

Training Your Brain To Adopt Healthful Habits: Mastering the Five Brain Challenges

An 18-Hour Home Study Program for Health Professionals | 280-Page Book

Why is it so hard to maintain healthful habits? This program explains successful processes to initiate and maintain change from a neuroscience perspective. Specifically, the program examines five key brain challenges that underlie many of the most effective cognitive, behavioral and pharmacological strategies for changing health behaviors and maintaining healthful practices. The neuroscience is presented simply and focused on the practical. Each brain challenge is followed by exercises to target brain processes, encouraging health professionals or patients to change these processes. The text serves as a guide to learn how and why active participation is needed to produce meaningful change.

The program focuses on mastering five key brain challenges:

- 1. Learning to highly value behaviors that promote wellness while devaluing behaviors that lead to poor health.*
- 2. Enriching one's life to tame the need for immediate gratification.*
- 3. Enhancing resiliency to threats and chronic stressors.*
- 4. Training one's addiction circuits that respond to drugs as well as "comfort foods" to make healthful behaviors habitual.*
- 5. Making flexible decisions to empower the prefrontal cortex to make healthful choices.*

Participants completing the program should be able to:

- 1. Identify how the brain weighs options when making health-related decisions.*
- 2. Discuss how opportunities for reward get overvalued.*
- 3. List social factors that can overvalue habits and sabotage our health.*
- 4. Describe how the brain's reward system is sabotaged by addictive substances.*
- 5. State how we can correct value estimates, including reframing and challenging expectations.*
- 6. Discuss how impulse control is affected by neuronal processes.*
- 7. Outline several ways that illustrate how life enrichment improves impulse control.*
- 8. Define and give examples of reward deficiency syndrome.*
- 9. Describe how chronic stress increases the need for immediate gratification.*
- 10. List several effects of adverse early childhood experience on adult stress.*
- 11. List several ways to develop greater stress resilience.*
- 12. Compare and contrast habits that can be automatic from those that are acquired.*
- 13. Provide three examples of how we learn new behaviors.*
- 14. List several ways for how new behaviors can turn into old habits.*
- 15. Explain why willpower is not enough.*
- 16. Describe how problem-solving skills can develop and can disappear.*
- 17. List several ways to improve problem-solving and cognitive skills.*
- 18. Summarize key principles using the example of weight loss.*



NURSES: Institute for Brain Potential (IBP) is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the **American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation**. IBP is approved as a provider of continuing education by the **California Board of Registered Nursing**, Provider #CEP13896, and **Florida Board of Nursing**. This program provides 18 contact hours.



COUNSELORS, PSYCHOLOGISTS, SOCIAL WORKERS & MFTs: Institute for Brain Potential is approved by the **American Psychological Association** to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. Institute for Brain Potential maintains responsibility for this program and its content. This program provides 18 CE credit.



ACE Institute for Brain Potential, ACE Approval Number: 1160, is approved as a provider for social work continuing education by the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) www.aswb.org through the Approved Continuing Education (ACE) Program. Institute for Brain Potential maintains responsibility for the program. ASWB Approval Period: November 11, 2017 – November 11, 2020. Social workers should contact their regulatory board to determine course approval for continuing education credits. Social workers participating in this course will receive 18 clinical continuing education clock hours. Social Work Practice Level: Intermediate.

Institute for Brain Potential is approved as a provider of CE by **Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, MFT and Mental Health Counseling**, by **Florida Board of Psychology**, by **Illinois Department of Professional Regulation MFT CE Sponsor Program**, Sponsor #168.000183, and by **Texas State Board of Examiners of Marriage & Family Therapists**, Provider #830. IBP is approved as a provider of CE for Counselors and Social Workers by **Ohio CSWMFT Board**. Institute for Brain Potential (IBP), SW CPE is recognized by the **New York State Education Department's State Board for Social Work** as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed social workers #0341. Institute for Brain Potential (IBP) is recognized by the **New York State Education Department's State Board for Mental Health Practitioners** as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed mental health counselors. #MHC-0134. Institute for Brain Potential (IBP) is recognized by the **New York State Education Department's State Board for Mental Health Practitioners** as an approved provider of continuing education for licensed marriage and family therapists. #MFT-0068. This program provides 18 contact hours.

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DENTAL PROFESSIONALS: Institute for Brain Potential is designated as an Approved PACE Program Provider by the **Academy of General Dentistry (AGD)**. The formal continuing dental education programs of this provider are accepted by the AGD for Fellowship/Mastership and membership maintenance credit. Approval does not imply acceptance by a state or provincial board of dentistry or AGD endorsement. The current term of approval extends from 12/01/18 – 11/30/24. Provider ID# 312413. Subject Code: 557. Institute for Brain Potential, provider RP-4261, is authorized to confer continuing dental education for Dentists, Dental Hygienists and Dental Assistants by the **Dental Board of California**. Institute for Brain Potential is an approved provider with the **Florida Board of Dentistry**. This program provides 18 hours of CE credit.

