ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION



Building Brain-Healthy Habits

Objectives

By the end of this program, you will be able to:

- Explain how brain health is important now and across your lifetime
- Recognize actions that can help protect brain health
- Make a plan to build brain-healthy habits by applying what you have learned







Please note: This program is intended to provide education on how to protect brain health through healthy living. If you have concerns about or are living with dementia, there are several Association programs available to support you. Resources will be provided at the end of this program.

Think about actions to take

To help build and maintain brain-healthy habits, we will walk through creating an action plan.



Healthy habits for your brain

10
HEALTHY
HABITS
FOR YOUR
BRAIN

We will focus on these brain-healthy habits.

- Control Your Blood Pressure
- Manage Diabetes
- Maintain a Healthy Weight
- Be Smoke-Free
- Get Moving
- Eat Right
- Sleep Well
- Challenge Your Mind
- Stay in School
- Protect Your Head

Healthy living benefits the brain



Learn more at alz.org/USPOINTER

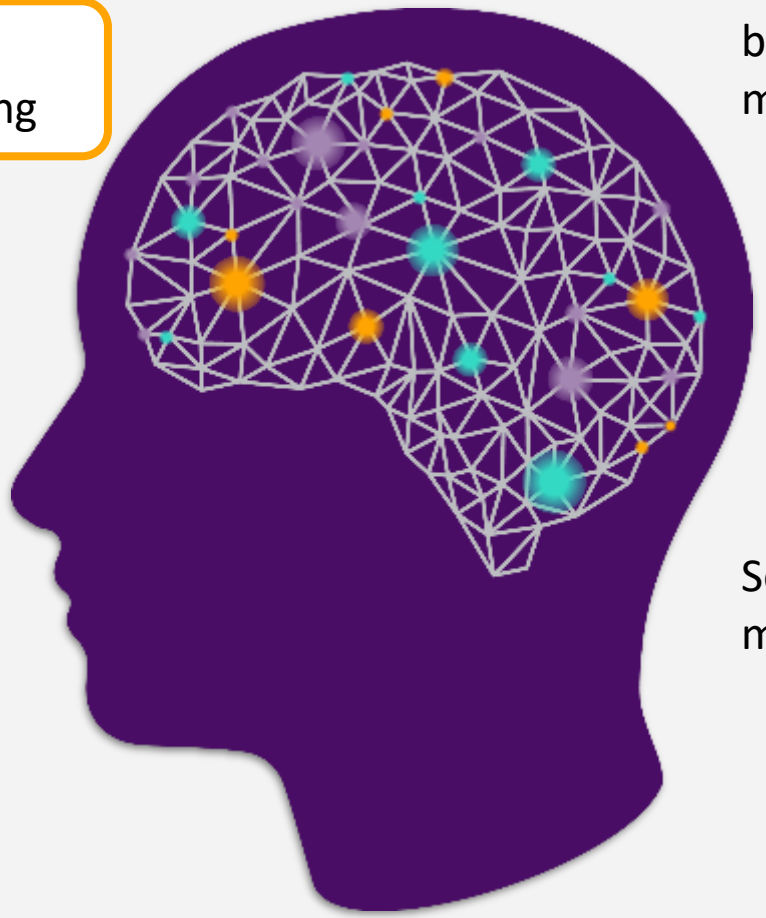
U.S.POINTER
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

- The first large-scale, randomized controlled trial of its kind in the U.S.
- Showed that a structured healthy lifestyle program combining exercise, healthy diet, cognitive engagment, and health monitoring can protect cognitive function.

Importance of Brain Health



What is brain health?



