



BRAIN HEALTH
— INSTITUTE —

brainH.E.A.L.T.H.™

Simple Steps to Prevent, Stabilize & Restore Cognitive Decline

Dr. Kristine Lokken

Brain Health Institute Inc.

Webpage: www.bhibrainhealth.com; Telephone: 205-757-8947

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/brainhealthinstitute/>

At the Brain Health Institute in Birmingham, Alabama we use the brainH.E.A.L.T.H.™ intervention to empower individuals in the prevention, stabilization, and restoration of cognitive decline. The brainH.E.A.L.T.H.™ intervention is grounded in the latest research aimed at improving thinking, memory, mood, and well-being.

H: Healthy Eating. Appropriate nutrition and hydration can get us thinking and feeling our best. What we put into our bodies provides the raw material to build and repair our **mitochondria** – the structural building blocks of our DNA and brain cells. Without the right raw material, our brains and bodies will ultimately go into disrepair. Set goals to:

- Eat and prepare whole, real foods like organic vegetables and berries;
- Embrace consumption of healthy fats, like olive oil, coconut, and avocados;
- Reduce sugar intake & eliminate use of artificial sweeteners;
- Cut back on processed foods and read food labels to make informed decisions.

E: Emotional Regulation: Our emotions can have a big impact on brain health. Incorporating techniques to regulate and manage our reactions to daily hassles can improve both mood and memory. Practice the following **daily self-care rituals** to promote emotional health:

- Socialize and cultivate meaningful relationships;
- Ask for assistance and share personal challenges with supportive others;
- Get outside and embrace Mother Nature;
- Practice body and brain friendly things like yoga and meditation.

A: Activity and Leisure. Really consider how you are spending your time. Does your life have **joy**, **meaning**, and **purpose**? Are you carving out time for exercise and enough time for restful sleep? Exercise and movement are foundational to a healthy mind and sleep is critical for brain health. During sleep, our bodies literally “take out the trash”, flushing out cellular debris from the brain, including the chemically sticky beta-amyloid plaque thought to play a role in Alzheimer’s Disease. Consider the following:



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- Examine how you spend your days to see if this aligns with the life you desire;
- Pick a type of movement you truly enjoy so you look forward to it and stick with it;
- Focus on getting a minimum of 7-8 hours of restful sleep each night;
- Create a nighttime ritual during the “golden hour” before your set bedtime.

L: Learning Strategies. Try to challenge yourself mentally on a daily basis.

Engaging in **complex tasks** can strengthen connections between the different parts of your brain and provide a buffer against cognitive impairment. You can: :

- Learn or (re-learn) a musical instrument or foreign language;
- Participate in challenging games, like Bridge or Chess;
- Enroll in a new educational course (free to seniors in Alabama!);
- Practice a new physical activity like ballroom dancing.

T: Toxicant Removal. A large percentage of Alzheimer’s Disease risk can be attributed to environmental factors. Current or lifetime exposure to heavy metals (aluminum, lead, mercury, copper, etc.), pesticides, industrial chemicals, and air pollutants can induce **neuro-inflammation**, setting the stage for dementias or other brain health issues.

You can take steps right now to reduce your toxicant load:

- Consume organic, pesticide free food and pure water;
- Examine your personal care products for questionable or harmful ingredients;
- Examine the quality of the air in your home/work place, as mold and other mycotoxins can have a detrimental effect on brain health, and finally;
- Take inventory of previous toxicant exposures.

H: Habit Formation. At the Brain Health Institute, we provide personalized, tailored approaches to improving brain health. We suggest starting with **one simple shift** in each of the areas described above. Gradually building on basic healthy habits can lead to big changes over time and build resilience against harmful insults to our precious brains. Eventually, brain health promoting behaviors will out-number unhealthy behaviors and will become easy and habitual.

Some of the suggestions above may be easy to implement and some may prove more difficult to tackle at this time. That’s okay - **start with EASY!** The most important thing is to continue to make forward progress. Remember, perfection is not the goal. Supporting your brain and your body in gentle, positive ways is the most important thing. Sometimes, the hardest part is just taking the first step!

Start where you are. Start today.