

STRONG MEMORY, SHARP MIND



**ANTI-AGING STRATEGIES
FOR YOUR BRAIN**

FRANK MINIRTH, MD


Revell

a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Frank Minirth, MD, Strong Memory, Sharp Mind
Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2017. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2017 by Minirth Holdings, LLC

Published by Revell
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

ISBN 978-0-8007-2822-9

The names and details of the people and situations described in this book have been changed or presented in composite form in order to ensure the privacy of those with whom the author has worked.

This publication is intended to provide helpful and informative material on the subjects addressed. Readers should consult their personal health professionals before adopting any of the suggestions in this book or drawing inferences from it. The author and publisher expressly disclaim responsibility for any adverse effects arising from the use or application of the information contained in this book.

17 18 19 20 21 22 23 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



Frank Minirth, MD, Strong Memory, Sharp Mind
Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2017. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

I dedicate this book
to all who seek to guard their minds
and to caretakers of those in mental decline—
as a personal encouragement,
as a source for information and help,
and as a timely call to action.



Dr. Frank Minirth was a pioneer in Christian psychiatry. He posthumously received the inaugural Frank B. Minirth Christian Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine Award by the American Association of Christian Counselors in 2015.

Contents

Acknowledgments	11
How to Use This Book	13
Introduction	17

Part 1 Threats to Cognitive Health

1. It's Your Choice	25
2. What Can Happen to Your Brain?	37
3. Your Aging Brain	53
4. Stress and Your Brain	71
5. Anxiety and Your Brain	101
6. Science Offers Hope	121

Part 2 How to Protect Your Mind

7. Revive Your Purpose	141
8. You Can Preserve Your Mind	153
9. Homework for Life	175
10. Mental Exercise with Words	191

Contents

11. Broad Knowledge—Better Brain	207
12. Finish Well!	225
Conclusion	239
Appendix A: The Brain and Memory	241
Appendix B: Alzheimer’s Disease, Dementias, and Cognition	249
Appendix C: Vocabulary Words	271
Appendix D: Answers to Brain Boosters	281
Notes	285
Bibliography	289

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the legions of people who have helped me through years of physical, psychological, professional, and spiritual growth. Included are theologians, medical doctors, authors, professors, friends, family, and, most of all, my loving wife, Mary Alice.

Special thanks to Jane Mack, science journalist, for preparing this manuscript for publication.

How to Use This Book

Brain on Board

You don't see it or feel it. You can't hear it or hold it.

It's out of sight, out of mind.

Don't drift through your thirties, forties, and fifties,
then suddenly realize your brain is fading.

Don't settle for it being just "good enough."

You deserve better than that.

Don't take your brain for granted.

I wrote this book for those who want a basic understanding of the brain's strengths and vulnerabilities and what can be done to reduce the risk of mental decline. My hope is that the content will motivate you to take personal action to keep your mind sharp.

I've included many lists throughout this book because it's the best way to package a lot of information so it can be processed and retained by the brain. Scan the lists and stop on the items that catch your attention. Some repetition exists because repetition helps learning.

I've designed this book as a personal workbook for readers of all ages and as a caregiver's handbook. It's a helpful resource for every person, family, counselor, care center, health-care provider, senior citizen group, and mental health care agency.

Keep a Pen and Highlighter Handy

I encourage you to mark meaningful passages for frequent review and to highlight the action tips and how-to lists. Noting these will provide a good basis for making a personalized "brain-care action plan." Keep refreshing the plan by reviewing this book for more ideas.

It's also important to engage in the Brain Boosters mental exercises. They are designed to be reviewed over and over because cognition works through repetition. Learning broad knowledge rekindles and increases memory tracks. If you have difficulty with some of the exercises, don't quit. Researching the answers will help you retain the knowledge. Keep studying and repeating these exercises until you master them with speed and accuracy. The answers can be found in appendix D.

Brain Fitness Is a Ticket to a More Vital Life

I encourage everyone, whether you're thirty or sixty or eighty, to take this book to heart because a mind is a terrible thing to lose. Every individual has to make the personal choice to protect his or her memory for a better chance to make it through old age with an intact, robust mind. In this case, choices really do matter. Don't let each birthday mark more

lost memories, diminished skills, and waning relationships. Life's many opportunities and blessings can drift away with age if the brain isn't nourished and exercised.