Memory and thinking

Social-emotional, behavioral and mental health

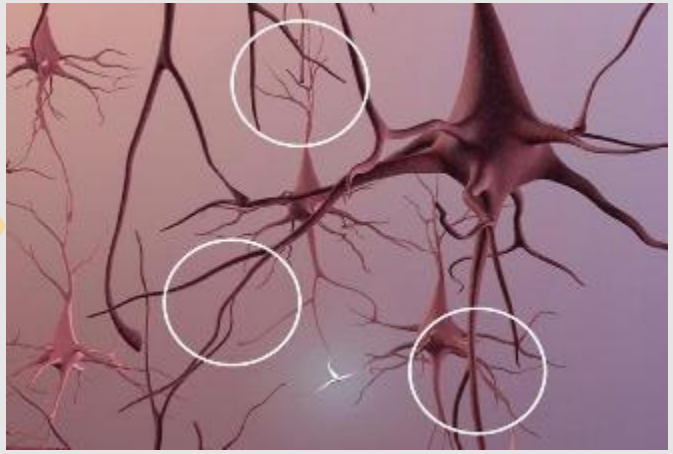
Sensory and movement

How does the brain work?





Neurons (nerve cells) are essential to all human activity.



100 billion neurons connect at more than 100 trillion points to create a "neuron forest."

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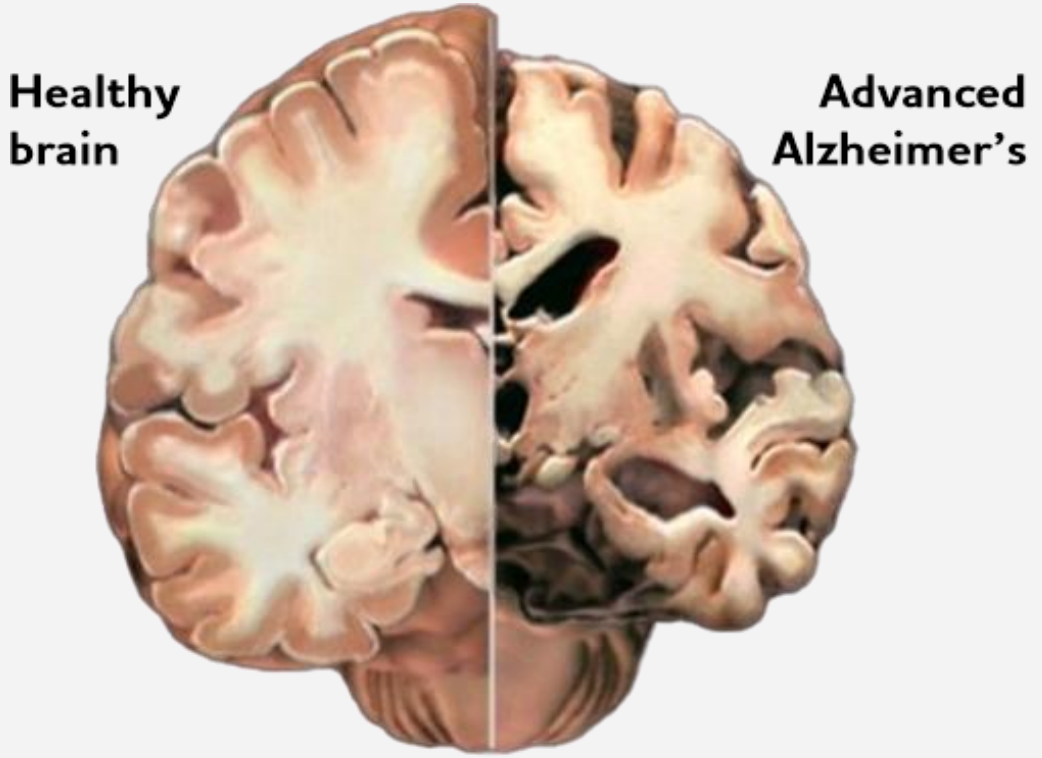
Alzheimer’s Disease and the brain



Brain changes can start *20 years or more*
before symptoms of dementia are experienced

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Understanding dementia



Cognitive decline

Cognitive decline refers to changes in memory and thinking that are worsening over time. Just as with our physical abilities, some cognitive decline is expected as we age.

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI)

MCI is an early stage of memory loss or other cognitive ability loss (such as language or visual/ spatial perception) in individuals who maintain the ability to independently perform most activities of daily living.

Dementia

Dementia is a loss of memory and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life.

Dementia is not a normal part of aging.

