2025 Top Takeaways

SEVEN KEY IDEAS THAT MAKE US THINK ABOUT BRAIN HEALTH IN A NEW WAY

A digital version with video supplements is available at centerforbrainhealth.org/brainhealthweek-takeaways

Tips for creating takeaways & action items on last page

1 **Each of us can gain agency over our own brain health.**

90% of people know the brain can change, but only 30% know how to take agency over their own brain health. Each year during BrainHealth Week, leaders at Center for BrainHealth call for a "brain fitness revolution" — sharing simple steps that empower communities to strengthen brain fitness through daily habits that make a difference.

2 **Neuroplasticity is possible at every life stage.**

The brain is capable of high levels of neuroplasticity in its second, third, fourth decade, and beyond, in ways that researchers are just beginning to unravel. The brain has uncharted potential to improve across the lifespan — it's never too early or too late to start taking better care of our brain health.

3 **Making brain gains is about "you against you."**

The challenge is to outperform ourselves, and adopting a "can do" mindset is essential. Practicing habits that foster self-belief makes a transformative difference — each small step helps us become more confident, and gains in confidence lead to new opportunities to learn and thrive.

4 **Measuring brain health motivates improvement.**

If we cannot measure brain health, we cannot measure improvements. New studies quantify how people who follow brain-healthy strategies demonstrate continuous improvement regardless of where they start. Our BrainHealth® Index is empowering today's research to capture and continue the positive effects of evidence-based brain health strategies.

5 **Collaboration is essential to advance brain performance.**

Precision brain health requires working across disciplines, learning the best ways to serve brain health in different contexts. Emerging research focused on the potential of the female brain may unlock understanding about brain science that could benefit all of humanity.

6 **Technology can empower precision brain health.**

We are on the cusp of a neuro-technology revolution, bringing us closer than ever to sharing the keys to precision brain health. Having accessible and easy-to-use tools is essential to harnessing the agency all of us have — to take steps that can promote, protect and preserve our brain health across the lifespan.

7 **Making time to appreciate art is good for brain health.**

Focusing on a work of art helps us practice new ways of seeing. Pausing to engage with the world around us is one of our most essential brain functions, shaping how we manage stress, experience joy, connect with others and hone our concentration skills. When we take time to carefully observe art and explore creative ways of thinking, we engage the brain in one of its most fundamental learning processes.

ACTION ITEMS: How Do These Takeaways Connect to Your Life and Community?

What are two (2) ways you plan to apply these learnings in your everyday life?

1) _____

2) _____

TAKEAWAYS – EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH BRAIN HEALTH

This dynamic conference brought together leading voices in women's brain health to share the latest scientific breakthroughs and provide practical strategies for communities and organizations.

The Maternal Brain
Dr. Emily Jacobs
UC Santa Barbara

1. After adolescence, women experience two additional, extensive waves of neural remodeling: during pregnancy and perimenopause. Rather than viewing these transitions as periods of vulnerability, we should see them as opportunities to unlock new potential for brain resilience and performance.
2. With only 0.5% of research focusing on women, the maternal brain is vastly understudied. Understanding the brain changes that occur during pregnancy not only helps women but may also lead to broader insights into brain health for everyone. Engaging more women in research helps this path grow. Women-led research doesn't just fill gaps — it transforms how we understand the brain, leading to breakthroughs that benefit everyone.

The Resilient Brain
Gillian Coughlan, PhD
Massachusetts General Research Institute, Harvard

1. Being female isn't a pathology; it can be a superpower. Women are living longer, healthier lives, and their brains demonstrate remarkable resilience — even in the face of disease and decline. By leveraging factors that promote resilience, women can take a strength-based approach to brain aging, while also advocating n their communities.
2. Women have greater risk of developing Alzheimer's, which is well documented, but new research reveals that women with a diagnosis also tend to maintain cognitive function for longer, suggesting that unique protective factors on the X chromosome may play a role.

The Mentally Fit Brain
Judith Joseph, MD, MBA
Manhattan Behavioral Medicine, NYU

1. Many women are suffering from anhedonia ("low joy"). Naming this experience is the first step in restoring joy and connection. Modern stressors, from digital overload to shifting workplace cultures, can make it difficult to feel present and engaged.
2. We need to do more to prevent depression, rather than just treat it as an existing condition. Women should not wait for a mental health crisis to prioritize brain health. By making conscious choices every day and engaging with their brain in meaningful ways, women can cultivate stronger, more resilient minds

The Nourished Brain
Annie Fenn, MD
The BrainHealth Kitchen

1. What we eat today shapes the health and function of our brain — not just now, but over the course of our lives. The way to begin eating a brain-healthy diet is to start with what we already love to eat while being intentional about adding the kinds of foods that we know we need more of.
2. Women's hormonal profiles influence nutrient absorption, making it especially important to prioritize neuroprotective food groups, but rather than chasing individual "superfoods," women can improve their brain health right now and into the future by focusing on a well-rounded diet full of polyphenols.

The Perimenopausal Brain
Jessica Shepherd, MD
Sanctum + Wellness

1. From a biological viewpoint, living beyond reproductive years suggests an evolutionary and social advantage for the unique role of women. Women consistently thrive for decades post-menopause, contributing wisdom, leadership and care that strengthens families and communities. This transition should be valued as a powerful new phase of cognitive potential rather than a period of decline.
2. Menopause is a whole-body experience (including the brain); emerging evidence suggests there is a window of opportunity at the onset of menopause for hormone therapy to help support long-term brain resilience. Proactive strategies like cognitive training and lifestyle adjustments can help sustain executive function, mental clarity and long-term resilience, in order to extend the human brain span as a vital element of longevity.

