



Neurobics- Book 1



25 Exercises to Strengthen Your Brain

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In recent years, ground-breaking studies have proven that Neuroplasticity (the brain's ability to reorganize itself through neural pathways and connections in response to real or *imagined* experiences) is not limited to youth and does not have to diminish with age.

We don't have a set number of brain cells that die off as we grow older. Not only can we generate new brain cells, we can establish new stronger neural pathways through deliberately creating new associative patterns. We can strengthen our brains...with Neurobics.

Neurobics are exercises that use all of our senses in new and novel ways. Neurobics is something anyone can do anywhere in just minutes a day. It's not a quick fix, but a conscious lifestyle choice. It's a way to make "mind-building" exercises out of everyday activities.

We're going to provide you with 25 Neurobic exercises to get you started. You can design your own Neurobic Exercises but be sure that the activities provide the kind of nerve cell stimulation needed to activate new brain circuits.

Neurobic exercises should include at least one or more of the following:

1. **Use one of your senses in a new way.** By dulling the sense you normally use you are forcing yourself to rely on another sense. i.e. Eating a meal in silence, listening to specific music in combination with a distinctive aroma.
2. **Really engage your emotions.** You want your brain to sit up and take notice. The activity should make you step outside the box, be unusual, surprising, meaningful.
3. **Break a routine.** Make it unexpected.

Here are a few tips to consider before you get started...

Carefully select what you expose your brain to...

Remember that the brain doesn't distinguish between what's real and what's imagined. Exposure to sensationalized news stories, gossip and negativity can affect our brains as if we lived those very experiences. Limit your exposure to people, places and experiences that are not a positive influence.





Begin and end each day on a positive note...

When you wake up each morning before getting out of bed, think of the things you are thankful for. Smile. State your intention for the day. As you drift off to sleep think of the good things that happened in your day. Visualize your dreams.

Resist the urge to criticize and judge...

This especially applies to you. When you feel challenged, take a deep breath and really think about your words and thoughts. It's easy to get caught up in self-defeating language.

Think Big...

Set your intentions much higher than your desires. As you visualize and imagine this highest intention you are not only triggering positive psychological benefits, you are also making your core desire feel more easily attainable.

Meditate...

We all know that meditation has numerous benefits to our mind, body and spirit. Meditation can also help us install changes in our life. It can help us strengthen our neural pathways. When we meditate we are synchronizing both hemispheres of the brain. There is available to us a great technological way to assist with meditation. This specially prepared music can take the listener into Alpha brain wave patterns of pre-sleep and then down into Theta patterns of memory, dreams and deep meditation. Brain Wave Entrainment music can be found at mindpowermp3.com. Listening to this music on a regular basis can have a dramatic effect on our moods and energy which assists in strengthening our brains!

Have Fun....

Long lasting changes are easy to achieve when we make them enjoyable and add plenty of laughter and fun.





-1-

FEEL THE WEALTH

Fill a cup with different coins and while doing another activity, reach into the cup without looking and pick up a coin. By touch alone determine what each coin is and place them in stacks. You can also do this in the car – and even put them in your coin holder if you have one.

This works well with other small objects too. You can use items of slightly different sizes and different textures such as nuts, screws, paper clips, washers, candy, jewelry etc. You can also use small squares of sandpapers, leather, satin or other textures.

Using touch instead of vision exercises our tactile discrimination. Distinguishing these subtle differences increases cortical activation and gives us stronger synapses.





-2-

WAKE UP AND SMELL.....THE AROMA

Wake up to a new olfactory sensation. Break the routine of freshly brewed coffee (or other aroma) being the first smell you recognize and associate with your morning.

Choose a favorite aroma and keep it in a container by the bedside. You might choose a citrus scent, a savory aroma, a peppermint or vanilla extract, a fruity or earthy smell. Continue to inhale this new aroma as you begin your daily routine of bathing, dressing etc.

By introducing new aromas in connection with your morning activities – new neural pathways are being activated.





-3-

SHHHHHHHH...

Headphones and earbuds are good for more than listening. They are just the tool for experiencing silence. Experience silence during your daily routine. While you have breakfast with your family, or as you're preparing for the day. Wear earplugs while you are making lunches.

