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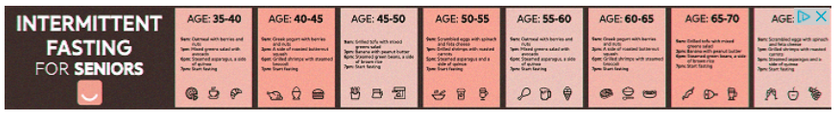

HEALTH

10 Natural Tricks for Staying Focused

Safe and effective ways to squash that brain fog

Gina Kelly UPDATED OCT 14, 2021 FACT CHECKED

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We've all had trouble focusing before. It's natural for our minds to wander now and then, but it can be frustrating when it happens often. Take a few minutes to find out how you can stay focused and defeat that brain fog.

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01 | TAKE GINSENG

Ginseng is the root of a plant that's been used in traditional medicine for thousands of years. It is thought to have several health benefits, including

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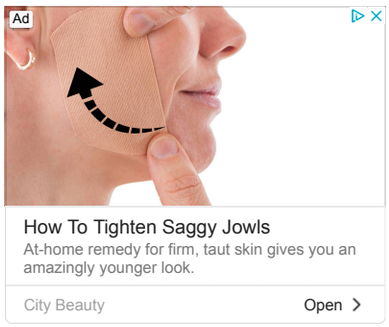

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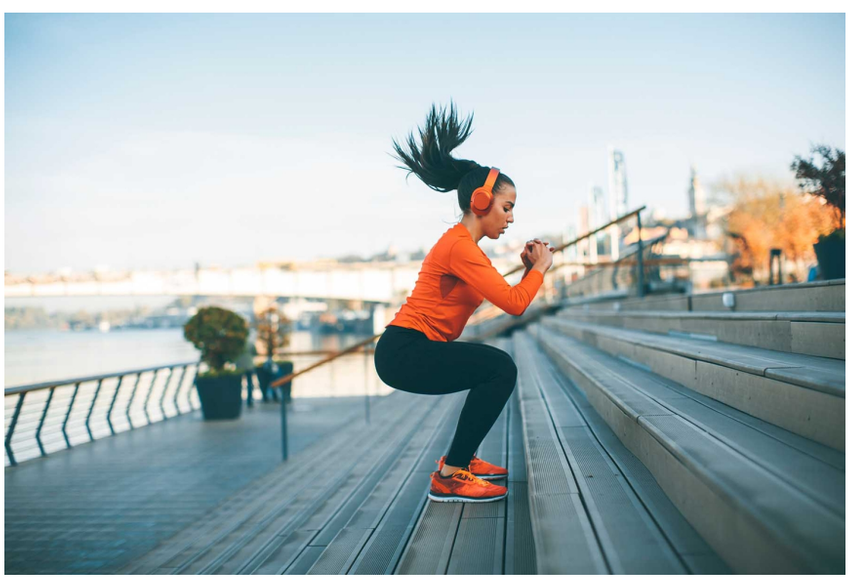
regulating blood sugar levels, boosting immunity, and enhancing focus. Studies have confirmed ginseng's effectiveness in improving attention in those diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), though more research is needed.

02 | GET MORE SLEEP

Sleep is imperative to our mental and physical health. When we don't get enough of it, we can't concentrate, our thought process slows, and our memory is impaired. It's recommended we get about seven to eight hours of sleep per night. Unfortunately, a lot of people don't dedicate enough time to sleep, but it's something we should all prioritize. If you've made the time but still struggle to get some shut-eye, there are many ways to improve your sleep.

03 | EXERCISE



Another step you can take to improve focus and concentration is to exercise. One study showed that participants increased the size of their hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for memory and learning, after aerobic exercise. Several other studies suggested that individuals who exercise have a greater volume of matter in the part of the brain responsible for controlled thinking and memory than those who don't exercise.

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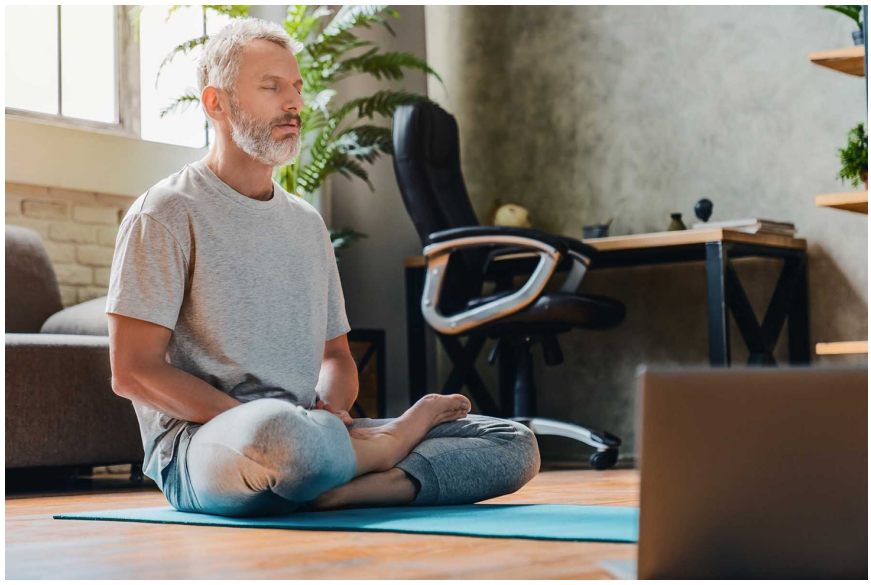
04 | MEDITATE