Note

Medical information about the brain changes at a rapid rate. What is thought to be true today may be better elucidated tomorrow, so errors are possible. Never disregard or delay seeking medical advice because of something heard from the media, read in a book, or seen on the internet.

Some of the content of this book is technical, but readers will glean a greater awareness of and appreciation for the complexity, vulnerabilities, and miraculous powers of the human brain.

This book is not intended as a specific guide for any medical diagnosis or treatment; medical doctors should be consulted for all medical conditions. It includes general references to common information. When deciding on specifics of any medical actions, symptoms, diagnoses, prognoses, or treatments, many aspects must be considered. The information given here may not be absolute or complete; variations, coinciding factors, and updates may exist.

Introduction

Memory Matters

At birthday celebrations, I hear phrases such as “the thirties are the new twenties,” “the forties are the new thirties,” and “the fifties are the new forties.” People brag about looking and feeling younger than their parents did at the same chronological age.

We want our minds to stay dynamic too. But after high school or college, some people never pick up another book or take another class. The more fit we keep our brains, the better they’ll withstand the rigors of aging, protect our well-being, and lead to life satisfaction.

Everyone wants to be happy, healthy, loved, and reasonably prosperous and to enjoy fulfilling relationships. These core desires keep us motivated. Our decisions are based on these desires as well as habits, others’ demands, impulsive urges, and conscious planning. And every day we choose what thoughts to dwell on and words to say, and what to do and not do. Each choice has far-reaching ramifications. Bit by bit, we form patterns that direct our lives and interpersonal interactions.

Something you may have not considered is that none of this is possible without a healthy brain. Your mind controls behavior, and if your mental status is compromised, days, weeks, months, and years can be difficult for you and your family.

I hope this book will motivate you to refresh healthy choices and to follow through with a brain-care action plan. Keep modifying the plan along the way as you age and life events change. It's okay to start with the easiest steps. Just start.

Don't Just Let Nature Take Its Course

If you've hit your early thirties, your brain's natural aging process has started. It may take longer to memorize and learn new things, and your verbal fluency, perception, and reasoning skills are slowing down.

Changes in the mind and body continue through every life phase. But the older we get, the more dramatic the symptoms seem: our hair and skin look different, and memories often begin to fade. This impacts everyone at some point, but there is help and hope to keep our minds intact through the senior years.

What are your concerns and goals? The sooner you start taking the memory-care steps suggested in this book, the more progress and positive outcomes you'll experience as the years pass. You can stay sharp mentally by exercising and nurturing the wondrous infrastructure of your brain.

There is a broad spectrum of brain function. During the typical life span, brain function starts high and decreases as risk factors take their toll:

(1) From a superior functioning brain → (2) to average cognition → (3) to a slight decrease in cognition → (4) to early cognitive decline → (5) to minor neurocognitive dysfunction → (6) to major neurocognitive dysfunction.

Where do you think you are in this process now? Where would you like to be? This book can help you get there. Don't regret that you didn't act sooner. Early detection of mental decline is the key to a better long-term prognosis.

Do You Want a Sharper Mind? It's Possible at Any Age

When one of my daughters was young, I asked, "Do you want to boost your brainpower?" She did. Today, she is a medical doctor and psychiatrist.

In response to a frail, elderly pastor's request for help with his fading memory, I asked, "Do you want to boost your brainpower?" He did. He has returned to preaching and is enjoying a thriving ministry.

It's encouraging to know that brainpower can be increased at any age—through childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and even in the senior years. The benefits of controlling, challenging, directing, and improving our minds are many, including delaying cognitive decline or slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease.