Ingrained routines allow us to "tune out" sensory input our brain has determined is not needed for a routine task. Blocking out sound forces us to use other senses to complete even simple tasks. It also forces us to pay attention to everything around us.





-4-

SHOPPING NEUROBICS

No this isn't a person who shops compulsively. 😊 Start your shopping at the opposite end of the grocery store from where you usually start shopping.

Change the way you look for items. Stores typically place their more profitable items at eye level. Look at everything on the shelves from the top to the bottom. Choose items you don't normally purchase and look at the ingredients. It's not necessary to buy them, just investigate.

Instead of buying a lot of pre-packaged food, talk to the Deli clerk, check out the fresh fish, go through the bakery. Close your eyes and smell the fruits and vegetables. You can also try small amounts of cereals, spices, grains (health food stores usually have a good selection).

This is another way to introduce new textures and aromas, not to mention taste.





-5-

PLAY AN ON-GOING GAME

Set up a chessboard, or any other strategic game, in a common area. As household members go by they can make a move in the game. Everyone is an anonymous player. There are no winners or losers.

This type of anonymous player game doesn't allow for long term strategies. It does involve visual-spatial thinking and provides relief from left-brain, verbal activities.

This game is also perfect for the workplace. Set one up in the break room or any high traffic area. It lets your working mind take a break too!





-6-

BRUSHING, BRUSHING, BRUSHING

Use your non-dominant hand to apply the toothpaste to your brush, and then brush your teeth in a totally different pattern than the one you usually use. Use this same hand to rinse and help floss.

You can also use your non-dominant hand to apply make-up, shave (carefully), brush and style your hair, button/zip clothes and eat breakfast.

By using your non-dominant hand you are activating the opposite side of your brain from the side you normally activate. So the circuits/ connections you would normally use are inactive, while the opposite side has to suddenly “wake up” and direct behaviors. This can create rapid expansion in the control and process of tactile information from the hand.





-7-

SEXUAL EVOLUTION

Sex uses all of our senses as well as engaging our emotions. The brain really comes alive during a sexual encounter. Candles, music, champagne, massage, perfumed oils, a feather can all contribute to sensory exploration.

Playing, novelty, challenging your imagination to create heightened sensations can all play a pivotal role in getting those synapses firing. Closing your eyes and relying on your other senses is an intuitive part of sexual pleasure.

The fun and challenge is finding new ways to make sex an exciting and sensual adventure. Add to that the fact that you're strengthening your brain!





-8-

EYES ON THE ROAD...ONLY

If you drive, the next time you go to your car, close your eyes and use only your senses to begin your trip. Find your keys, unlock the door, sit inside, buckle your seatbelt and start the engine. Continue using your sense of touch and spatial memory to locate the radio and change the station, to start and shut off the windshield wipers.

Having your eyes closed forces your brain to activate rarely used pathways. It also opens up opportunities for more associations such as the cold metal on the seat belt or the ridges on the keys.





-9-

BRAINSTORM

“**Brainstorming** is a technique groups of individuals can use to generate novel ideas and enhance their collective creativity. This technique requires heightened expressiveness, postponed evaluation, quantity as opposed to quality contributions, and a conscious effort to improve upon earlier suggestions. The brainstorming method was developed in 1939 by an advertising executive, Alex Osborne, with the desire to improve his colleagues’ abilities to generate new, unusual, and imaginative ideas.”
(Wikipedia)

Since the goal of Brainstorming is to encourage individuals to make associations and then exchange and enrich them with other peoples associations, it is a very Neurobic activity.

These new and unusual associations bring electrical flashes between brain areas that rarely communicate – thus the “storm” in brainstorm.





-10-

UPSIDE-DOWN

Turn your life upside-down. Turn your calendar, pictures, artwork, notes on the fridge, clock and anything else you'd like, upside-down.

After just a brief glance the analytical, left side of your brain likes to label an object. Since the right brain perceives “non-verbal” spatial relationships when something is turned upside-down it interprets the colors, shapes and relationships as puzzle pieces locking into place. When the objects are upside down it forces the right brain to kick in and perceive as opposed to the left brain's analytical labeling.