Understanding dementia



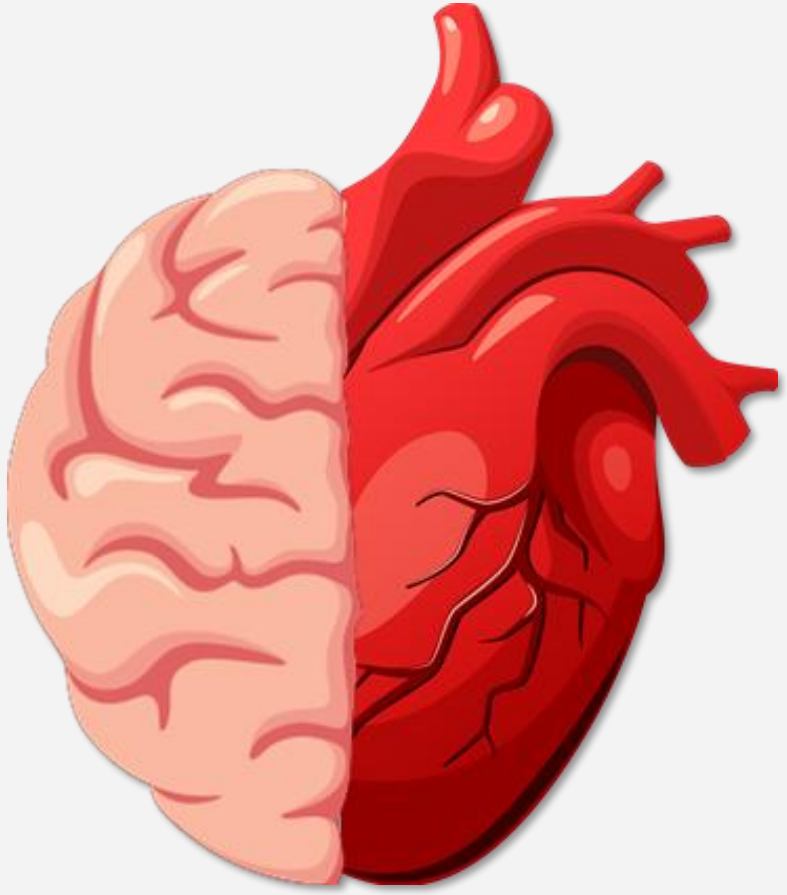
Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia but there are several other diseases that can cause dementia, including:

- **Vascular**
- **Lewy Body**
- **Frontotemporal degeneration (FTD)**
- **Mixed Pathology (dementia from more than one cause)**

