

Busy Bees and Brain Function



The word “busy” doesn’t exactly radiate good vibes, does it?

In fact, it might be your go-to excuse for turning down drinks after work with coworkers, the reason you say no to a volunteer opportunity, or why you’ve never learned to play guitar. But what if filling up your day could actually lead to increased brain function?

Busyness and the brain

Researchers were curious, too. A [study](#), published in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, tested more than 300 adults, ages 50 to 89. Surprisingly, they found that busier people tend to have better cognition.

In short, staying engaged can help put the everyday puzzle pieces of life together, skills like problem-solving, language, imagination, perception, and planning.

If you still need a little extra motivation to stay active, just think about your future. Researchers point to other studies that report benefits of high levels of cognitive, social, and physical activities can delay mental decline and reduce the risk of diseases like Alzheimer’s and of dementia.

If all signs point to increased health and mental function, why not sign up for classes and lectures that interest you and schedule more coffee meet-ups?

The stress factor

But don’t spread yourself too thinly.

“Busyness could be detrimental to cognition if it heightens stress substantially, as prolonged stress is harmful to the central nervous system,” the study said.

High levels of engagement can mean less time for relaxation, self-examination, and brain recharging. Plus, you’re more likely to [multitask](#) when busy, the perfect breeding ground for distractions.

Finding balance

As with all correlational studies, it’s hard to tell if living an active lifestyle improves cognition or if it’s the other way around — if smarter folks are capable of handling more activities, resulting in greater levels of busyness.

The key is finding balance.

What this study didn’t discuss, is how busyness relates to enjoyment.

If you’re stressed, it might be best to re-evaluate your priorities. On the other hand, spending time learning a new hobby and going to bed each night wondering where the day went can be rewarding and exciting.

After all, there’s nothing wrong with testing the waters. Try saying “yes” and seeking new opportunities, because you never know what might make your brain happy.