

# THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



## # 1508 Exercising to Better Brain Function

In this spot, we often talk about things we can do to be healthier, and to maintain if not make improvements in brain function. A recently released study has some good news on that, and you might consider it a President's Day gift. I'm Jerry Roberts, and I'll have it for you, next on The Extra Point.

As we age, our brain's ability to learn and remember information naturally declines. The hippocampus, responsible for learning and memory, typically starts to shrink by about one percent per year once we reach our late 20s.

To make it easier, we'll say it starts shrinking at 30. Take your age, subtract 30, and that's how many percentage points your hippocampus has been deflated. Wait, don't despair, I am here with positive news.

Recent research suggests that exercise can slow down and even reverse this physical decay. Not only can exercise increase the size of the hippocampus, but it also improves memory, cognition, and overall brain health.

First, there is a connection between exercise and brain function, and even a few minutes of exercise can provide short-term mental benefits.

Maybe you've heard that we have a fixed number of brain cells, and start losing them as we age, and it's kind of a one-way deal as the count gets progressively smaller. Well, this is actually not the whole truth.

Studies published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* indicate that exercise can stimulate the growth of new brain cells well into our 60s and 70s. Why is Ray Gibson Pika's Best? One reason...he has grown more brain cells.

Exercise triggers the release of chemicals that enhance neuron formation, synaptic plasticity, and overall brain function. The communication between our muscles and brain plays a vital role in this process, making exercise a

powerful tool for maintaining cognitive health.

So, how much exercise do we need? Another study published in *Translational Sports Medicine* reveals that even a brief period of aerobic exercise, ranging from two minutes to one hour at moderate-to-high intensity, can improve attention, concentration, learning and memory functions for up to two hours.

You want examples? Simple activities like climbing stairs, doing pushups, or engaging in jumping jacks can provide an immediate mental boost.

Let's go deeper. What if we forget things, that so-called "age-related memory loss"? This will require regular exercise that elevates the heart rate. A study showed that brisk walking for 40 minutes, three times a week, increased the volume of the hippocampus by slightly over 2 percent.

Any form of moderate-intensity exercise can be effective; the key is to maintain a pulse between 60 and 70 percent of your maximum heart rate. The calculation is easy. Take the number 220 and subtract your age. Ray is 61, thus his max heart rate would be 159. To hit within the 60 to 70 percent number, that's 95 to 111 beats per minute. Disclaimer to cover our collective back sides: This is not medical advice and I am not a medical professional, though I have played one on TV. Check with your doctor to make sure you are ready for an exercise program.

The specific type of exercise doesn't matter as much as making sure your heart rate stays within the desired range. Further, consistency is key, as the studies referenced showed that it takes time to stimulate hippocampal growth.

Find something you like to do and that you'll stick with. Maybe two or three types of exercise, and you can switch off between them.

(Con't.)

While regular exercise can promote brain cell growth and improve memory, even short bursts of exercise can provide immediate mental benefits.

Lace up your sneakers, get moving, and build more brain cells.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

###

For information on training and consulting services with Jerry Roberts, please click this link: [guamtraining.com](http://guamtraining.com)