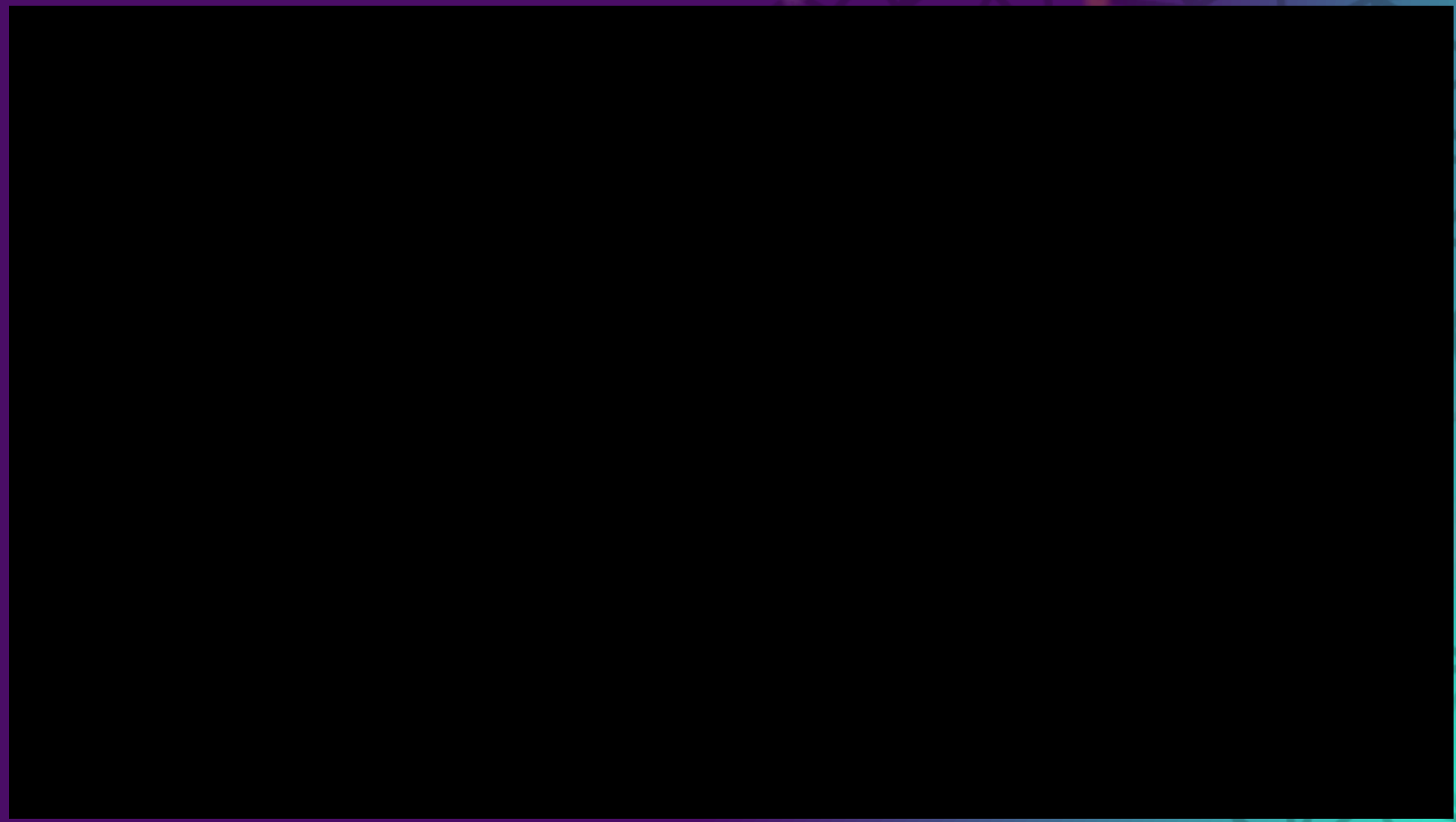
The brain-heart connection

Our hearts and brains are closely connected.

- The heart pumps blood to the brain.
- The blood provides oxygen and other nutrients to nourish the brain.
- **What's good for our hearts is good for our brains.**



Video – Why brain health matters to me



When is the best time to start thinking about brain health?



It’s never too early or too late to take action for brain health.

Health Conditions and the Brain





Maintain a Healthy Weight



Control Your Blood Pressure



Manage Diabetes

Be Smoke-Free

What's good for the heart is good for the brain

Control Your Blood Pressure



Blood pressure should be less than 130/80 mmHG.

Manage Diabetes



Healthy eating, exercise and medications can be effective in managing diabetes.

Maintain a Healthy Weight



Talk with a health care provider about what is right for you.

Be Smoke-Free



Quitting can be hard! 1-800-QUIT-NOW or local resources can help.

Brain-Healthy Habits



Get Moving



Eat Right



Sleep Well

Benefits of brain-healthy habits





Get Moving

Exercise improves brain function by increasing blood and oxygen flow. It also helps improve connections among brain cells.



Eat Right

Improved nutrition is connected to better brain health. The MIND diet provides optimal nutrition for the brain.



Sleep Well

Deep sleep may help “wash away” a build up of proteins in the brain that are a risk to brain health.

Discussion: Change is hard!





Challenges

From your experience, what are some challenges to building these healthy habits?



Strategies

What are some strategies that have worked to overcome these obstacles?

Get moving

Get Moving

Aerobics, strength training and stretching are all part of a balanced exercise routine.

