof gates to block access to stairs, especially at night.

Living Room & Common Areas

This is where comfort meets caution.



- **Furniture layout:** Arrange furniture to allow easy movement. Remove sharp-edged or unstable pieces.
- **Secure rugs and cords:** Use non-slip mats or remove rugs altogether. Tape down cords or use cord covers.
- **Simplify remotes:** Use large-button remotes or cover unnecessary buttons with tape.
- **Familiar items:** Display family photos and favorite objects to create a sense of comfort and continuity.
- **Reduce noise and glare:** Turn off TVs or radios when not in use and use soft lighting to avoid harsh shadows.

The kitchen can be a danger zone—but it doesn't have to be.

- **Appliance safety:** Use stove knob covers or install an automatic shut-off device. Unplug small appliances when not in use.
- **Lock cabinets:** Use childproof latches on drawers and cabinets with knives, cleaning supplies, or alcohol.
- **Food safety:** Regularly check the fridge for expired food. Use clear containers and label leftovers.
- **Simplify tasks:** Provide easy-to-use utensils and consider pre-prepared meals. Remove fake fruit or food-shaped magnets that could be mistaken for real food.

Bathroom

Slippery surfaces and hot water make bathrooms tricky.

- **Grab bars:** Install them near the toilet and in the shower or tub.
- **Non-slip surfaces:** Use mats or adhesive strips in the tub and on the floor.
- **Raised toilet seats:** These make sitting and standing easier and safer.
- **Water temperature:** Set the water heater to 120°F to prevent burns.
- **Remove hazards:** Lock away medications and toiletries that could be mistaken for food. Unplug and store small appliances.

Kitchen



- **Nightlights:** Keep the bathroom lit at night to prevent disorientation.

Bedroom

A restful space should also be a safe one.

- **Bed height:** Ensure the bed is easy to get in and out of. Consider bed rails or floor mats for fall protection.
- **Clear paths:** Keep the route to the bathroom free of obstacles. Use motion-activated nightlights.
- **Clothing organization:** Lay out outfits in advance and remove out-of-season clothes to reduce confusion.
- **Comfort items:** Familiar bedding, photos, and a large digital clock can help with orientation and comfort.
- **Monitoring:** Use a baby monitor or motion sensor to stay aware of nighttime activity.

Tech & Tools That Help

You don't need a smart home, but a few gadgets can make life easier:

- **GPS trackers:** Wearable devices can help locate someone who wanders.
- **Medical alert systems:** Fall-detection pendants or emergency buttons provide peace of mind.
- **Smart assistants:** Devices like Alexa or Google Home can offer reminders, play music, or control lights with voice commands.
- **Whiteboards & calendars:** Use them for daily schedules and reminders to reduce anxiety.

Adapting Over Time

Dementia is progressive, so your home will need to evolve too.

- **Early stage:** Focus on labels, reminders, and maintaining independence.

- **Middle stage:** Add locks, alarms, and more supervision.
- **Late stage:** Prioritize comfort and safety. Consider professional help if home care becomes overwhelming.

Final Thoughts

Creating a dementia-friendly home isn't about making it sterile or clinical, it's about **making it safer, calmer, and more supportive**. Start with the basics, make changes gradually, and always keep your loved one's dignity and comfort in mind.

And don't forget to laugh. A little humor goes a long way—label the cookie jar “Grandma's Secret Stash” or the toilet paper “Conqueror of the Porcelain Throne.” Safety and smiles can go hand in hand.

You've got this. With a few thoughtful changes, your home can be a haven of love, safety, and peace for everyone. ●



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FOOD, NUTRITION & COOKING

BRAIN FOOD

HOW NUTRITION FUELS A STRONG, SHARP, AND RESILIENT MIND

By James Morris

When people think about nutrition, they often focus on weight, heart health, or muscle strength. Yet one of the most important organs in the body—the brain—is frequently overlooked. Your brain controls every thought, memory, emotion, and movement, and it works around the clock, even while you sleep. Just like the rest of your body, it depends on high-quality fuel to function at its best. That’s where “brain food” comes in.

