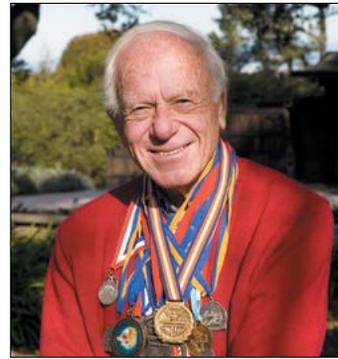


Your Brain IS a Muscle. Use It. Or Lose It.



By Walter M. Bortz, II, MD



I have spent almost all of my life extolling the benefits of physical exercise for just about everything. But early on, I fended off questions about whether the benefits extended also to the brain because I felt that the evidence was not yet available.

And then in 1988, Dr. Bob Dustman of Salt Lake City published a research article in the journal *Neurobiology of Aging* that reported on his study in which old persons had their cognitive competence measured before and after a bout of physical training. And Voilà, their IQs went up.

I was shocked and delighted. And invited Bob to Stanford to lecture. This early report has exploded until now there are hundreds of scientific papers that affirm

the value of exercise to the brain. Not only is the value for us every day folks, but also it's documented that it markedly helps persons with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.

A certain contributing factor to all of this benefit involves the chemical BDNF, brain derived neurotrophic factor, which our brain manufactures in the hypothalamus when we exercise. This certainly is an issue related to the paper that I wrote "Exercise as an Evolutionary Force" which suggested that the reason the human brain expanded during our Paleolithic era was that our ancestors were very physically active at that time.

The lesson now comes to us—body and brain. If we can expect to live to our full potential of 100 healthy years, this requires our brain to be part of the game plan. Use it or lose it.

Dr. Walter M. Bortz, II is one of America's most distinguished scientific experts on healthy aging and longevity. He spent his entire career at Stanford University where he holds the position of Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine. An active marathoner, he has written seven books including "Dare to Be 100" and "Next Medicine." To learn more, visit walterbortz.com or email: DRBortz@aol.com.

Editor's Note: For more insight on how the body ages over time, Dr. Walter M. Bortz has written an excellent book on the topic: "Dare To Be 100." Available from Amazon.com.

Secrets of Longevity

