

Restoring Health at Chugachmiut

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Supporting a Healthy Brain

As I have written about many times, unresolved Adverse Childhood Experiences can lead to adoption of negative behaviors like smoking, drinking, drug use, depression, poor diet and hydration and many others. Many of our choices start to negatively influence our brain starting with our childhood and continuing to adulthood. Drinking caffeinated beverages such as alcohol, coffee, heavily sugared fruit type drinks and soda dehydrate our brain, which consists of 80% water. In contrast, our bodies are about 60% water. Here are some of the effects of dehydration:

-“...slight dehydration can produce a small but critical shrinkage of the brain, impairing neuromuscular coordination, concentration and thinking.”

-“ A deficiency of water can alter the concentration of electrolytes such as sodium, potassium and chloride which has a negative effect on the function of the brain.”

-“ Dehydration reduces blood volume, creating thicker, more concentrated blood which stresses the heart. This also decreases the ability to transport oxygen and nutrients to the muscles and other living cells.”

Many children find temporary relief from their stresses and anxiety through sniffing substances and “huffing,” with have great potential for brain damage.

Alcohol use causes many more problems, as discussed on the National Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse web site ([ALCOHOL'S DAMAGING EFFECTS ON THE BRAIN](#)).

Restoring our Health requires taking better care of our brain. We can start to do that by very simply replacing a majority of the liquids we drink with filtered water. Eliminating as many toxins as we can from the water we drink is a great goal. Some people add a couple of teaspoons of apple cider vinegar to their water daily, although the medical community claims that more study needs to be done to prove whether there is benefit. ([Apple Cider Vinegar](#)). Many more add about a quarter teaspoon of salt to each quart of water. I am not talking about common table salt here, but about high quality sea salt. Most high quality salts have significant amounts of minerals. Processed table salts are typically said to be very hard on the body. Here is an article that discusses the use of sea salt in your water. ([Health Benefit of Sea Salt](#)).


Some physicians also recommend supplements for improved brain health, although diet is the preferred source of vitamins. Among the recommendations are Fish Oil (Omega 3 Fatty Acids); Vitamin D; Folic Acid (and other B vitamins); Vitamins C & E; CoEnzyme Q10; and Alpha Lipoic Acid. Your own Doctor or a nutritionist should help you select what you need for optimal brain health. Dr. Daniel Amen, a Psychiatrist, has a good discussion of supplementation in Chapter 20 (pp. 192-216) of his book titled “Making A Good Brain Great.”

Exercise is also great support for your brain. Proper hydration facilitates good blood flow for oxygen and nutrients when combined with exercise that sustains your optimal heart rate for a period of time consistent with your overall fitness. (That means don't overdo exercise, but do enough to benefit your body). And according to Dr. John Ratey, author of "Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain,"

"Exercise produces large quantities of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that helps neurons survive and encourages the growth of new ones. 'I call it Miracle-Gro for the brain,' says John Ratey, MD, a clinical associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and author of the upcoming Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain. "It helps the cells grow and makes them better and more resilient to future stresses." Brains with more BDNF have a greater capacity for knowledge. To boost BDNF levels, Ratey recommends moderate- to high-intensity aerobic exercise, incorporating interval training. Other research shows that just walking brings substantial benefits. Best bet: Include a 10-minute speedwalk in your daily stroll." ([The Body Beautiful](#))

Challenging your brain is also highly recommended. Learning new skills and languages are beneficial because they help you "exercise" your brain. Reading new and challenging material, play cards or board games, socialize and work hard at remembering names and faces, and memorize something significant every day. Keep a journal to record what has happened in your day and write it down at the end of the day.

Because we are going to be helping our patients overcome their unresolved childhood traumas, which have been programmed into their brain by Adverse Childhood Experiences, we need healthy brains to support this effort. Our patients will need to put in the long hard work necessary to change their dark thinking and negative actions to sunny thinking and positive actions. A healthy brain makes it more likely that the patient will be successful.

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JD on **January 14, 2011 at 11:49 AM**

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