The Rested Brain
Matt Walker, PhD
UC Berkley

1. Sleep is instrumental to optimal brain functioning, yet women have increased risk of experiencing sleep disruptions over their lifetimes due to hormonal fluctuations, caregiving responsibilities and anxiety disorders. Despite typically needing more sleep per night than men (conservative estimates claim 20+ minutes, but could be 1-2 hours), three times more women suffer from insomnia.
2. The keys to a good sleep can be remembered by QQRT: Quality, Quality, Regularity and Timing. Women are more vulnerable to the emotional detriment that happens without sufficient sleep and need to be especially protective of sleep, setting a healthy example by recognizing that getting good sleep is okay.

AI and the Digital Twin Brain
Nina Miolane, PhD
UC Santa Barbara

1. Finding what motivates you is key to any wellness plan. A Twin Digital Brain is like a flight simulator navigating a brain-healthy future by anticipating brain changes over time. This AI tool holds the potential to motivate proactive behaviors today, prompted by a glimpse into the future – a powerful tool for anyone with a brain.
2. Interdisciplinary research is needed to unlock tomorrow's discoveries and the next generation of brain health tools. Collaborating with neuroscientists and researchers from other fields plays a pivotal role in raising awareness of vital, new discoveries in brain health science.

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TAKEAWAYS – ACCELERATE! BREAKTHROUGHS IN BRAIN PERFORMANCE

Changemakers and visionaries met to explore how principles of neuroscience can help deliver and optimize peak performance.



The Implications of Measuring Brain Performance

Sandi Chapman, PhD, Mark D'Esposito, MD and Ian Robertson, PhD

1. We have not been able to measure factors of brain health before, but now we can. And this kind of tool has the power to unlock a collective sense of agency for generations to come. "Just in time" is now.
2. Strengthening brain performance affects daily life by helping us be more adaptive in a changing world and unpredictable situations. No matter the starting point, anyone can benefit from tools for better brain performance.

How Confidence Improves Performance

Ian Robertson, PhD

1. Confidence raises our status in the eyes of other people, and the good news is that we can take steps to become more self-assured. Growing in confidence helps us achieve goals and gain well-being, despite uncertainty or anxiety.
2. When we think, "I can do that" — the brain gets a small dose of dopamine. Taking a "can do" perspective encourages us to adopt an outlook of self-belief and determination, which nurtures our confidence to grow.

How Sleep Improves Performance

Matt Walker, PhD

1. Getting good sleep every night is probably the most powerful, legal performance enhancer that we can use to achieve higher-level output. Without quality sleep, none of us will ever perform as well as we could.
2. Less sleep does not equal more productivity; rather than viewing sleep as a cost, we need to reframe it as an investment in our long-term health and longevity. In general, the less you sleep, the shorter your life.



Leveraging Technology to Enhance Brain Health (and Performance)

Wesley Clapp, PhD, and Brian Miller, PhD, NeuroScouting
Brian Magierski, 21 Impact Labs

1. High performance in athletes is more than behavioral; it involves training integrated cognitive processes across the brain and body in order to achieve top performance in high pressure situations.
2. Although conventional thinking says our brains inevitably decline with age, research shows that strengthening our brain health today makes a difference in how our brains age — moving forward, emerging technologies will play an essential role in creating the collective agency to power the brain health revolution.

Researchers at NeuroScouting have been collecting data in collaboration with The BrainHealth Project for over two years.
The xponetiq app and solution platform is powered by content and technology developed at Center for BrainHealth.



Performance and Resilience in the Military

Jennifer Zientz, MS, CCC-SLP, and Kevin Gatley

Alexander "Ollie" Oliver, Virginia High Performance (VHP)

1. Our highest performers don't just want to settle for being sharp; they always want to be sharper, more surgical, which requires preparing the mind to be agile, even in the most demanding circumstances.
2. To achieve the greatest impact, brain training needs to be relatable, measurable and motivated personal growth — research shows that applying the right strategies in the context of our lived environments can elevate brain performance over time, no matter what level we start at today.

VHP has added Center for BrainHealth's proprietary performance assessment and tracking tool, the BrainHealth Index, and science-backed training protocols leveraging the brain's executive networks to their unique mix of offerings.

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CREATING TAKEAWAYS & ACTION ITEMS

Key takeaways require deeper-level thinking, help make learning meaningful and combat information overload. Synthesizing information helps increase retention and inspire "Aha! Moments," strengthening frontal networks of the brain.

If you want to try using this approach, learn more and track your takeaways using our fillable card. Start with top takeaways, then generate your own questions, ideas (Aha! Moments) and even action items that empower you to apply this new learning in your life.

Center for BrainHealth uses Strategic Memory Advanced Reasoning Tactics (SMART™), a proprietary brain training methodology developed and tested by our researchers and other teams over three decades, to teach techniques that prime the brain, calibrate mental energy, reinforce strategic thinking and ignite innovation. These practices can be applied when attending any event, conference or meeting — or any area of life to help create meaningful learning.

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