Brain food isn’t a single superfood or supplement. Instead, it’s a pattern of eating that supplies your brain with the nutrients it needs to stay sharp, adaptable, and protected over time. From boosting concentration and mood to reducing the risk of age-related cognitive decline, what you eat today plays a powerful role in shaping your brain health tomorrow.



Why the Brain Needs Special Nutrition

Although the brain accounts for only about two percent of your body weight, it uses roughly twenty percent of your total daily energy. This makes it one of the most energy-demanding organs in the body. Neurons, neurotransmitters, and neural networks all rely on vitamins, minerals, healthy fats, and antioxidants to communicate efficiently and repair themselves.

When the brain doesn't receive the nutrients it needs, the effects can show up in subtle ways at first—brain fog, low mood, difficulty focusing, or memory lapses. Over time, chronic poor nutrition may contribute to inflammation, oxidative stress, and faster cognitive aging. On the other hand, a nutrient-rich diet supports mental clarity, emotional balance, learning, and long-term brain resilience.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: The Brain's Structural Fats

One of the most critical nutrients for brain health is omega-3 fatty acids, especially DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid). The brain is made largely of fat, and DHA is a major building block of neuron cell membranes. These fats help keep brain cells flexible, allowing faster and more efficient communication.

Fatty fish such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, trout, and herring are among the best dietary sources of omega-3s. Regular consumption has been associated with better memory, improved learning, and

lower risk of cognitive decline later in life. Omega-3s also play a role in regulating mood and reducing inflammation, which may help protect against depression and anxiety.

For people who do not eat fish, plant-based options like walnuts, flaxseeds, chia seeds, and algae-based omega-3 supplements can help support brain health, though they typically provide a different form of omega-3 that the body converts less efficiently.

Antioxidants: Defending the Brain from Damage

The brain is especially vulnerable to oxidative stress because it uses so much oxygen and energy.

Antioxidants help neutralize free radicals—unstable molecules that can damage brain cells over time.

Berries, particularly blueberries, strawberries, and blackberries, are rich in antioxidants called flavonoids. These compounds have been shown to cross the blood-brain barrier and collect in areas of the brain involved in learning and memory. Regular berry consumption has been linked to improved cognitive performance and slower mental aging.

Dark chocolate (in moderation), colorful vegetables, citrus fruits, and green tea also provide antioxidants that help protect neurons while supporting blood flow to the brain.

B Vitamins: Supporting Memory and Mental Energy

B vitamins—especially B6, B9 (folate), and B12—are essential for healthy brain function. They help





the brain produce neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, which influence mood, focus, and motivation. These vitamins also help regulate homocysteine, a compound that, at high levels, is associated with cognitive decline.

Good sources of B vitamins include leafy green vegetables, legumes, eggs, dairy products, whole grains, fish, and fortified foods. As people age, absorption of vitamin B12 can decrease, making it particularly important for older adults to monitor their intake.

Whole Grains and Glucose Stability

Glucose is the brain's primary fuel source, but not all carbohydrates support brain function equally. Highly refined sugars cause rapid spikes and crashes in blood sugar, which can lead to fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating.

Whole grains such as oats, brown rice, quinoa, and whole-wheat

bread release glucose slowly, providing steady energy to the brain throughout the day. This helps maintain attention, mental stamina, and stable mood, especially during long periods of thinking or learning.

Leafy Greens and Micronutrients

Leafy green vegetables like spinach, kale, collards, and broccoli are packed with brain-supportive nutrients, including vitamin K, lutein, beta-carotene, and folate. These compounds help protect brain cells, support healthy blood flow, and reduce inflammation.

Studies have consistently found that people who eat leafy greens regularly tend to experience a slower rate of cognitive decline as they age. Even one serving per day can contribute meaningfully to brain health over time.

