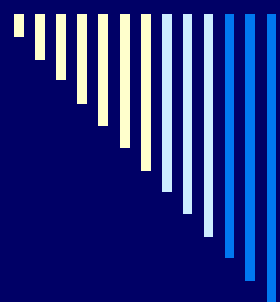


Grey Matters: A Brain Health Paradigm to Improve Quality of Life among Older Adults

Rosemary Cox, LCSW, LMFT

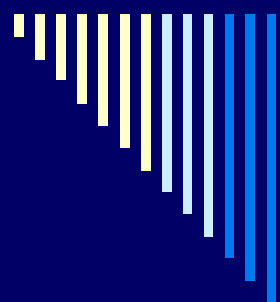
Mary R. Wood, Ph.D.

Memorial Leighton Center
South Bend, Indiana



Session Objectives

- To describe two new programs we developed for brain health including:
- The motivations for designing the courses as we did and
- The program outcomes



Overview

- We developed two comprehensive curricula on aging and brain health for seniors.
- Topics include problem solving, stress management, memory, and aging.
- We added motivational elements to address fears and obstacles.



Response Rate

- These classes take place in a medium sized town in northern Indiana with a county population of about 267,000.
 - Our announcements went out to our mailing list and the local newspaper.
-

Stressed Out by Your Memory?

The Memorial Leighton Center is conducting a research study to determine the effects of two recently developed programs on thinking, memory and stress related to normal memory and thinking problems. You may qualify to participate if you are at least 50 years old and are not already diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.

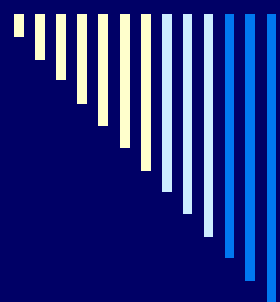
This non-invasive study requires you to attend a series of classes scheduled from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. one night each week. Classes begin in late March, and you must be prepared to attend classes through mid June.

All study-related materials and assessments are provided free to qualified participants.

Enrollment in this study is limited, and the enrollment period ends February 28. If you are interested in taking part in this important research study or would like more information, please call the Memorial Leighton Center.

574-647-6628

Memorial
Leighton Center™



Response Rate

- ❑ Each announcement has resulted in about 150 inquires.
- ❑ High response rate suggests that boomers and seniors are concerned about their memory and cognitive function.



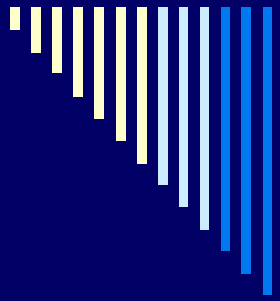
Motivations to Take Our Classes

- 51% Noticed memory problems
 - 22% Wanted more information about the brain and memory
 - 13% Were feeling stressed
-



Brain Gymnastics

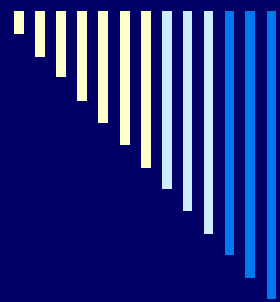




Brain Gymnastics

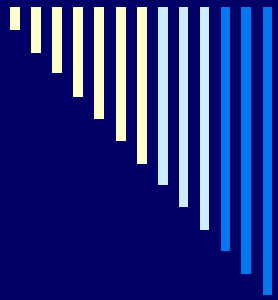
Focuses on

- ❑ Cognitive skill building
- ❑ Positive attitude development



Brain Gymnastics

- ❑ Each week we examine a great thinker such as Charles Darwin
- ❑ Most of the great thinkers struggled, but they developed mental skills all of us can do



Brain Gymnastics

Such as

- ❑ Using our imaginations
- ❑ Observing details
- ❑ Cultivating creativity
- ❑ Asking questions



Is it all in your Head?





Is it all in your Head?