This new perception is also thought to bring out the latent artist in each of us.





-11-

IMPROVISATION

Creative expression is an excellent Neurobic exercise. Try your hand at making a video. It could be a story, a documentary, a news piece with interviews and viewpoints, a cooking piece or anything that interests you.

Dub, Dub, Dub, Dub....Record a television show and choose friends/family to be the characters. Play the program while muted and each of you make up the dialogue for your character. This can be especially fun with nature programs.

Play a video using different music as the background. Use romantic, rock, jazz, musical or scary music to change the perception of what's going on in the show.

All of these activities are not only fun but they create new associations and pathways.





-12-

A NOVEL MEAL

Change the order of your meal. Start with dessert and end with soup or salad. Your brain loves the unexpected.

Eat breakfast for dinner and dinner for breakfast. Bring on some unusual associations by letting the entire family contribute one item menu idea. Marshmallow fluff and hamburgers will certainly be a novel experience.

Share your meal in a new location. Try eating outside or having a picnic on the floor of the living room.

Try a new unique food and serve it in an unusual container. Imagine trying to eat a flavored banana from a bottle. 😊





-13-

UN-ROUTINE YOUR MORNING

Try occasionally introducing different elements to your morning. Instead of watching the news, switch to a children's program. It might help you remember how much children explore and learn with abandon.

Change your alarm to wake 10 minutes earlier. Change the alarm tone, or music to something you have never tried before.

Vary the order of your morning routine. Try eating breakfast first and then getting ready for work. You can also change your breakfast as well.

This is also a great place to introduce a short meditation and some brain wave entrainment music. You can find many beautiful, unique and ancient audios to transform your life at mindpowermp3.com

Brain activity increases with these novel approaches as evidenced in brain imaging studies. This greater "brain power" decreases when activities become routine.





-14-

PLAY “WHAT IS THIS?”

This is a fun game for any age. You hand someone an ordinary item and they have to think of as many ideas of what that object could be within a specified time frame. Say one or two minutes.

Example: A spatula could be a shovel, a microphone, a baseball bat, a flyswatter, a bracelet holder, a canoe paddle, a fan etc.

This game forces you to reach into your mental database and make new associations in a humorous way.





-15-

HOBBY TIME

Start a new hobby. Hobbies that require the use of more than one sense and that are not routine are the most Neurobic. They also make fine distinctions within one sensory system.

Take up knitting or cross stitch. Build a model car or airplane. Switch things up by covering one eye. More touch and spatial skills are needed since you lose depth perception when one eye is covered.

Master something new; a telescope, a camera, windsurfing, snowboarding or a musical instrument.

Try something that puts you in a sensory environment that requires you to pay close attention to your surroundings. Cooking, woodworking, fly fishing and archery are a few examples.





-16-

REPOSITIONING

When you use a daily routine your cortex and hippocampus construct a spatial map of your space. This means there is very little mental effort needed to move around and function in these spaces. Repositioning the location of familiar items reactivates spatial networks and forces your visual and somatosensory areas to get busy adjusting your internal maps.

So rearrange the furniture, change the order of the clothes in your closet, change your cabinet contents around in the kitchen/bathroom, move your watch to the other wrist, change up your desk or office as well.

If your schedule allows, you can also rearrange your daily tasks. Instead of checking your mail first thing in the morning, eat breakfast first. Take breaks at work/home at different times if possible.

Just try changing where you keep your remote control or cell phone. You'll notice yourself reaching for the old location and when you catch yourself and redirect to the new location, this reflects your brain establishing a new pathway.





-17-

MAKE YOUR COMMUTE SOCIAL

Buy the newspaper from a person when possible. Go inside to pay for your gas instead of paying at the pump.

Make faces at kids in the car in front of you. Stop somewhere new for breakfast or coffee.

Cognitive abilities suffer under social deprivation. Keeping active and social is critical to good mental health.





-18-

NEW CUISINE

Once a month try a new cuisine that incorporates exotic foods, tastes and smells. Choose a recipe for breakfast or dinner and shop at an ethnic market for the ingredients. This is a Neurobic exercise too!