The choices you make over your lifetime can be fateful or fruitful. Making the necessary choices to preserve your long-term brainpower is solely up to you. Nobody can do it for you. This book empowers you with scientific facts, timely information, and many how-to tips in self-help action plans. Believe you can improve your memory. Most everyone can if they put in the effort and believe they can. In a renowned

psychology study, teachers told a group of average students that they were gifted in intellect and memory (they were not). By the end of the school year they were at the top of their classes due to embracing learning and growth opportunities. Believing in their potential and capabilities made a difference. Learning shouldn't stop after the three thousand days of school before high school graduation.

In fact, the next twenty to forty years spent building your career, raising a family, and setting yourself up for eventual retirement are the most critical years for developing and preserving your brain. Because you're reading this book you're obviously already aware of the profound benefits of brain fitness, and you're off to a great start.

This Book Is Your Brain-Care Owner's Manual

The care and feeding of your brain are critical. Rest it. Feed it. Exercise it. Teach it. Challenge it. Protect it. Fight for it. Build it. Stimulate it. Fuel it. Water it. Cross-train it. Entertain it. Flex it. Work it. Preserve it.

Each chapter of this book concludes with a Choose Well section that will help you enjoy more confidence and success throughout your adult years. The Brain Boosters mental exercises provide a sampling of the kinds of knowledge that can strengthen your memory. I've drawn from professional and scientific research and from personal training and experience to write this book. Please use it as a workbook. Write in it and turn down corners of key pages for frequent review. I believe that your efforts will not only benefit you now but will also help preserve your high-functioning brain through the years ahead. This is my hope for you.

A Personal Note

When I graduated from medical school, I took the Hippocratic Oath, which is traditional for physicians as they begin medical practice. Several phrases from that pledge have inspired me throughout my career to promote preventive mental health care to help people avoid or lessen the devastating effects of mental illness.

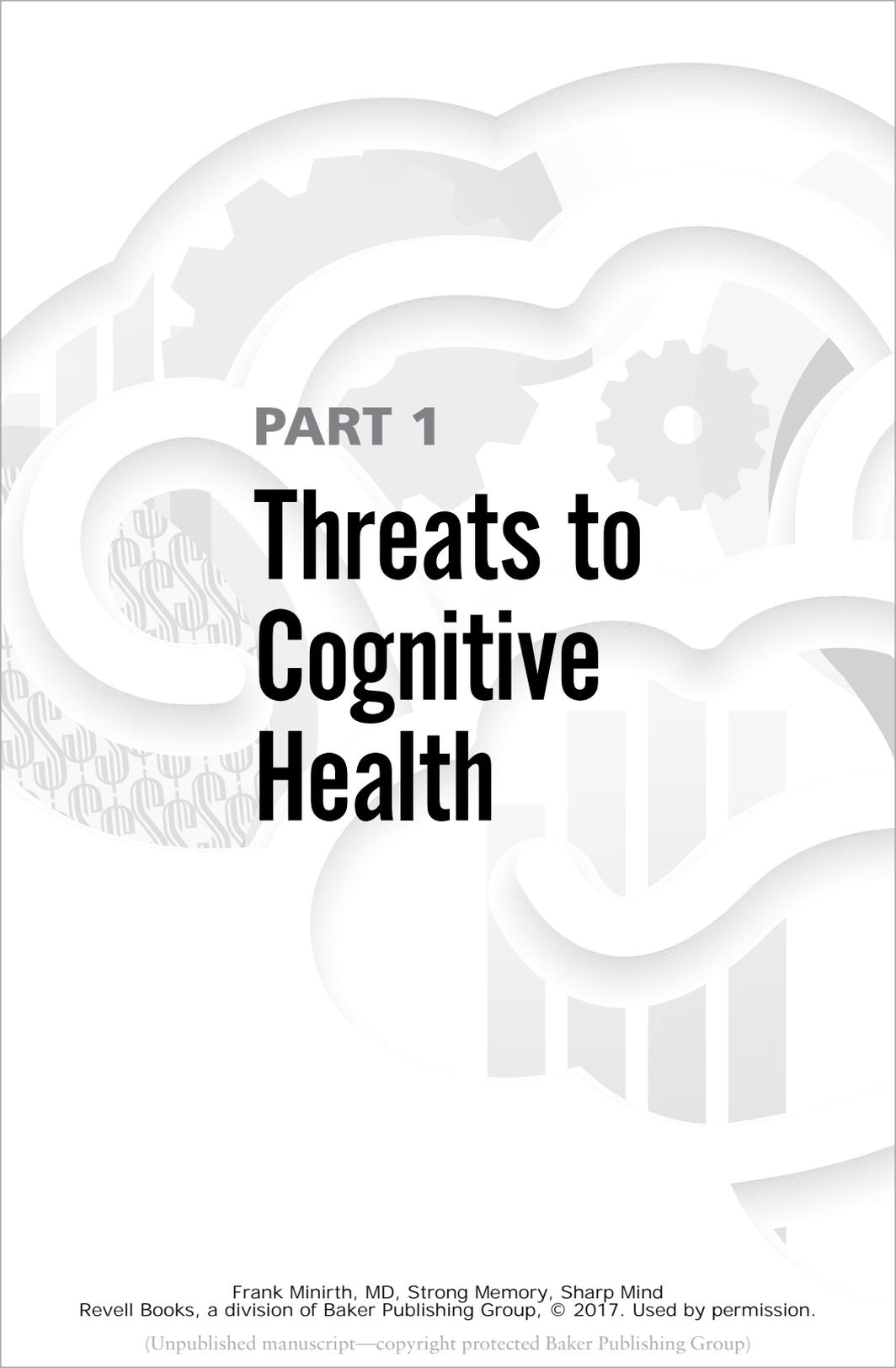
Here are some excerpts:

I will prevent disease whenever I can for prevention is preferable to cure.

I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm.

The books I've written and the years of hosting radio talk shows were in response to these commitments. I have focused on educating people about mental health so they can be aware of and recognize problems in the early stages. This book is my continued "call to action" to encourage everyone to protect their mind and their long-term quality of life.

Dr. Frank Minirth



PART 1

Threats to Cognitive Health

Frank Minirth, MD, Strong Memory, Sharp Mind
Revell Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2017. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

1. It's Your Choice

IT'S A FACT: The brain directs all thinking, feeling, moving, talking, and activity. It's never too early or too late to take care of your brain . . . so it can take care of you.

Memory is the guardian of all things.
Cicero, circa 70 BC

We are what we repeatedly do.
Aristotle, 350 BC

Without memory you wouldn't know how to drive to work. Without memory you wouldn't recognize your family. Without memory you couldn't even talk. Without your memory there would be no you. Without memory there's no brainpower.

There is profound truth in Aristotle's timeless adage. I would alter that statement just a little to say, "We often become what we want to become by what we repeatedly choose to do." What we repeatedly put into our brains helps determine who we are, how we think, and what we do. Aristotle's adage serves as a wake-up call to consider our good as well as our bad routines and habits. Are these choices helping or hurting us?

Everyone knows that our bodies perform better when they're regularly nourished and exercised. Muscle cells develop with

repeated physical exercise. We lift weights to build muscle and do sit-ups to strengthen abs. The same is true for our brains; they need regular workouts too.

Brain cell connections are developed and maintained with repeated mental exercise. Exercise increases brain cell dendrite connections to other brain cells and revitalizes brain circuits. The phrase “use it or lose it” applies to the neural pathways and connections in our brains as much as it does to our muscles. Each mental challenge builds new associations among the neural connections of the brain.

Your choices chart your life, for better or worse. If you’re in your thirties or forties, you’ve got the time, momentum, and some life experience going for you. To be healthy, your brain needs regular exercise, rest, nutrition, and tune-ups. Daily choices can be just as important as the major decisions you make. Are your lifestyle choices hurting or helping your brain health?

Take this quick quiz.

	Yes	No
Do you eat junk food and sugar?	___	___
Do you sit the majority of the day?	___	___
Do you spend hours watching television or surfing the internet?	___	___
Do you generally feel stressed or anxious?	___	___
Do you spend more time watching television than reading books or exercising?	___	___
Do you spend most of your days alone?	___	___
Do you have a chronic illness?	___	___
Do you have an unhealthy addiction?	___	___
Do you have a weight problem?	___	___
Do you get less than seven hours of sleep at night?	___	___

The more yes answers you have, the more you may need a brain-care tune-up.