Focuses on

- ❑ Specific memory techniques
 - ❑ Stress reduction
-



Both Courses Offer:

- ❑ Information on age-related changes in brain function
 - ❑ General problem solving techniques
 - ❑ Some instruction on specific memory strategies
 - ❑ Instruction on stress reduction techniques and the importance of sleep and rest
-

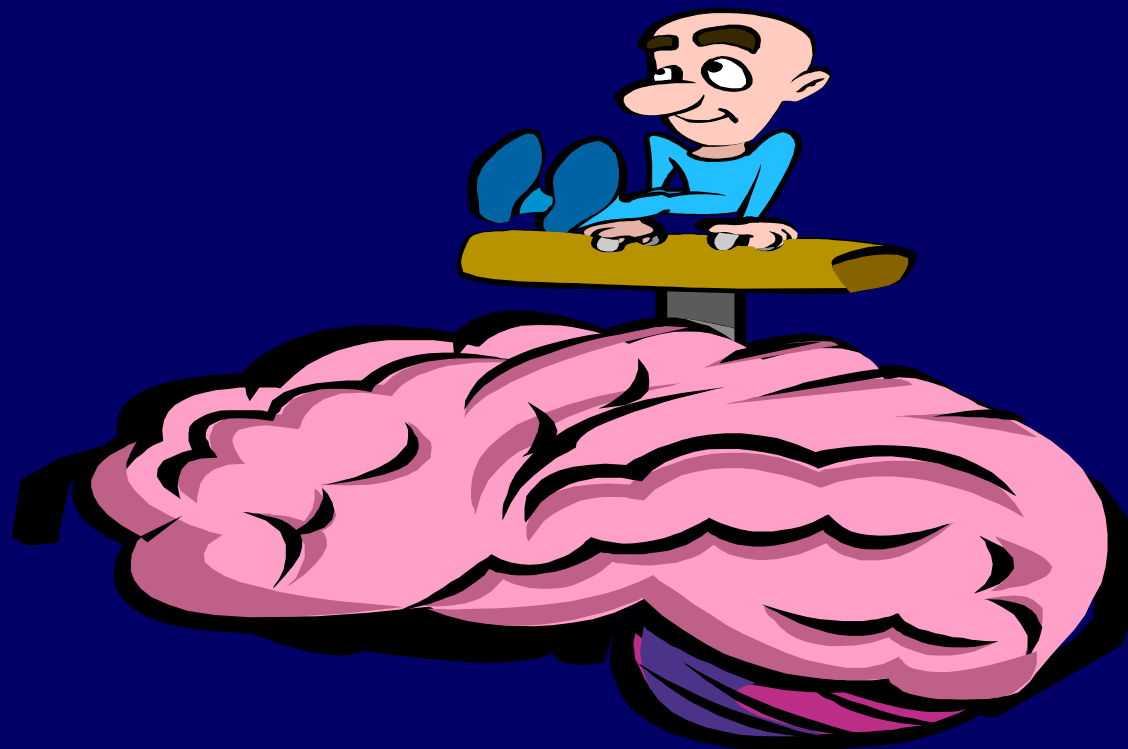


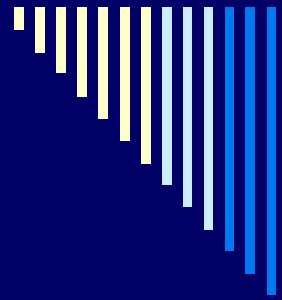
Both Courses Offer:

- ❑ Encouragement to engage in physical and mentally stimulating activities
 - ❑ Encouragement to focus and attend
 - ❑ Exercises in imagination, creativity, emotional intelligence, wisdom, mental flexibility, humor, confidence
 - ❑ A positive approach to aging
-



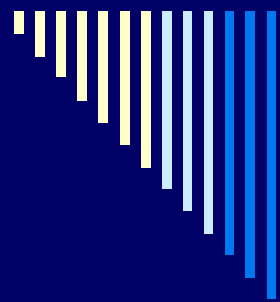
Motivation Rather Than Drills





Motivation Rather Than Drills

Taking a more **social, informative,** and **motivational** approach rather than memory drills better matches participants' needs



The Social Experience

- Classes are intergenerational
 - Personal stories are shared building a sense of community
 - We model the lives of some of the great thinkers such as Leonardo da Vinci and Charles Darwin
-



Gaining Knowledge

- ❑ We stress what gets better with age to empower participants.
 - ❑ Each class has memory and brain health tips.
 - ❑ Knowing how the brain works makes them excited about possibilities.
 - ❑ Accurate information about Alzheimer's is a great relief.
-



Increased Motivation

- Including exercises for empowerment
 - Discovering attention is the first step, they realize – “I can do that!”
 - Knowing there are many things they can do for brain health, such as mind activities, stress management, and adequate sleep, allows them to develop their own action-plan
-



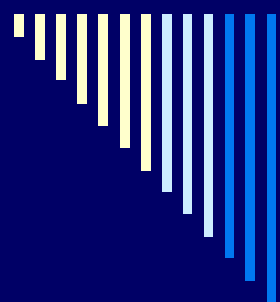
What They Take Away

Only 17% named a memory strategy when asked what was the most valuable thing they learned.



