

LifeWork Family

Monthly work/life news for UAW-Represented DaimlerChrysler Workers September 2004

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EXERCISE YOUR MIND

Misplace your keys lately? Open the refrigerator and wonder why you're there? Can't seem to conjure up the event that your sibling swears was one of the most memorable moments in your lives? We all tend to chalk them up to "senior moments" but, as these memory lapses occur more frequently, we begin to wonder if we are experiencing significant memory loss.

Think there's nothing we can do about it? Think again. According to the National Institute on Aging, we may already be doing a lot to sharpen our minds. Just as the body requires a healthy diet and exercise plan, so does the mind. According to Dr. Gary Small, neuroscientist and director of the Center on Aging at the University of California

Just as the body requires a healthy diet and exercise plan,

(Los Angeles), making lifestyle choices can actually slow the

aging of the brain. He believes that genetics makes up about a third of what predicts brain aging. The other two thirds has to do with our environment and lifestyle choices. A human brain begins showing signs of aging during our 20's and 30's. If that is true, what measures can we take to keep our brains fit and keep those senior moments few and far between?



Basically, it comes down to diet and exercise.

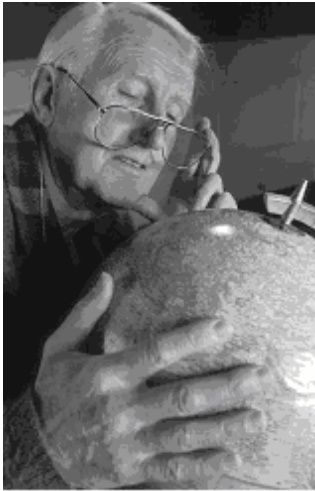
Recent research conducted by David Snowden of the University of Kentucky showed that by constantly challenging the brain we create dendrites, or neural pathways, which allow the brain to compensate for the deteriorating effects of aging. Recommended brainteasers include:

- Learning a new language
- Taking up a new musical instrument
- Doing crossword puzzles
- Playing word games



- Learning to write with your less dominant hand
- Catching up on current events by reading

Physical exercise is also critical. By ensuring a good blood supply to the brain we help keep our brains fit and healthy. According to the AARP Andrus Foundation, aerobic activity increases levels of brain chemicals that enhance the growth of nerve cells, which improve our memory skills. And, by all means, don't smoke. Smoking damages the brain's blood vessels.



Try to reduce stress. According to the Novartis Foundation for Gerontology, stress can have a negative impact on the brain by releasing a hormone called cortisol, which harms brain cells. Regular exercise, meditation and other stress busters can help preserve mental ability.

Eat brain food. According to Dr. Small, a diet low in fat yet rich in omega-3 fatty acids (fish, avocados, walnuts and brazil nuts, fruits and vegetables like dried plums, raisins, blueberries, broccoli, beets and onions) helps improve brain function. Remember, it's easier to protect your brain now, then it is to repair it later.

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BACK TO SCHOOL ANXIETIES

PAVING THE WAY

It is normal for children, as it is for adults, to experience some anxiety when approaching anything new. You can help your child prepare for the first day at school, whether it be in child care, kindergarten, first grade, middle school, high school, or even that trip off to college. All these are "firsts" for you and for your child, but with a little extra planning and TLC, they can be exciting for all of you. Below you will find tips to make these transitions easier for the child or young adult in your life.

THE FIRST DAYS

Taking the following steps to ease the fear of the unknown will make the first day of school much more comfortable for you and your child. Walk the route to school with your child before the first day. Help your child find the right classroom and the bathroom. Check where the bus will drop off and pick up. Talk with your child about expectations for the school year. Read books about school. Share some of your fondest memories of school, but don't feel that school must be a topic of daily discussion. If your child is having a difficult time with this transition, acknowledge these feelings, be patient and calm, stress the positive, and let your child know that all will be fine. It might help to tuck a "love note" in your child's lunch or send a family photo to look at during the day. Leave a kiss in the palm of your child's hand and it will be there whenever it is needed during the day!

Movin' on Up

Continue to be positive about school and learning as your child enters middle school. Be sensitive to the anxieties your child may be feeling over this transition. Many students are concerned about such things as: switching classes, locker use, and mixing with older students. Discuss, don't dismiss, these feelings. Talk about the social pressures that are a part of middle and high school. Exchange thoughts about peer pressure, making good decisions, the importance of choosing friends carefully, and the fact that everyone is responsible for the decisions they make. Set realistic limits and communicate the consequences he or she will face if limits are not adhered to. Discuss the variety of extracurricular activities available and attend plays, concerts, sporting events, etc. whenever possible. Even though your children may act as if they do not want you involved in school activities anymore- they are happy to know that you care enough to participate. These years go by quickly so hang on and enjoy the ride!

THE ROAD TO COLLEGE

Wow! Your child has graduated from high school and will be heading off to college. What can you do to help with the adjustment? Take some time to reinforce the values that are important to your family. College students will be faced with situations involving sex, alcohol, and drugs - help them to think these things through beforehand. Discuss financial responsibility - too many young people graduate from college deep in credit card debt. Help your child develop a plan for balancing an active social life with important academic endeavors. Allow your child to pursue his or her own passions. Your input is very valuable, but college is a time for self-discovery. Remember that you have worked hard to bring your child to this point and now the time has come to let your child fly. Communicate your faith in your child's ability and that you support what he or she is doing. Regular communication via email or phone is great, but sending an occasional care package with an encouraging note will be appreciated far more than you know!

WHAT'S NEW

With the end of summer in sight and the new school year kicked off, the Circle of Life Committee would like to thank the 60 UAW-represented employees who contributed to the success of the 2004 Summer Camp Program. A total of 79 vouchers were requested, with 34 kids returning from 2003 and 45 new kids who were able to take advantage of the 20% discount at the 17 Metropolitan Detroit area camps. Please remember to keep this program in mind for next summer!

We wish everyone good luck and much happiness in the 2004 – 2005 school year!