Why Do You Want a Sharper Mind?

Place a check mark by all the following motives that apply to you. This will encourage you to step up your brain fitness. It may also help you clarify your short- and long-range goals, strengths, and areas for improvement.

I want to build my brainpower so I can

-
- decrease the chance of memory loss in later years
 - maintain my current level of memory and brain function
 - improve my self-esteem
 - maintain independence as long as possible
 - improve my decision-making and problem-solving skills
 - facilitate my career advancement
 - improve my short- and long-term memory
 - avoid embarrassing situations (i.e., brain freeze, senior moments)
 - improve my attention span and concentration
 - improve my scholastic performance
 - do more multitasking (which is really changing sharp focus very quickly)
 - be more efficient in daily routines
 - consistently function at my best level
 - improve my relationships
 - function better in business and social situations (i.e., remember names and details)
 - reduce the stress of managing all my responsibilities
 - accentuate my personal strengths
 - have more intelligent conversations
 - enjoy more special interests and activities
 - stop or reverse cognitive decline (cognition is the mental process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses)
-

Consider the consequences if you choose to do nothing to boost your brain. All of the incentives listed above may be at

risk. It may seem tough to take on a brain-care action plan, but it's going to be even tougher in the long run to ignore it. The sobering realization is that your brain is vulnerable to a natural decrease in function.

You can do something about this decline with a little effort and commitment. Brain care can be done in small steps over a period of time. It's unique in the fact that it's doable for people of all ages and varying circumstances.

Don't let apathy get in the way of becoming who you want to be now and through your senior years. Excuses and procrastination are your enemies. Rarely is anyone successful without hard work. Apathy is a symptom of certain medical conditions, including depression and dementia. If you lacked motivation and interest, you probably wouldn't be reading this book, so it's not too late for you.

As you continue reading, highlight all the action tips that might interest you for a brain-care plan. Start small. Just start. You'll be glad you did. These choices will improve the quality of your life now and in the future.

Make Willpower Work for You

God created you with a will—an ability to choose. This is key. With your willpower, you can continually move toward balanced, healthy behaviors such as physical and mental exercise, a nutritious diet, and spiritual growth.

But before you can achieve and enjoy this balance, you may have some unhealthy behaviors that need to be limited or stopped. Do you drink too much alcohol, smoke, take drugs, lack sleep, rarely exercise, or overeat? Maybe you need to practice some “won't power” too. These common lifestyle

challenges require a personal act of will, a personal choice, to overcome.

Do you argue with yourself when it comes to problems of willpower? It's in our nature.

As a medical doctor for over forty years, I've repeatedly seen people move toward better choices because of willpower. The choice factor is significant in their overall well-being. I've seen people choose to stop addictions, focus better, eat more appropriately, become less depressed, and act more appropriately. They often receive caring help to do so, but the choice is theirs. Sometimes willpower can reign over stress factors and, to a degree, even genetics and disease symptoms.

I'm not saying that stress and other epigenetic factors (external modifications to DNA that turn genes on or off) aren't important. I'm not saying that medical factors in the genome are unimportant. I'm saying that choices can be a significant factor in moving toward self-improvement and better health, as well as a healthier and happier outlook.

Training your brain to receive and act on the suggestion of your willpower takes practice. Part of the challenge will be to overcome bouts of doubt and a constant barrage of distractions. These obstacles will challenge your willpower every day. Without a reasonable plan, a personal commitment, and even a support system or accountability partner, there's little chance for lasting improvement.

I had a former neighbor who lacked self-discipline and willpower in his personal life. He functioned at work but was stymied by bad habits and apathy at home. He was disorganized, left home projects unfinished, and had no desire to try anything new or challenging. His children were grown, and his wife had passed away. His mental and physical health

declined, but he refused medical care. Lonely and depressed, he passed away after a brief illness.

You may know someone like this. But even people like him can find new hope through developing their willpower. It's the basis for good health, a balanced lifestyle, and personal success.

