Retrain your brain to reduce stress

Have you ever wanted to hit a re-start button when you are sick, tired or stressed? Discoveries in neuroscience and psychology show that brain games, positive thinking, and relaxation techniques can help train your brain to stress less and feel better.

Chronic stress takes a toll on all dimensions of wellness. The stress response impacts the function of many major body systems including circulatory, muscular, immune, digestive, nervous and endocrine; making it a risk factor for chronic disease. Even when you are not stressed, your body might operate in a stress mode because stress damages the brain networks to create a vicious cycle.

Traditional stress management programs focus on behavior, but brain training creates new neural pathways. It changes the way we appraise and react to stress. The brain does have the ability to repair and certain activities have the power to shape the brain into new directions. This research is not only being used to manage brain disorders, but also as a tool to manage trauma, pain, injury, illness, addictions and daily or chronic stress.

**Brain game**
1. Stand up or sit up straight in a chair.
2. Move your right hand towards your left knee. Lift your left knee to tap it with your right hand. Switch sides to tap your right knee with your left hand. Get comfortable with the motion.
3. Then, while one hand touches the opposite knee, say “A.” Switch sides and start by counting “1,” Switch sides again and say “B” and switch sides again to say “2.”
4. Proceed through the alphabet while touching opposite hand to knee and switching (ex: Count- “A, 1, B, 2, C, 3…”).
Healthy holidays

Indulgence is likely a word that comes to mind during the holiday season. Tempting foods, disruption of healthy routines along with added stress may contribute to weight gain during the holidays. Set yourself up for success in the New Year by setting a goal to maintain your weight. To keep the scale in balance throughout the month:

- **Eat small portions** of your favorite holiday foods and skip the foods you can eat other times of the year.
- **Make time for short exercise bouts** before and after holiday events and travel. Just 10 or 15 minutes is all it takes!
- **Include fruits and vegetables** at your holiday gatherings.
- Celebrate the holiday season with an active gathering like bowling, dancing or playing outside.
- **Avoid alcoholic beverages.** They contain empty calories, so consume in moderation.
- **Continue to practice your regular healthy routines** and put them on your busy calendar as a reminder.

### Dakota Wellness Program points reminders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complete by December 31, 2015</th>
<th>Begin on January 1, 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Available points must be redeemed through the Redemption Center by 11:59 p.m. on December 31, 2015. The point bank resets to zero at Midnight on January 1, 2016.</td>
<td>The annual Health Assessment will be available for completion. Watch for more information regarding the 2016 online Health Assessment completion requirements in January.</td>
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