

Brain Health Basics – Tips for Parents

Ensuring that your child eats healthy foods every day containing good fats and protein is the foundation of brain health. However, there are many other factors that are important. Follow the tips below to support healthy brain development and to ensure lasting results from Neurofeedback training.

1. Protect your child from undue stress.

- a. Stress can result in slower performance on attention-shifting tasks.
- b. Chronic over-secretion of stress hormones adversely affects brain function, especially memory.
- c. Tips for Reducing Stress in your child's life:
 - Keep your relationships as a parent safe and healthy. If you are stressed and unhappy in your marriage/relationships, your children can feel unsafe, insecure and stressed.
 - Do not burden your children with adult concerns and responsibilities. Learn effective communication skills and take care of your adult issues through counselors, financial assistants, and legal advisors.
 - Be sure homework time is balanced with play time, and **be sure that your child knows he/she is loved regardless of his/her performance and behavior.**

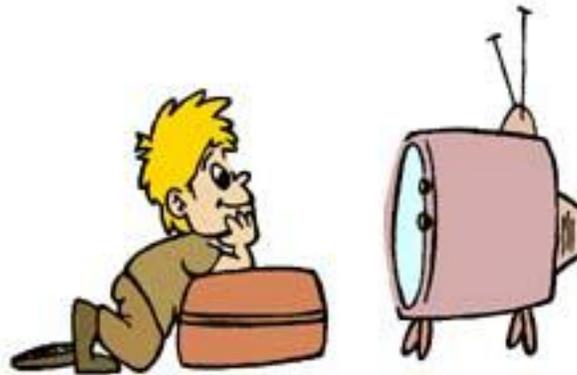
2. Nurture a loving relationship with your child that includes LOTS of HUGS.

- a. Avoid abusive behavior and harsh words. Saying you're sorry and giving a hug can reverse the negative effects in the brain of harsh words & actions. Go to a parenting class or counseling if you have trouble controlling your angry behaviors.
- b. Appropriate, loving touch does wonders for the brain! Studies indicate that touch has a beneficial effect on our perception of pain, treatment of disease, as well as emotional and physical development.
- c. Spend quality time with your child each day and develop healthy communications skills.



3. **Give your child permission to feel and express all of their feelings.** Many of us grew up with unhealthy messages such as “don't cry; don't be angry; don't get too excited.” Feelings are part of being human and crucial for emotional health. Allow your child time to be angry, sad, happy, and teach them to talk to you about how they feel.

4. **Create structure in your child's life that includes regular activities and bed times.** Routines give children a sense of security and help them develop self-discipline. Sleep is also crucial for development and brain health at all ages.
5. **Limit the amount of television your child watches.** The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that kids under 2 years old not watch *any* TV and that those older than 2 watch no more than 1 to 2 hours a day of quality programming. Some research shows that viewing television can increase slow wave frequencies that are typical in some types of ADD & ADHD.



6. **Allow your child LOTS of time to play.** This should include time for them to make up their own games and not just highly structured activities. There is a growing body of research that shows a link between play and the development of cognitive and social skills that are prerequisites for learning more complex concepts as children get older. Play is linked to growth in memory, self-regulation, oral language, recognizing symbols, higher levels of school adjustment and increased social development. Play has also been linked to increased literacy skills and other areas of academic learning.
7. **Protect your child from unsafe people and predators.** Sexual abuse statistics today are staggering, and often the abuse is carried out by a person you would least suspect such as a relative, friend or babysitter. Pay attention to changes in your child's mood and behavior and provide a safe environment for them to talk to you about anything. The effects of childhood trauma on the brain are severe, and current research shows that early trauma actually changes the way the brain develops. **Adult content in television shows and other media can also cause trauma in young brains.**