It's not easy to gain power over bad habits and unhealthy desires. Did you know that it usually takes about twenty-one days to establish a habit? Beyond that point, it becomes easier and even more entrenched as it is repeated.

It's also not easy to change or manage our core personality traits. The way we think and act is partly influenced by the brain's structures, hormones, neurotransmitters, and patterns of brain activity. Sometimes our natural personality traits are positive assets; sometimes they're stumbling blocks. But what's important is that we aim to develop the positive traits and overcome the negative ones.

Managing our cognitive styles is a brain function challenge. With your willpower, you can lessen the intensity of some of your undesirable personality traits.

Check any negative trait(s) that may apply to you:

-
- demanding, controlling, perfectionistic, stubborn, indecisive
 - emotional, excitable, egocentric
 - grandiose preoccupation with self
 - dramatic, conflict-oriented relationships, impulsive, angry
 - suspicious, hypersensitive, mistrusting of people
 - unstable moods and friendships, self-identity problems, nonconforming
 - shy, hypersensitive to rejection, socially withdrawn
 - overly dependent on others
 - procrastinating, inefficient
 - aloof
-

Scripture Power

In addition to your choices and willpower, there is a mighty power available to help you on your journey. I'll tell you about one of the most powerful forces on earth—power not only in the spiritual world but also in the intellectual world. Power that has protected me. Power that is both pragmatic and abstract. Power I simply call “Scripture Power.”

It is much more than intellectual. I've seen this power work in my life in different ways: direct empowerment by God, direction, discipline, discernment, diversion from sin, increased intellectual ability, joy, and correction, to name just a few.

The Bible is the number-one-selling book of all time, the greatest book ever written. The Bible is not of this world, it is “God-breathed.” When I reflect on God's Word, I think about its rich history—it's still inerrant, infallible, and inalienable after thousands of years. God was the author through forty human writers; sixty-six books are miraculously one book. This timeless Scripture ranges from the history of humankind, to relevance for today, to hope for tomorrow.

Although the accounts of people in the Bible were divinely inspired, the individuals were mere mortals with similar strengths, weaknesses, and personal struggles we experience today. We can identify with them and learn lessons from their lives that help us cope with the stresses of the twenty-first century.

The societies in which these biblical characters lived were vastly different from ours—no technology or mass transportation and limited scientific knowledge. They didn't face such things as the threat of nuclear warfare, but their timely concerns were as real to them as ours are to us. They grappled

with similar life-and-death issues. Accounts of their lives and how God works in and among us provide lessons that can guide our choices today.

The Bible teaches both individual choice and God’s sovereignty. Choice and sovereignty don’t negate each other. God wants us to make good choices; this book can guide you through some of them.

Choose Well

There’s a lot to be said for motivation, common sense, and mental fitness. They serve you well in everything you do.

As much as possible, choose to stay in a healthy zone—mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Being in constant pursuit of self-improvement is a process that requires a series of good choices. There is truth in the adage “We make our choices, then our choices make us.”

Self-Assessment—How Am I Doing?

When evaluating your personal brain health, the following factors can guide you. This is a snapshot of current stressors that may be impeding your mental and physical health.

Note: This brief self-assessment may be influenced by your current state of mind, depending on whether you are feeling confident or stressed out. Consider each of the following issues from an honest, general, insightful viewpoint.

Place a check mark by each of the areas that you may need help with or may need some improvement in your life:

<input type="checkbox"/> general functioning	<input type="checkbox"/> diet
<input type="checkbox"/> illness	<input type="checkbox"/> job performance

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> energy level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> addictions | <input type="checkbox"/> productivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> medications/drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> weight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> mood | <input type="checkbox"/> sensitivity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> healthy choices | <input type="checkbox"/> decision making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> stress level |
| <input type="checkbox"/> learning new things | <input type="checkbox"/> time management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> memory/cognition | <input type="checkbox"/> financial security |
| <input type="checkbox"/> business arrangements | <input type="checkbox"/> confusion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> sleep habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pain level | <input type="checkbox"/> appearance/grooming |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hobbies | <input type="checkbox"/> codependency (addiction to people, behaviors, or things) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> major, recent events/changes | <input type="checkbox"/> personality traits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> family history | <input type="checkbox"/> technology/TV habits |
| <input type="checkbox"/> abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wasting time | <input type="checkbox"/> other issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> attitude | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> physical symptoms | |
-

Select the Brain Boosters You Will Start This Week

Although they appear to be simple, the following are designed to exercise specific cognitive functions of your brain.