Aim for:



Aerobic exercise:
30-35 minutes of moderate-to-intense aerobic activity four times a week



Strength training:
15-20 minutes, two times a week



Stretching and balance exercises:
10-15 minutes, two times a week

Tips to get moving

Get Moving

Think about something fun and new you want to try.





Ask friends to join you.

Link it to something fun.





Track your progress.

alz.org/exercisetracker

Eat right

Eat Right

The MIND diet provides optimal nutrition for brain health.



Aim to regularly eat:

- Leafy Green Vegetables, 1 serving/day
- Other Vegetables, 1 serving/day
- Berries, 5 servings/week
- Whole Grains, 3 servings/day
- Poultry (white meat, skinless), 2 servings/week
- Fish (not fried), 1 serving/week
- Beans/Legumes, 3 servings/week
- Nuts, 5 servings/week
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil, 2 servings/day



Limit:

- Red & Processed Meats
- Butter/Margarine
- Cheese
- Fried Foods
- Sweets

alz.org/foodtracker

Tips to eat right

Eat Right

Focus on adding more healthy foods. What can you add?



- Healthy afternoon snacks
- Vegetables on pasta or rice
- Fruit along with dessert

Find healthier foods you can swap in. What new foods are you willing to try?

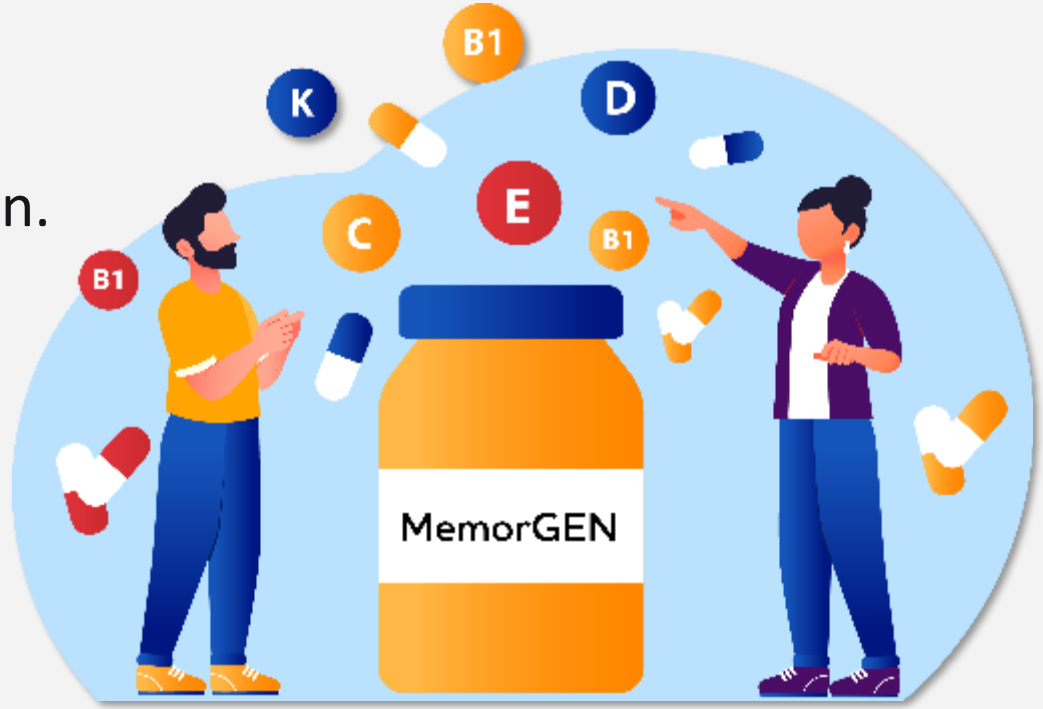


- Olive oil
- Herbs
- Leaner meats
- Whole grains

A note about vitamins and supplements

Many vitamins and supplements **claim** to improve thinking and memory.

- Many are developed with limited or no regulation.
- They may interact with other medications.
- Overall evidence doesn't show that vitamins and supplements reduce dementia risk.



A healthy diet remains the best way to promote brain health.

Sleep well

Sleep Well

Quality sleep allows you to go through the sleep cycle, including deep sleep, and this is valuable for brain health.



