

active lifestyles



Felician Village

Fall 2008

Dispelling myths about the aging brain ...

The importance of brain health

As we age, we acquire knowledge, gain wisdom and finely tune our skills. But what physically happens to our brains? The following information will help dispel common myths and offer answers to questions about how the brain ages.

Brain Myth #1: Brain health isn't important.

Brain health IS important. A commitment to a healthy lifestyle promotes the development of brain reserve and can help you maintain your thinking ability, memory and your "life story." Many Americans are afraid of brain disease and fear losing their memory. However, brain health is a proactive and positive means to do what is in your control to maximize and preserve your brain function.

Brain Myth #2: You can't change your brain.

Your brain is constantly changing in response to your experiences, and it retains this basic "plasticity" well into old age. Everything



you do and think about is reflected in patterns of activity in your brains. Scientists can see these patterns in brain-imaging scans that show which parts of the brain are functioning during specific tasks.

Changing your thinking or changing the way you behave causes corresponding changes in the brain systems involved. This is why therapy that teaches people to alter negative patterns of thought and behavior (like cognitive therapy, for example) can be effective in treating some mental disorders.

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Crossroads of Compassion

A special kickoff event was held in September to introduce Felician Village's long-term fund development program. The 180 guests at the event heard why the Felician Sisters, sponsors of Felician Village, are asking the community for support. With fewer Sisters, they are no longer able to generate as much money to support their missions, such as St. Mary's at Felician Village. Additionally, increasing costs and lower reimbursement from the government have kept Felician Village dependent on the Sisters for those subsidies.

The guests took the message seriously, and their response has exceeded expectations. To date, more than \$165,000 has been donated or pledged to support St. Mary's at Felician Village. This is a tremendous tribute to the Sisters, who have supported St. Mary's for 120 years, and to the community, for responding to the needs of the elderly.

The importance of brain health

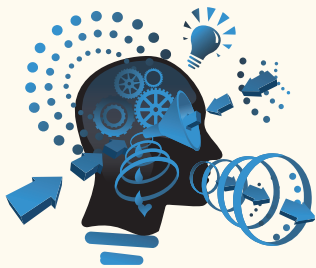
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Brain Myth #3: People lose brain cells every day and eventually just run out.

Actually, most regions of the brain do not lose brain cells as you age. And while you may lose some nerve connections, this is not necessarily a bad thing. It can be part of the reshaping of the brain that occurs with experience.

It's also possible that you can even grow new brain cells and create new connections, or prevent the ones you have from withering, if you exercise your brain.



Brain Myth #4: The brain doesn't make new brain cells.

This myth was widely believed for generations but has recently been proven false. We now know that certain areas in the brain—including the hippocampus (where new memories are created) and the olfactory bulb (the scent-processing center)—regularly generate new brain cells. Many of these cells go on to



become working parts in brain-cell connections.

Brain Myth #5: Memory decline is inevitable as we age.

Many people reach very old age and are still sharp as ever. Genetics clearly play a role in “successful aging,” but how we live our lives on a day-to-day basis is also critical. To help your brain age well, you can:

- Perform physical exercise (especially aerobic exercise).
- Engage in intellectually stimulating mental activity.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Maintain social connections (spending time with friends and family members, for example).
- Learn to manage stress.
- Develop a positive attitude toward yourself and your world.

(Information from AARP)

Felician Village team participates in Memory Walk

On September 27, a team of 30 walkers consisting of staff, residents, friends, family and six dogs from Felician Village, helped “Move to End Alzheimer’s” by participating in the Alzheimer’s Association Memory Walk® along the Mariner’s Trail in Manitowoc County. The Memory Walk® is the Alzheimer’s Association’s signature event for awareness and fundraising.

The Felician Village team set a fundraising goal of \$1,100 to be raised within a five-week period. The team organized several fundraisers to reach this goal, including a bake sale and brat fry. These proceeds, combined with money raised by individuals, surpassed the team’s goal and reached a grand total of \$2,600; the most money raised by any other team taking part in the walk. Way to go, Felician Village!



New brain health program announced

Wellness-based program helps prevent memory loss

With all the emphasis on the importance of maintaining a healthy body, the idea of brain health is often forgotten. Felician Village plans on changing that. A comprehensive brain health program, comprised of several different components, is being developed at Felician Village. The program will be available to residents and the public in January.

The brain health program will be a wellness-based program in the form of mental fitness and brain health experiences. Research has shown that early intervention is helpful in preventing dementia and Alzheimer's Disease. The benefits of the brain health program are to help prevent memory loss, provide memory enhancing experiences and provide support through the aging process.



There are four main factors related to brain health: a healthy cardiac diet, physical exercise, social relationships and mental fitness exercises. Programming is being designed to meet the

individual needs of current and future residents at Felician Village and for members of the general public. While there will be programs for all levels of cognitive functioning, enhanced programs will be available for residents with early- to middle-stage dementia and for middle- to late-stage dementia.

Included within the brain health program will be a laughing club for residents and the community, group programs offering cognitive stimulation, organized support groups and the Never 2 Late computer program. The Never 2 Late adaptive computer program,

designed specifically for seniors, engages, empowers and encourages lifelong learning. In addition to stimulating activities, there are creative programs that can enhance therapy treatment.

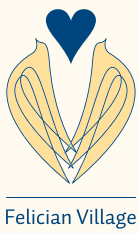
A brain health specialist, who will be announced in the near future, will be primarily responsible for implementing and managing the program. That person will be supported by Jennifer Collins, Life Enrichment Coordinator at Felician Village. Staff in all areas of the campus – independent living, assisted living, rehabilitation and nursing home – will become involved with residents in brain health activities.

For residents, the brain health program will be available as it becomes a standard part of on-campus activities and programming. The public will be able to access the new brain health programs at the Brain Health Center at St. Mary's at Felician Village in January.

“At Your Service” in-home services

Residents of The Gardens and The Court at Felician Village will soon be able to take advantage of a new “At Your Service” program. This new, in-home services program offers a variety of convenient services including housekeeping, grocery shopping, escort to physician appointments, assistance with bill paying, laundry services and more to help our residents. Introductory information is being provided at this time, and services will begin in January. There will be a small hourly or flat fee, depending on the services requested.

The purpose of “At Your Service” in-home services is to help residents maintain their independence by assisting them with daily activities that are getting difficult for them to do on their own. The services are not health care in nature but rather are related to activities of daily living.



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*For more information or a tour of Felician
Village, call (920) 684-7171, ext. 361.*

Fall prevention tips

Strategies to reduce injuries at home

Although one in three older adults falls each year in the US, falls are not an inevitable part of aging. There are proven strategies that can reduce falls and help people live better and longer:

Begin a regular exercise program. Exercise is one of the most important ways to lower your chances of falling. It makes you stronger and helps you feel better. Exercises that improve balance and coordination (like Tai Chi) are the most helpful.

Have your health care provider review your medicines. As you get older, the way medicines work in your body can change. Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can make you sleepy or dizzy and cause you to fall.



Have your vision checked at least once a year. You may be wearing the wrong glasses or have a condition that limits your vision. Poor vision can increase your chances of falling.

Make your home safer by doing the following:

- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Have grab bars put in next to your toilet and in the tub or shower. Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to see well.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house.

(Information from the CDC)