

How to Build a Healthy Brain

Making Change Stick – Checklist

In the table below I have broken down the key elements of a brain-healthy lifestyle into quick and easy tasks, many of which can be completed in less than five minutes.

Your challenge is to tick off three different tasks per day.

Tip: Each task must be in a different category, so it's not enough for you to have a salad of spinach, spring onions and beans and be done because all of those habits are in the same category. But have a handful of nuts (B6), floss before bed (C1) and go for a walk at lunchtime (D1) and you are winning. Try to vary the habits throughout the weeks to introduce a broad range of actions into your repertoire. It may not feel like you are doing very much, but over time these changes accumulate to create an overall brain-healthy lifestyle.

Week commencing: ___/___/___

A		Sleep
	1	Avoided coffee after midday.
	2	Got 30 minutes of natural light in the morning or at lunchtime.
	3	Turned lights down at least an hour before bed.
	4	Stopped using light-emitting devices at least an hour before bed.
	5	Kept the bedroom cool.
	6	Kept the bedroom dark.
	7	Wrote down any worries or tasks for the next day.
	8	Avoided doing work in bed or in the bedroom.
	9	Avoided alcohol in the two hours before bed.
	10	Avoided drinking too much liquid before bed.
B		Food
	1	Ate a serving (small bowlful) of leafy greens.
	2	Ate a cup of berries.
	3	Prepared a meal with three different herbs and/or spices (not including salt and pepper).
	4	Ate a serving of alliums.
	5	Ate half a tin of beans.
	6	Ate a handful of raw nuts.
	7	Had a serving of cold carbs.
	8	Had a serving of wholegrains.
	9	Drank one cup of tea or coffee.

	10	Ate a portion of oily fish.
C		Dental Health
	1	Flossed at least once today.
	2	Brushed teeth in the morning and evening.
	3	Booked a check-up with the dentist.
D		Physical Activity and Exercise
	1	Walked for at least 10 minutes.
	2	Exercised vigorously for 20 minutes.
	3	Moderately exercised for 30 minutes.
	4	Did strength training of a major muscle group (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).
	5	Did 30 minutes of mindful movement such as yoga or stretching.
	6	Got up every 50 minutes for a walk/stretch.
E		Breath
	1	Did at least two minutes of slow, controlled breathing.
	2	Sang a power ballad in the shower.
	3	Attended a yoga or other mindful movement class.
F		Heat
	1	Spent 20 minutes in the sauna or a hot bath.
G		Attention
	1	Did 20 minutes of mindfulness practice.
	2	Did 20 minutes of learning.
	3	Read uninterrupted for 20 minutes.
H		Critical Thinking
	1	Applied CT questions to a claim read on social media.
I		Social Media and Tech
	1	Put phone away when trying to work.
	2	Put phone away when talking to my partner or a friend.
J		Money
	1	Checked my bank account.
	2	Drafted a budget.
K		Emotions
	1	Wrote down how I am feeling and thought about why.
	2	Talked to a friend about what is bothering me.

	3	Went to therapy.
	4	Watched 20 minutes of comedy.
L		Relationships
	1	Called a friend or family member for a catch-up.
	2	Made a plan to meet up with a friend(s) in the next two weeks.
	3	Attended an interactive group activity such as a book club.
	4	Put phone away when talking to friends and family face-to-face.
	5	Let someone know they can call me if they need to talk.