Try something Mexican, made with tortillas or beans. Try a Japanese dish with fish and seaweed. Try special sauces or dips from different countries.

Use chopsticks; eat with your hands or with your fingers. Eat at a different time of day. When you eat the same types of food at the same time of day your taste and smell associative capacities are blunted.





-19-

TRAVEL

You certainly don't need another reason to plan a get-a-way. Travel is an excellent Neurobic Exercise!

Traveling exposes the senses to the novelty of new surroundings. Spatial maps used for normal navigation are no longer useable and new pathways must be constructed. Any discomfort or stress you might feel taking in new languages, sounds and sights is actually your brain kicking it up a notch!

Gary Small, director of the UCLA Longevity Center at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, and author of several books on Alzheimer's prevention, was quoted in the [June 2012 issue of Prevention](#) magazine as saying that, "Research shows that travel helps build vital neural pathways."





-20-

PLANT A GARDEN

Planting a garden, whether on a rooftop in the city, or an acre in the country is a richly Neurobic exercise. You use all of your senses to plant a garden.

Your spatial abilities are utilized to plan and execute your planting. Where to plant? What soil to use? What plants to plant? The sun exposure? The amount of water needed?

Then there is the feel/smell of the earth. The wonderful aroma of fresh fruit and vegetables. The taste of herbs. The smells of a beautiful flower bed. These are all rewards unto themselves.





-21-

BE EXPRESSIVE

Creating art activates portions of your brain that interpret color, texture and form. These are the non-verbal and emotional parts of the cerebral cortex and are very different than your linear, logical thinking.

Create art together! Doing a project as a group introduces a social factor that changes associations and helps create new neural pathways. You can get out paper and crayons, pencils or paint and choose a theme that each of you will create a work from.

You can also create a large work of art such as a mural. Add brain stimulation by holding the paintbrush/pencil in your teeth or with your feet.





-22-

TAKE A JOYFUL RIDE

Go on a drive with no destination in mind. Bring family/friend and let each person play navigator. Let them make the decisions of when to turn left, when to turn right or when to stop and smell the flowers.

You can also spread out a map of your area and let someone close their eyes and choose a location. Find a random place to go in that area. Be sure to make stops and be social. This enhances your sensory experiences.

Normally when you are driving you have a predetermined destination and often a routine route to get there. The anticipation and excitement of not being sure what comes next or your end destination forces your brain to sit up and take notice!





-23-

READER'S CHOICE

When we listen to someone else reading or we read out loud ourselves, we use different brain circuits than when we are reading silently. Listening, speaking and reading activate different areas of the brain.

When we listen to someone reading it activates two distinct areas in the left and right half of the cortex. Speaking the words aloud activates both sides of the motor cortex as well as part of the cerebellum. Reading silently activates only one area of the cortex in the left hemisphere.

So read aloud to your partner/child. Have them read aloud to you. It may take a while to complete a book but you have the added benefit of spending quality time together.





-24-

SHOPPING HABITS

Change your shopping routine by stopping by an ethnic market, butcher shop, bakery, fish market, produce stand, hardware store, book store or flea market.

Ethnic food stores usually have staff who know all about their products. Ask about where items come from and how they are used. By seeing, feeling and touching the products (when possible) you are forming new associative links.

Small stores allow you to have a very different experience than the big box chains. You can touch and experience the products as opposed to everything being pre-packaged. A bakery aroma or seeing/touching a loose screw in the hardware store may activate a childhood memory.

You can change things up even more by having a partner or friend make out your grocery list using only descriptions of the items. Now your routine grocery shopping trip has turned into a treasure hunt!





-25-

PARK IT

Visit a park in your area. Get comfortable and close your eyes. Use your other senses to determine what's happening around you. Free-associate using the smells, sounds and "feel" the experience.

Try identifying flowers or bird watching. Fly a kite. Run like a child. Swing in the wind.

Sail a model boat on a lake. Make your own from whatever you can find and have races!

Start a game of Frisbee or tag. Have an unusual picnic with new foods you've never tried. This is a great place to stretch out on a blanket and read to your partner/friend/child.





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