Although it's been around for thousands of years, meditation is finally having a moment. You can find all sorts of books, podcasts, and articles about its benefits. There are retreats and entire businesses dedicated to helping people meditate. There are many great reasons to meditate, including improving focus and concentration. Researchers say our mind wanders about half of the time, which makes it hard to concentrate on just about anything. Meditation can help us reset and bring our attention back to the task at hand. And you don't have to look very far to learn how to meditate.

05 | DRINK SOME TEA

L-theanine is an amino acid found in tea. While most tea has it, there are higher concentrations in green and black tea. L-theanine can also be found as a supplement and may improve cognitive function. In one study, 30 participants were asked to take either L-theanine or placebo tablets for four weeks. Those who took the L-theanine had improved cognitive function, including improvements in executive function and verbal fluency.

06 | PLAY COGNITIVE TRAINING GAMES

It's important to maintain our brain health so we can think clearly, preserve our memory, and continue to focus. A decade-long study tracked participants as they performed cognitive training exercises. Those participants who participated in cognitive interventions either maintained their level of cognitive function or experienced improvement in brain function. Some examples of cognitive training activities that may train your mind to focus are completing crossword puzzles and playing video games.

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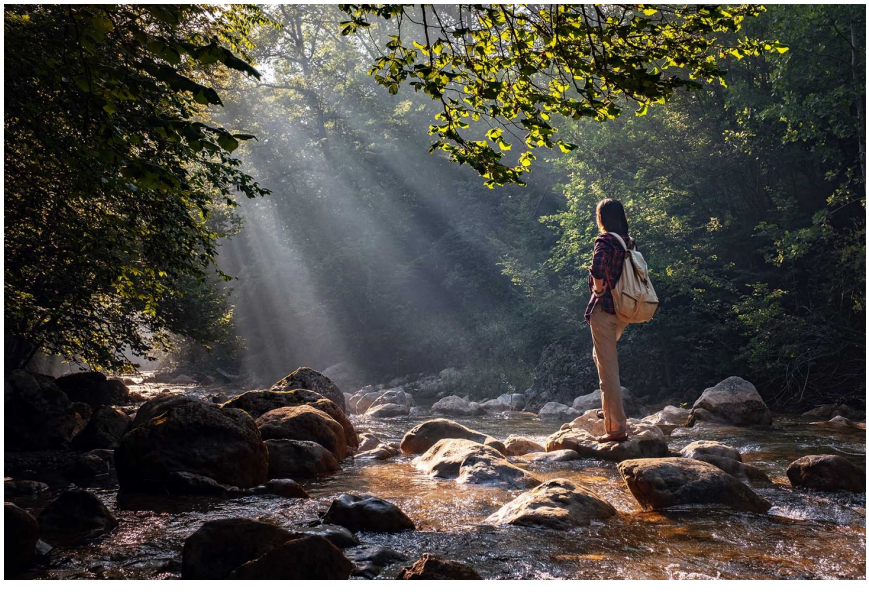
07 | SPEND TIME IN NATURE



When we spend time outside in nature our anxiety levels decrease, our immune systems get a boost, and our focus improves. Researchers asked study participants to spend 50 minutes walking in either an urban or natural environment. Those individuals who spent time in nature had better cognitive function than those in the urban setting. In a similar study, children diagnosed with ADHD had better concentration after spending time in nature compared to an urban environment. And if you don't have time to head to the forest, adding some plants to your workspace can help increase brain function and productivity, too.

08 | ADD SOME CAFFEINE TO YOUR DIET

Caffeine can block adenosine receptors, which results in the release of several neurotransmitters responsible for healthy cognitive function. One of those neurotransmitters, dopamine, helps the brain focus. In moderation, caffeine can help you focus and increase your concentration. Caffeine can be found in dark chocolate, coffee, and some other foods.

09 | HAVE BREAKFAST EVERY MORNING

While we often associate blood sugar levels with diabetic patients, low glucose levels can affect just about anyone. We can become irritable, anxious, or shaky. Our bodies can sweat, and we can even become confused. Obviously, hypoglycemia is no joke. Keeping blood sugar levels up is also key to optimal brain function and will help you to maintain your focus. Eating full meals and snacks can help, especially after fasting all night while you sleep.

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10 | EAT A BRAIN-BOOSTING DIET

Omega-3 fatty acids can be found in fish, nuts, and supplements. They play a crucial role in the body by fighting off heart disease, joint pain, and even depression, though more research is needed. Omega-3s can also help you focus. In a study performed with healthy adults, omega-3 supplements improved cognitive performance compared to the placebo group.

NEXT »

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