- Learn more about something that interests you. (Education increases dendritic fields in the cortical language area.)
- Read something mentally stimulating at least thirty minutes daily (novels, books about hobbies and special interests, newspapers for current events). Occasionally read out loud.
- Create a more stimulating environment at home.
- Take new routes when you drive or go for walks.

- ___ Spend more time with friends for stimulating social interactions.
 - ___ Learn new vocabulary words each week and use them in daily conversation (see appendix C).
 - ___ Play board games, chess, and cards; do puzzles.
 - ___ Play video games or explore the internet on topics of interest.
 - ___ Comb your hair and brush your teeth with the opposite hand.
 - ___ Listen to music and learn the lyrics to new songs.
 - ___ Make changes in the order of daily routines.
 - ___ Take ten- to fifteen-minute power naps. (Brains at rest can help organize information and memories.)
 - ___ Take a free class at a local library or college.
 - ___ Focus on five items in a room, then try to recall those items throughout the day, especially when you have changed to a different location.
 - ___ Do stretching exercises during television commercials.
-

Now ask yourself: Do I honestly feel that my routines and choices are healthy? Would the people I trust say my actions and choices are healthy?

Brain Boosters

Fact: Increasing mental exercise improves cognition.

The more years you consistently stimulate your memory the better chance you have of reducing the threat of cognitive decline or dementia. If you are thirty years old and

start right now, you may be able to accomplish years or decades of preventive care. Investing this effort for a vital mind is similar to the money you're already investing for a comfortable retirement lifestyle. Try the following mental exercises.

Abstract Puzzle

A man is looking at a portrait on a wall and says, "Brothers and sisters I have none, but this man's father is my father's son." At whose portrait is he looking?¹

Memorization

Memorize the forty-five US presidents in order. List them as quickly as you can and repeat them daily: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Adams, Jackson, Van Buren, Harrison, Tyler, Polk, Taylor, Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan, Lincoln, Johnson, Grant, Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland, Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley, Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson, Harding, Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump.

When you've mastered that, try learning and practicing them in reverse order: Trump, Obama, Bush, Clinton, Bush, Reagan, Carter, Ford, Nixon, Johnson, Kennedy, Eisenhower, Truman, Roosevelt, Hoover, Coolidge, Harding, Wilson, Taft, Roosevelt, McKinley, Cleveland, Harrison, Cleveland, Arthur, Garfield, Hayes, Grant, Johnson, Lincoln, Buchanan, Pierce, Fillmore, Taylor, Polk, Tyler, Harrison, Van Buren, Jackson, Adams, Monroe, Madison, Jefferson, Adams, Washington.

If you're not interested in learning the presidents, make a list of thirty to forty items in a topic that relates to your profession or hobbies and memorize that list.

Math Exercises

Practice math exercises in your head when you go for a walk or while you wait in the car.

- Calculating tips for staff at restaurants, airports, hotels, beauty shops, and other places is a daily challenge. Impress your friends and ditch your smartphone calculator.

Find 10 percent of the total bill by moving the decimal to the left one space.

5 percent is half that amount.

For 15 percent, add the 10 and 5 percent.

20 percent is double the 10 percent.

Example: Your bill is \$148.00. Round it up to \$150.00.

10 percent is \$15.00.

20 percent is $2 \times \$15 = \30.00 for the tip.

(Of course, you can adjust the amount up or down.)

- In your head, add or subtract serial numbers (2s, 3s, 4s, etc.) from 100 as quickly as possible. Then choose a number to multiply by itself. Start with smaller numbers like 2s, 3s, and 4s to warm up, then progress to 7s, 8s, and 9s. Repeat the series daily until you can do it quickly. Then move to a new series.