Nuts, Seeds, and Healthy Fats

Nuts and seeds provide a powerful combination of healthy fats, antioxidants, protein, and minerals.

Walnuts are particularly notable for brain health because they contain alpha-linolenic acid, a plant-based omega-3 fat, as well as vitamin E, which helps protect brain cells from oxidative damage.

Almonds, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and hazelnuts also support brain function by supplying magnesium, zinc, and iron—minerals involved in nerve signaling, oxygen delivery, and energy metabolism.

The Gut–Brain Connection

Emerging research highlights the importance of the gut microbiome in brain health. The bacteria living in your digestive system help produce neurotransmitters, regulate inflammation, and communicate with the brain through what's known as the gut-brain axis.

Fiber-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains feed beneficial gut bacteria. Fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kimchi introduce probiotics that may support both digestive and mental health. A

balanced gut environment is increasingly recognized as a contributor to improved mood, cognition, and stress resilience.

Foods That May Work Against Brain Health

Just as some foods nourish the brain, others can undermine it when consumed too often. Diets high in ultra-processed foods, added sugars, refined carbohydrates, and unhealthy fats have been associated with increased inflammation and faster cognitive decline over time.

Saturated and trans fats found in fried foods, pastries, and processed snacks may impair memory and decision-making when eaten in excess. Moderation and balance are

key—brain health is built through consistent, long-term dietary habits rather than perfection.

A Dietary Pattern for Lifelong Brain Strength

Rather than focusing on individual foods alone, many experts emphasize overall dietary patterns. Eating styles such as the Mediterranean diet and the MIND diet (a blend of Mediterranean and DASH principles) prioritize whole, plant-forward foods, healthy fats, fish, and minimal processing. These patterns have been consistently linked to better cognitive health and slower mental aging.

Feeding Your Brain for the Future

Your brain is remarkably adaptable, capable of forming new connections throughout life. Nutrition is one of the most powerful tools you have to support that adaptability. By choosing foods rich in healthy fats, antioxidants, vitamins, minerals, and fiber, you invest in clearer thinking, better mood, stronger memory, and long-term brain resilience.

Brain food isn't about quick fixes or miracle products—it's about nourishing your mind every day. Each meal is an opportunity to fuel one of the most extraordinary organs you possess and to protect your mental vitality for years to come. ●