Adults should aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep.

Tips to sleep well

Sleep Well



Avoid caffeine later in the day.



Be physically active during the day.



Minimize naps.



Keep a regular sleep schedule.





Cooler temperatures promote sleep.



Minimize noise.



Block light with black out curtains or masks.



Protect your sleep from disruptions.

Brain-Healthy Habits



Challenge Your Mind



Stay in School



Protect Your Head

Keep your brain working hard

Stay in School

Challenge Your Mind

Cognitive engagement builds new connections in our brains.







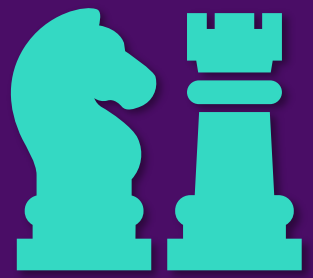
- Learning builds up a “cognitive reserve”.
- The more years of formal education, the better.
- Cognitive engagement encourages bloodflow to the brain and more connections between brain cells.

Video - What is cognitive engagement?



Tips to challenge your mind

Challenge Your Mind



Try strategy games



Do puzzles



Learn a language



Explore a new hobby

Get out of your comfort zone and make your brain work hard.

Prevent head injuries



Protect Your Head

Head injuries, including concussions, can cause short- and long-term problems.



Make sure everyone in your vehicle is wearing a seatbelt.



Wear a helmet to minimize injuries while bike riding, skating, skiing, or similar activities.



Organize your space to minimize the risk of falling. Keep safety in mind for home projects.

Other factors being studied



Hearing and vision loss:

To date, some studies suggest that **hearing and/or vision loss may be associated with higher risk of dementia.**



Air pollution:

Some studies show a **link between particulate matter** in the air **and possible increased risk of cognitive decline.**



Alcohol abuse:

Excessive use of alcohol over time can lead to memory issues and possibly even to Korsakoff syndrome – a chronic memory disorder.



Stress:

Short-term stress may affect our daily routines and brain-healthy habits. So, **managing stress could be important for brain health.**

Key points

All Ages Welcome!



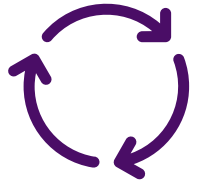
Nurture the healthy habits you adopted in childhood, or start new ones at any stage of life.

More Habits = More Benefits



Include a variety of healthy habits.

Consistency is Key!



For these habits to make a difference, they need to be done on a regular basis!

Tips for Success



Strategies for success

Set a flexible goal.



Include other people.



Use rewards that work.



Speak positively.



Habit track.



Time to build an action plan



Set a goal



Define your actions



Overcome obstacles



Set a timeline

What is your goal?

- Pick one of the areas you wanted to focus on.
- What change do you want to make? Write it down.

Consider a flexible goal to encourage success!



Set a goal

What action will you take?

