



Twelve Brain Rules

In his new book, **Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home and School** (Pear Press; www.brainrules.net), John Medina observes, “If you wanted to create an educational environment that was directly opposed at what the brain was good at doing, you probably would design something like a classroom.” To demonstrate directions we might more effectively pursue, he outlines 12 brain-focused principles for teaching and learning.....

1. **Exercise:** Exercise boosts brain power.
2. **Survival:** The human brain evolved too
3. **Wiring:** Every brain is wired differently.
4. **Attention:** We don ’t pay attention to boring things.
5. **Short-term memory:** Repeat to remember.
6. **Long-term Memory:** Remember to repeat.
7. **Sleep:** Sleep well, think well.
8. **Stress:** Stressed brains do not learn the same way.
9. **Sensory Integration:** Stimulate more of the senses.
10. **Vision:** Vision trumps all of the other senses.
11. **Gender:** Male and Female brains are different.
12. **Exploration:** We are powerful and natural explorers.

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What Do We Know About Stress?

Stress is a universal and naturally occurring phenomenon in humans. Recent epidemiological research indicates marked increases in stress-related diseases as a result of life styles saturated with excessive stress and chronic tension. Burnout, heart attacks, ulcers, decreased productivity, relational problems, loneliness, cynicism, and depression are frequent symptoms of chronic stress that adversely affect us personally, professionally, and physically.

While stress cannot be eliminated, we can learn to deal with it effectively to maximize our potential. There are many programs available to help us learn how to identify the stressors in our lives, to understand how these stressors affect us, and to learn and practice a variety of effective coping strategies. What can we do to manage stress effectively?

- Eliminate negative self-thought
- Set realistic expectations
- Take care of yourself physically—sleep well.
- Learn to be assertive-know when to say no.
- Understand your role and clarify the boundaries.
- Use “to do” lists to help you manage your time more effectively.
- Build a supportive network for yourself.
- Begin today by self-nurturing through treating yourself and rewarding
- Learn to delegate.
- Develop relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, mental imagery and music.
- Maximize your prime working time.
- Avoid procrastination
- Maximize commuting and waiting time by reading, writing, and returning phone calls.
- Minimize schedule interruptions.
- Schedule regular exercise.
- Eat well. Restrict caffeine, avoid crash diets, restrict fat and carbohydrates.
- Create an environment conducive to relaxation. Maintain and nurture your sense of humor.
- Maintain an optimistic attitude. Give up negative fantasies.
- Accept and embrace the positives— avoid being the victim.
- Keep your language clear and focused.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Seek optimistic people for your support system.
- Strive for realism not perfectionism.

— Adapted from *The Best of Active Training*. Reproduced with permission of Pheiffer, an Imprint of Wiley. www.pheiffer.com

Keep Your Brain Pumped for Action

You know it is important to exercise your body, but it is also important to exercise your brain. Scientists know that you can grow new neurons in parts of your brain related to movement and memory. This notion of neurogenesis used to be unthinkable. Here is how you can keep your brain primed for action:

1. **Add to your bag of tricks.** Real world experience still counts the most, and “walking the walk” in management turns out to be more than good business practice. It is also cognitive calisthenics. When Xerox CEO, Anne Mulcahy, asked financier Warren Buffet how she could pull her company out of a tailspin, he told her to walk about. She did and found out what Xerox employees and customers thought was important rather than what he financial people and share holders said was important.
2. **Play hard.** It fires up the pre-frontal cortex, helping us to think and understand the world. Albert Einstein described his experience in developing the theory of relativity as a “physical sensation” that turned into dreamlike images and finally a formula. “Imagination”, he said, “ is more important than knowledge”. That’s why Google and Apple are so big on “play”. Organizations that stifle play may stymie brainpower, which is what happens to overprotected children who can’t explore the world freely and never reach their potential.
3. **Look for patterns.** Superiority in pattern recognition may be the greatest competitive advantage. It goes back to practice and play, and runs forward to developing new ways of thinking. To increase your capacity for pattern recognition, challenge and enlarge your knowledge. Make your thinking more nuanced, less black and white. Consider how to use someone else’s system in your line of work.
4. **Seek out new things.** When you have a mental block, get up and change the environment. Buddhists call it “beginner’s mind”, a willingness to step back and start over.

— Adapted from “Cognitive Fitness,” Roderick Gilkey and Curt Kilts, Harvard Business Review.

Resource Recommendation

The Leadership Challenge
James Kouzes and Barry Posner
Jossey-Bass Publishers



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Promoting Quality Care and Education for Young Children and Their Families

<http://southernearlychildhood.org>

The Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA) is a regional organization committed to promoting quality care and education for young children and their families. SECA is committed to providing leadership and support to individuals and groups by:

- Enhancing the quality of young children's lives through early childhood care and education.*
- Supporting families in their roles of caring for their children.*
- Fostering the professional growth and status of individuals working with young children and their families.*
- Increasing public understanding and support for policies and programs which ensure developmentally based services to young children and their families.*
- Focusing on Southern issues concerning children and families*

Board Cafe

I searched the Board Café website at: <http://www.compasspoint.org> The following articles are posted and can be downloaded for free for this month:

- If You Don't Have Time to Save: Nonprofit Retirement Part 3
- Take a Three Minute Vacation Right Now: Visit the World of Fish!
- Closing Down the Right Way: Dissolving an Organization
- What Nonprofits Are Saying About Bailout: A Fast Roundup
- Should Nonprofits Be More Like Business? Asked the Week of the Bailout 10/01/08.

Leadership

Leadership is an attitude before it is an ability...Leadership produces useful change, while management creates orderly results which maintain work efficiency....Leaders are people who do the right thing; managers are people who do things right. Both roles are crucial, but they differ profoundly. —Warren Bennis