LEARNING, GROWTH & TECHNOLOGY

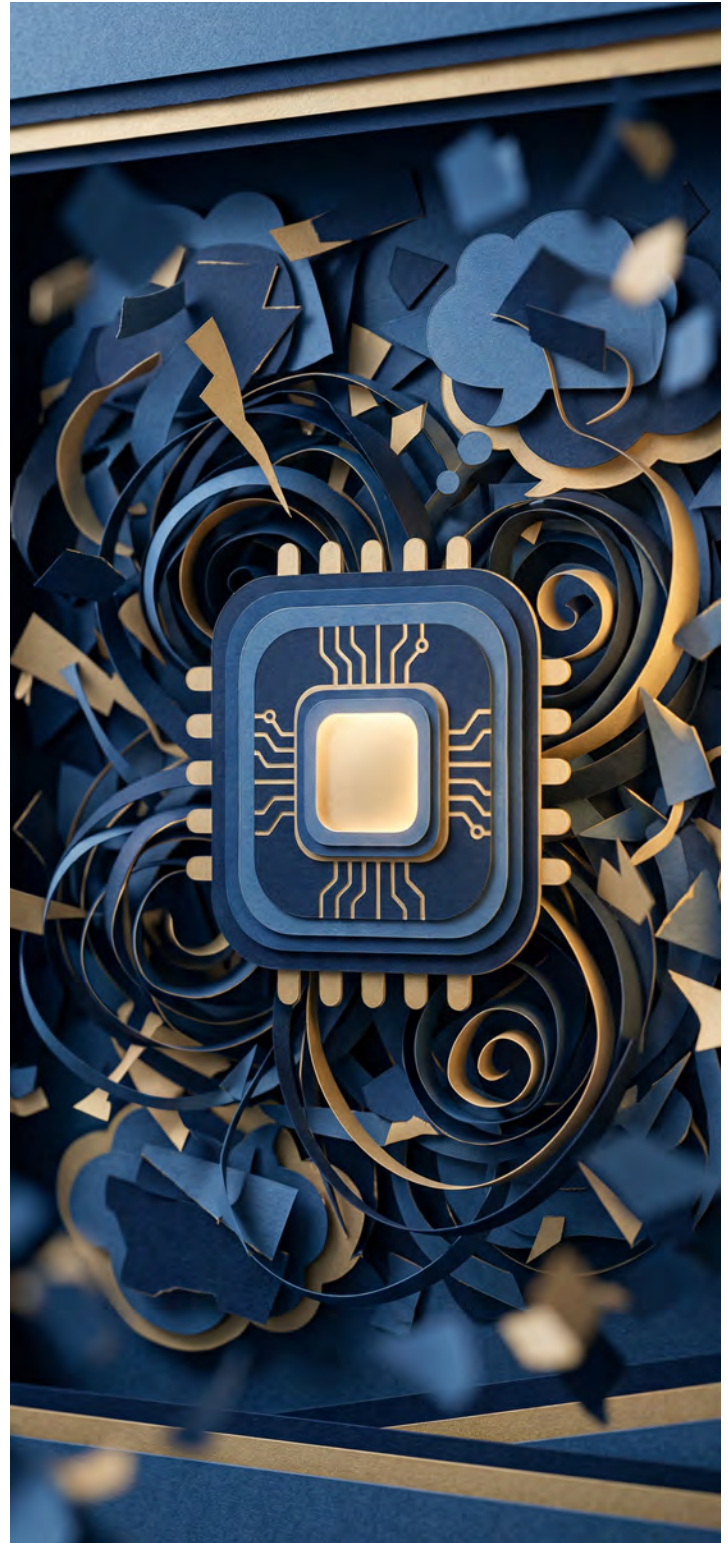
TECH THAT CARES DIGITAL TOOLS FOR YOUR BRAIN AND SANITY

By James Morris

When you hear “technology,” what comes to mind? If it’s the sound of your phone pinging for the 47th time today or the sheer terror of trying to pair Bluetooth headphones, you’re not alone. Technology has a reputation for driving us to the brink of madness. But here’s the plot twist: some digital tools are actually here to help us—if you can believe it.

Yes, there’s a kinder, gentler side to tech. It doesn’t *always* want to overwhelm you with updates or make you feel like you accidentally signed up for a tech support call center. Some tools, it turns out, exist solely to support your mental and brain health. They whisper, “Hey, take a deep breath,” rather than scream, “Install this update now or perish!”

And since it’s Mental Health and Brain Health Awareness Month, let’s take a moment to appreciate this rare breed of technology—the ones that don’t stress us out but instead help us stay calm, focused, and connected.



Mental Health vs. Brain Health: What's the Difference?

Think of mental health and brain health as two sides of the same coin, but with distinct personalities. Mental health is the emotional side—the part that helps us manage stress, keep our moods in check, and stay connected to other humans (even the ones who chew too loudly). Brain health, on the other hand, is like your mind's personal trainer. It's all about keeping memory, focus, and problem-solving skills in shape.

As we age, both mental and brain health can start to wobble. Stress, loneliness, and even a bad night's sleep can sneak in and mess with how we feel and think. That's where supportive tools come in—not to replace doctors or therapists (or your best friend who listens to all your complaints) but to add a little extra oomph to your healthy habits.