The One Thing I Learned

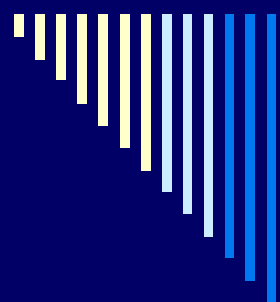
- 20% - Information about the brain, stress, and memory
 - 17% Memory Strategies
 - 15% Importance of relaxation
 - 12% There are things I can do to improve memory/cognition
 - 12% Importance of paying attention
 - 12% Self-awareness
-



What They Take Away

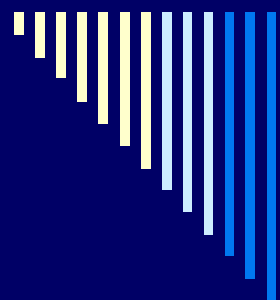
The majority of the answers revolve around

- ❑ Gaining knowledge
- ❑ Gaining increased self-awareness
- ❑ Learning assistive techniques such as reducing stress and paying attention



Two Things They Plan To Do

- 22% Named a specific stress reduction technique
- 17% Named a specific memory strategy
- 10% Named they would exercise their mind or brain



Educational Needs

Client feedback has led us to the following conclusions about the needs in our community:



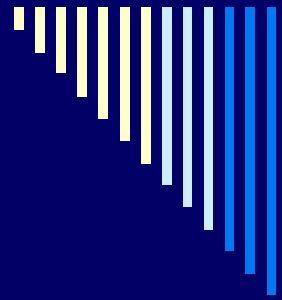
Educational Needs

- ❑ Information about the brain and aging
 - ❑ Encouragement and motivation
 - ❑ General problem solving strategies
 - ❑ Techniques to help reduce anxiety, worry, and stress
 - ❑ Assistance with specific memory or attention problems
-



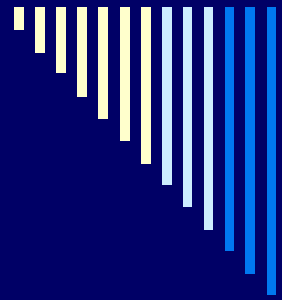
A Key Finding





A Key Finding

It was a surprise to us that the stress reduction techniques were the most frequently reported “take-aways”.



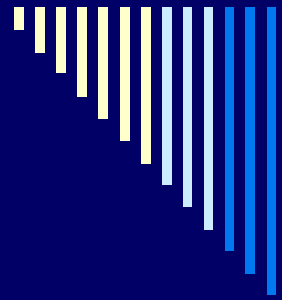
A Key Finding

- It is possible that participants are more stressed than they realized
- They don't realize the impact of stress in their lives
- They didn't know the value of engaging in deliberate relaxation



A Key Finding

- ❑ Memory strategies are often difficult and boring
 - ❑ Many want a quick and easy solution
 - ❑ The relaxation techniques are easier to do and make them feel and function better in a wide variety of activities
-



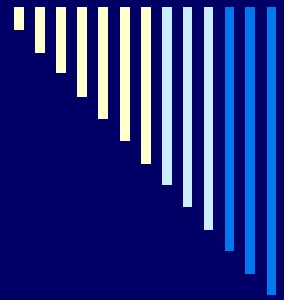
New Directions

We are currently developing a new class focusing on stress.

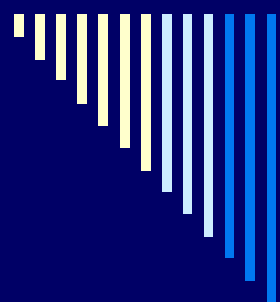


New Directions

- ❑ We are conducting empirical research on the effectiveness of these courses
 - ❑ Objective memory
 - ❑ Subjective memory
 - ❑ Perceived levels of stress
-



Questions or Comments?



ASA Conference, 2008

Washington, D.C.

March 29, 2008

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