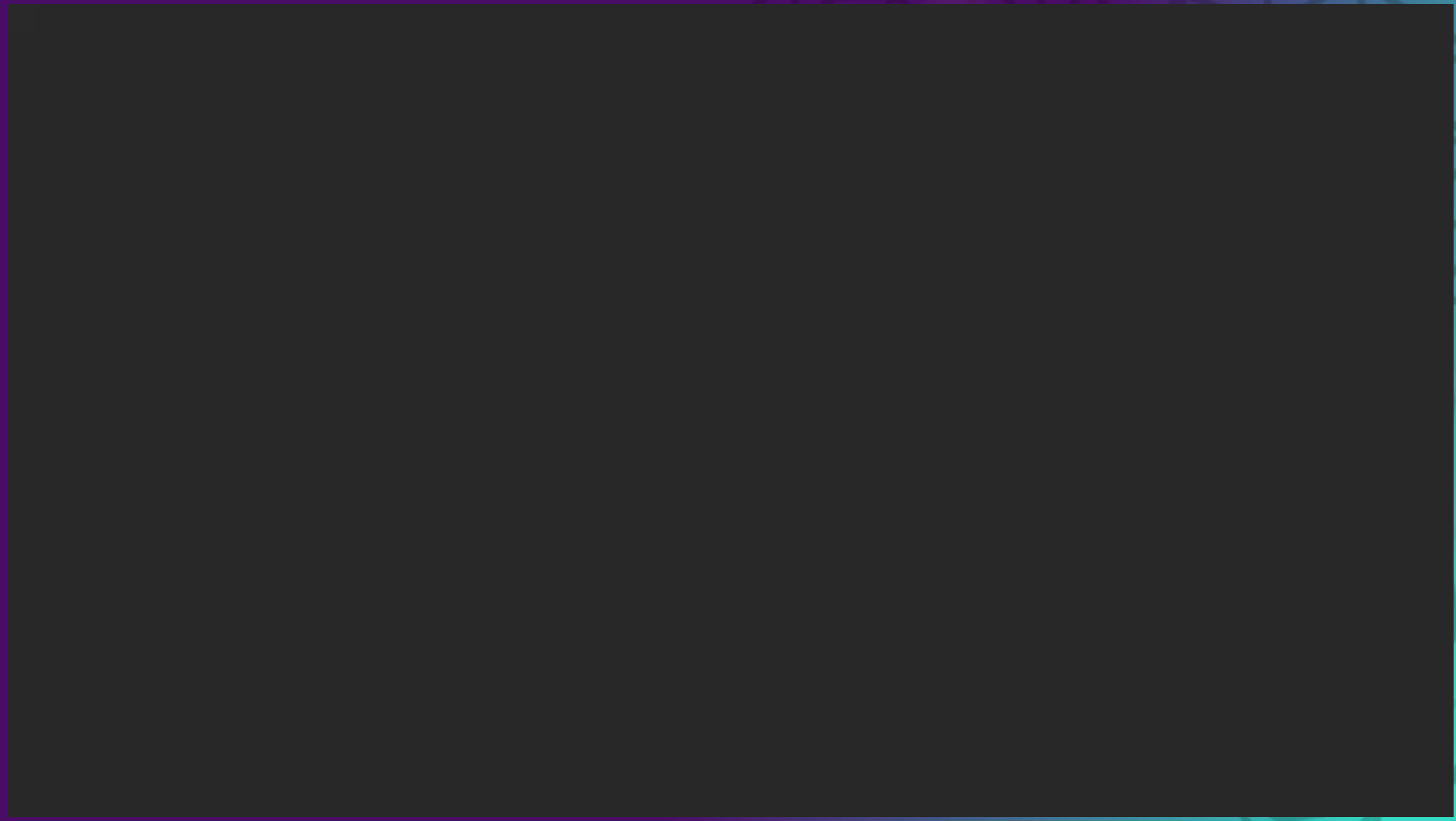
A habit loop is a three-step process that can help build new routines. When habits are built into routines, they stick!

- What is your cue?
- What is your action?
- How will you reward yourself?



Define your actions

Video - Habit loop



What obstacles might you need to overcome?

- Consider the speedbumps you might encounter.
- How could you avoid or overcome this obstacle?

Obstacles are expected. Remember to keep going!



Overcome obstacles

Set a timeline

- When will you start?
- How often will you do the new action?
- When will you check in on your progress?
- How will you track your progress?



Set a timeline

You can do this!

Review and revise your action plan.