Tech for Emotional Wellbeing: It's Not All Cat Memes

Let's start with mental health. Technology has come up with some clever ways to help us stay emotionally balanced—without demanding we become Zen monks or write a novel about our feelings.

Take mindfulness apps, for example. These little gems offer guided breathing exercises, soothing sounds, and short moments of reflection. And the best part? There's no “wrong” way to use them. You can meditate for two

minutes or just listen to the sound of rain without feeling judged.

Sleep tech is another lifesaver. Forget the trackers that tell you how badly you slept (which, frankly, isn't helpful). Instead, look for tools that gently nudge you toward better bedtime habits—like relaxation audio or reminders to put your phone down and go to sleep already.

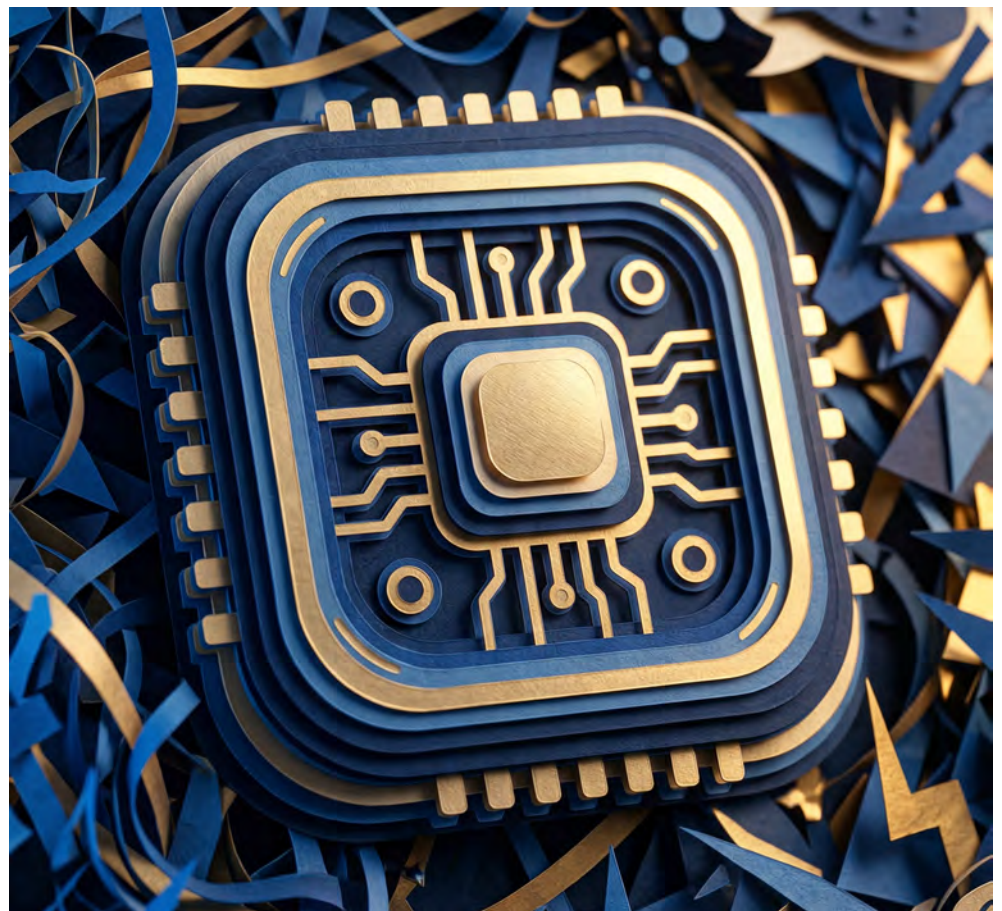
And then there are journaling apps. These aren't your old diary with a lock and key—they're more like a friend who gives you a daily nudge to jot down what's good, what's hard, or what's just plain weird about your day. No essays required.