PHYSICAL THERAPISTS: Institute for Brain Potential is approved as a provider of the physical therapy continuing education by the **Physical Therapy Board of California**. Institute for Brain Potential is an **Illinois Department of Professional Regulation Approved CE Sponsor** for PTs and PTAs, #216.000210. Institute for Brain Potential is recognized by the **New York State Education Department's State Board of Physical Therapy** as an approved provider of physical therapy continuing education. This program provides 18 contact hours of CE credit.

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SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS: Institute for Brain Potential is an approved provider by the **California Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Board (SLPAB)**, # PDP247. This program provides 18 CE hours.

Challenge 1:

How to Value What Makes Us Healthy

How Your Brain Weighs Health-Related Decisions

- Calculating the value of an opportunity
- Dopamine neurons and reward expectations
- Immediate gratification and the limbic system
- Delayed gratification and the prefrontal cortex

How Opportunities For Reward Get Overvalued

- Social reinforcement and peer pressure
- Power of suggestion: placebo and nocebo effects
- Impaired expectancy and alcohol-related decisions
- Marketing your own expectations and rewards

Social Factors in Overvaluing Habits and Sabotaging Health

- How habits are contagious
- Why we love to sabotage attempts at self-improvement
- When helping is hurtful: rescuing, doting, enabling
- How verbal reinforcement alters our experience

Hijacking the Brain's Reward System

- The attraction of addictive substances
- Spiraling out of control: overvaluing drug reward
- Speed and intensity of drug absorption: addiction or not?

How to Assess the True Value of a Reward

- How to correct value estimates
- Reframing: adopting a new perspective
- Tackling irrational fears: treating phobic disorders
- Comparing self against others: social comparison biases
- Revealing internal contradictions between how we think and act

Challenge 2: Taming the Need for Immediate Gratification

Reducing Maladaptive Habits By Improving Impulse Control

- Neural control of our impulses
- The neurons that desire immediate gratification
- Inhibiting the neurons that seek immediate gratification

Life-Enriching Activities

- Enhancing communication skills
- Breaking problems down to manageable steps
- Doing what you love and loving what you do

Reward-Deficiency Syndrome

- Dopamine deficiency: addiction, depression and obesity
- Raised to be mild or wild?
- Social hierarchy and need for immediate gratification
- Dopamine deficiency and consuming passions
- Risks of immediate gratification
- How to change your environment to resist temptations

Challenge 3: Increasing Resilient to Threats and Chronic Stress

How Stress Increases Need for Immediate Gratification

- Why and how we respond to stress
- Understanding stress triggers
- Chronic stress, immediate gratification and serotonin
- Reducing chronic stress by achieving greater sense of control
- Understanding posttraumatic stress: horror frozen in memory
- Achieving greater control over stressors in your life.

Effects of Early Childhood Stress

- What prepares us for stress: the stress hormone cortisol
- The enduring effects of maternal anxiety and separation
- Separation anxiety: overcoming past stressors

How We Can Develop Greater Stress Resilience

- Pacing, scheduling and self-care: the sleep connection
- Detrimental effects of overwork and sleep deprivation
- Pre-planning and problem-solving
- Relaxation: a neurobiological perspective

Challenge 4: Retraining Your Addiction Circuits to Make Healthful Behaviors Habitual

Healthful Behaviors as Habit-Forming

- How habits become automatic
- What behaviors can become automatic?
- What happens to brain processing as habits form?

How We Learn New Behaviors

- Imitation, mirror neurons and importance of modeling
- Importance of observation
- Increasing your confidence to do a behavior: practice
- Modeling, encouragement and anxiety reduction

Turning a New Behavior Into an Old Habit

- Practice, practice, practice: how much, how often
- Obtaining social support
- Monitoring and feedback
- Creating immediate contingencies for health behavior

Challenge 5: Making Flexible Decisions to Empower Your Brain to Make Healthful Decisions

Delaying Automatic Unhealthy Habits

- Why willpower is not enough
- The limits of willpower in overcoming habits
- Alternatives to willpower

How Problem-Solving Skills Develop and Disappear

- Developmental stages and cognitive decline
- Risk aversion and risky decision-making
- Use it or lose it: effects of novelty and activity: protecting the aging brain
- Enhancing neuronal regrowth (neurogenesis)

Improving Problem-Solving and Cognitive Skills

- What prevents problem-solving?
- Tricks for helping your prefrontal cortex

Surmounting the Challenges: The Example of Weight Loss

A review and application of the five brain challenges

PRIMARY AUTHOR

Jodie Trafton, Ph.D., a neuroscientist and mental health services researcher, designs and evaluates treatment systems for addiction, chronic pain and anxiety disorders for the 140 medical centers within the Veterans Health Administration as Director of the VA's Program Evaluation and Resource Center. She is Editor in Chief of the three-volume series, Best Practices in the Behavioral Management of Chronic Disease, the most comprehensive reviews of programs for changing health-related behaviors and habits.

An outstanding instructor, Dr. Trafton teaches a highly rated series of classes at Stanford University for graduate students and medical residents on topics including addictions and strategies for managing pain, impulse control and habits. Health professionals recommend her ability to present practical discoveries with clarity, enthusiasm and warmth.

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