Set a goal



Define your actions

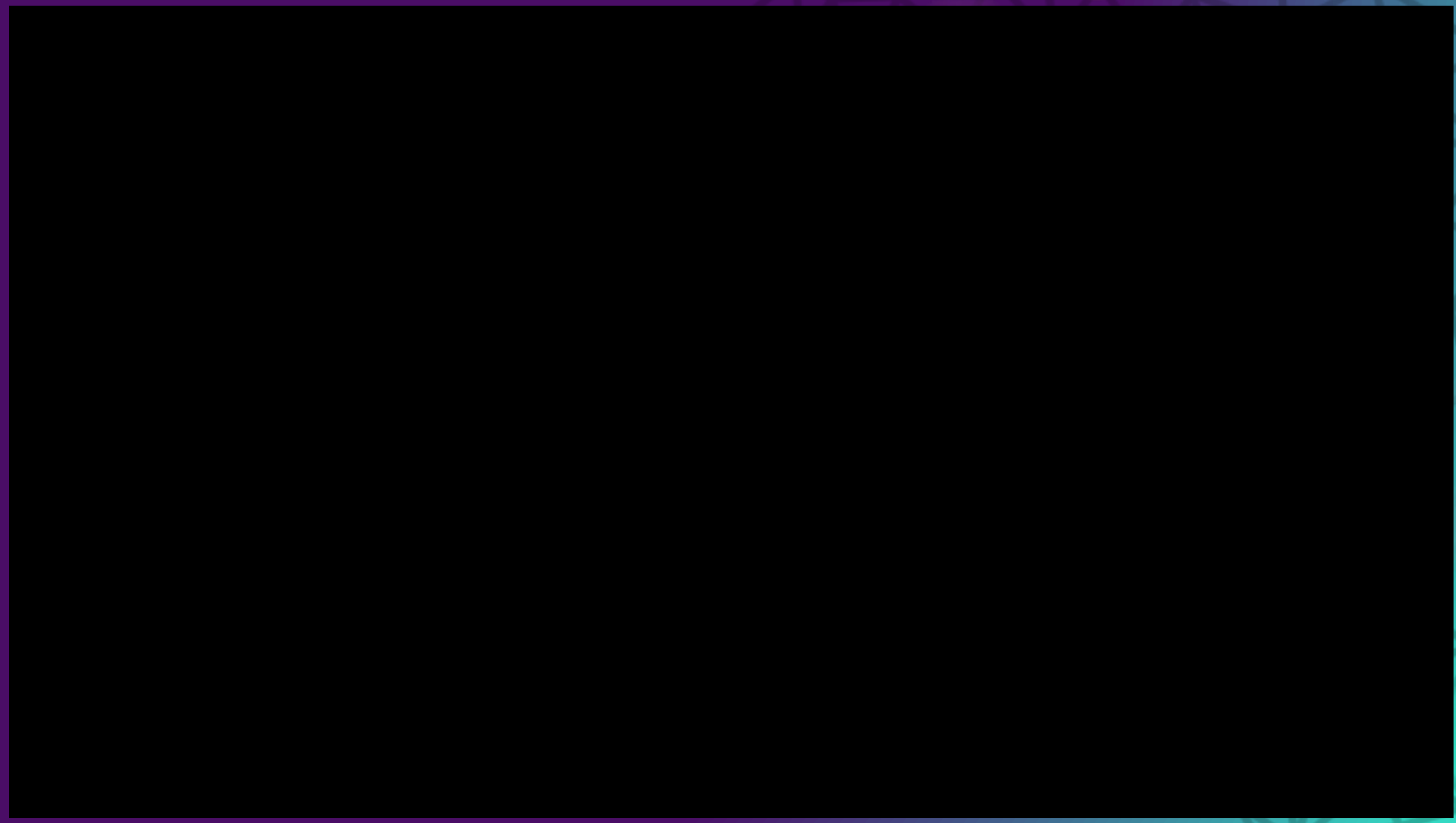


Overcome obstacles



Set a timeline

Video – Moving forward



Healthy habits for your brain



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What can I do for my brain health now?


Control Your Blood Pressure


Manage Diabetes


Maintain a Healthy Weight


Be Smoke-Free


Get Moving


Eat Right


Sleep Well


Challenge Your Mind


Stay in School


Protect Your Head

Additional resources and support

24/7 Helpline
800.272.3900

Local Resources
- Find your chapter (alz.org/findus)
- Support groups
- Alzheimer's Association Community Resource Finder (alz.org/crf)

Online (alz.org)
alz.org/care
alz.org/safety
alz.org/driving

ALZConnected®
(alz.org/alzconnected)

ALZNavigator™
(alz.org/alznavigator)

My ALZ Journey™
(alz.org/myalzjourney)

Education Programs
(alz.org/education)
In-person, online and virtual