

Whole Brain Exercises – Activities to Boost Your Whole Brain Thinking

By: Deborah Lindholm, December 29, 2008

Whether it's called brain training or cranial callisthenics, you'll have noticed the new interest in exercising the brain. With Alzheimer's disease rising as the population ages, brain games and problem-solving are gaining popularity. Brain exercise isn't just for elderly people. There are brain games for babies and people with brain damage. Programs feature in schools and are endorsed by major employers.

Scientists are divided on the usefulness of brain workouts. Some studies seem to show positive results, but some neuro-scientists say that they are based on over-simplified ideas about brain function. Regardless, users report that regular brain games improve concentration, memory and alertness. Unlike exercises that claim to develop abilities allegedly located in the right or left brain, whole brain exercises are geared towards integrating the two sides, or comprise a range of exercises targeting all brain areas. They include:

Cross Crawls

Derived from kinesiology, the basis of the cross crawl is rhythmic movement. The idea is that babies are born 'homolateral', with the right brain governing the right side of the body, the left brain the left side. It is claimed that cross crawls for babies help transfer the energies, so that right-brain - left body and left-brain - right body connect.

In adults, it is said to help integrate the functioning of the two sides of the brain, speeding communication through the corpus callosum, improving dyslexia and boosting the immune system, amongst other benefits. It involves alternately touching the right hand (standing) or elbow (seated) to the left knee and vice versa, 25 times each or for 2 minutes.

Lazy Eights (Infinity Sign)

Lazy Eights are said to exercise both sides of the brain, with benefits including enhanced attention, hand-eye co-ordination and emotional wellbeing, as well as reduced stress. With a pen and paper, using first your dominant, then your non-dominant hand, draw the infinity sign (the number eight lying on its side) for 1-2 minutes daily.

An alternative that doesn't require pen and paper is Rhythmic Eights. Also derived from kinesiology principles of rhythmic movement, Rhythmic Eights consist of 'drawing' figures of eights in the air for up to a minute daily. This movement is said to balance the two hemispheres of the brain.

Other Exercises

Hook-ups for calming, 'energy yawns', 'brain button' activation, visual tracking exercises and other activities are promoted as brain boosters. Ordinary activities like juggling may also be good exercise for multiple parts of the brain and a combination of Sudoku, crosswords and other puzzles also contributes to a varied brain workout that will at the very least stave off boredom and pass the time.