Brain Health: Use It or Lose It (With a Little Help from Tech)

Now let's talk brain health. Your brain loves a good challenge, but it doesn't need to win a Nobel Prize to stay sharp. It just needs to stay curious and engaged.

Cue the digital games. No, not the ones where you blow up aliens; I mean the ones that make you think. Word puzzles, logic games, and pattern recognition apps are all great ways to give your brain a little workout. And remember: it's about having fun, not competing with that one friend who always brags about their Sudoku skills.

Technology also makes lifelong learning a breeze. Want to learn about the history of cheese? (Who wouldn't?) There's an online class for that. Curious about watercolor painting or astrophysics? Dive in. The beauty of learning is that it doesn't have to be formal—it just has to spark your curiosity.



Even simple reminders can be brain-friendly. A nudge to drink water, stretch, or pick up that knitting project you started six months ago can keep your mind and body humming along.

Staying Connected: Because Isolation is So Last Year

Let's face it: humans are social creatures, even if some of us would rather hang out with our pets. Staying connected is crucial for both mental and brain health, and technology can make it easier—even when you're miles apart.

Video calls let you see your loved ones' faces, even if you're in your pajamas (just don't stand up). Online classes and book clubs bring people together for shared learning and laughs. And messaging apps let you fire off a quick "thinking of you" without the pressure of a full conversation.

Used thoughtfully, these tools can help combat isolation and keep your social life alive—even if your idea of a party is a cozy chat with one friend and a cup of tea.

How to Keep Tech from Driving You Nuts

Here's the golden rule of tech: it's supposed to work for *you*, not the other way around. If a digital tool feels like it's making your life harder, it's time for a breakup.

Start small—try one tool at a time. Pick something that feels simple and intuitive, like that pair of jeans you wear everywhere. Ignore features you don't need (because who really uses 90% of what an app offers?). And if you get stuck, ask for help. There's no shame in phoning a friend—or bribing your tech-savvy grandkid with cookies.

Most importantly, be patient with yourself. Learning something new always comes with a little frustration. The key is to keep going—and maybe reward yourself with chocolate afterward.

Tech That Cares: The Takeaway

Let's get one thing straight: you don't *need* technology to take care of your mental or brain health. But if you want to give it a shot, the right tools can make a difference. Whether it's a calming app, a brain-teasing game, or a video call that makes you laugh till your sides hurt, technology can be a quiet, supportive presence in your life.

Because here's the thing: mental and brain health don't come with an expiration date. You can keep learning, growing, and thriving at any age. And if technology can help you along the way? Well, that's one update worth installing. ●

Helpful Cellphone Apps to Explore

These apps are optional tools designed to support relaxation, connection, and mental engagement. Most offer free versions and can be downloaded from your phone's app store.

For Calm, Stress Relief & Emotional Wellbeing

- **Calm** – Offers guided relaxation, breathing exercises, and soothing audio designed to support relaxation and sleep.
- **Headspace** – Provides short, guided mindfulness sessions focused on stress, focus, and rest.
- **Insight Timer** – Features a large collection of guided meditations and calming soundscapes, many available at no cost.

For Sleep Support

- **Sleep Cycle** – Helps users better understand sleep patterns and includes gentle wake-up features.
- **BetterSleep** – Combines relaxing sounds, bedtime stories, and wind-down routines for easier evenings.

For Brain Health & Mental Engagement

- **Lumosity** – Features cognitive games designed to support memory, attention, and problem-solving through short daily activities.
- **Elevate** – Offers brain-training exercises focused on language skills, math, and focus.
- **Peak** – Provides a variety of short mental puzzles that encourage focus, flexibility, and curiosity.

For Staying Connected

- **Zoom** – Makes it possible to participate in virtual gatherings, classes, or conversations with friends and family.
- **WhatsApp** – Allows easy messaging, photo sharing, and video calls with individuals or groups.

Technology tools are not a substitute for medical or mental health care. If you have concerns about your mental or brain health, consider speaking with a healthcare professional.



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