

Boosting your brain:

The Starter Kit

*Created by Dr. Andrea Wilkinson PhD,
with a specialization in Cognitive Aging*



Hello!

Thank you so much for downloading your Brain Boosting Starter Kit. This tool has been created for adults in midlife and beyond who want to focus on and improve their brain health.

BrainShape.ca is a community for adults who want to stay mentally and physically vibrant as they age. Through this platform and the **BrainShape Podcast**, we share brain health tools and inspiration.

Please follow us on social media (**@BrainShapeTO**).

Why Create a Brain Boosting Plan?

Setting healthy goals is an important first step in creating a life that will keep your brain in tip top shape; so, I applaud you for taking the time to plan out your brain boosting goals.

Framing your goals for success can be tricky; so, in this starter kit, I will introduce you to the idea of SMART goals. This concept is important, because it increases your likelihood of success. Your goals should be *SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, ATTAINABLE, REALISTIC, and TIME-BOUND*. Check out TOOL #1 (on page 5) for more details!

Who am I?

My name is Dr. Andrea Wilkinson. I have a PhD in Psychology with a specialization in Cognitive Aging. I have been studying brain fitness and cognitive maintenance for over 15 years. I am fascinated by the boundaries of brain plasticity – your brain’s ability to change itself, and am keen on sharing the latest research and knowledge about how to optimize your mental and physical energy as you age.



I hope this starter kit helps you plan your way to feeling more focused and vibrant in Phase Two of Life. If you have any questions or concerns, please share them in our Facebook group www.facebook.com/BrainShapeTO/ or feel email me directly at: andrea@brainshape.ca

I’m really looking forward to being a part of your brain health journey!

Dr. Andrea

Brain Boosting Starter Kit





In order to optimize your brain health, you need to have a strategy! This starter kit will act as a guide, so that you can make your own plan to prioritize and boost your brain health. An important starting point in planning your strategy, is looking back at what you have accomplished in the last 12-months and deciding how to move the needle over the next 12-months. One fundamental principle of brain health is to challenge yourself and get a little uncomfortable in the process. Getting out of your comfort zone is an ever-changing pursuit. What was uncomfortable and challenging 12-months ago, will - or has already - become substantially easier; so, be sure to raise the bar for the year ahead.

Step #1

List the top 3 accomplishments have you achieved in the past 12-months and are most proud of:

Step #2

Identify one goal within each of the four key pillars of brain health that you want to focus on in the next 12-months:

| MY TOP 4 | |
|---|---|
|  | Food & Nutrition |
|  | Social |
|  | Physical Fitness |
|  | Mental Considerations (including sleep, stress management and mental challenges). |

Tools

To increase your chances of success, think about your goals in 6-month chunks. Then, revisit your goals every 3-months to see how you are doing and update, revise and tweak - as needed. At the 6-month mark, do a full audit of your goals. Keep the goals you have yet to achieve on your list and replace the goals you have successfully reached with new ones for the next 6-month period.

Tool #1 - Create SMART Goals

When creating your goals (of any kind), they must be clear and well-defined. SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound.

- Specific:* State what you want to do using clear action words (e.g., exercise more).
The more specific you are about your goals the better.
- Measurable:* Identify what success means in a measurable way.
(e.g., exercise for 30-minutes)
- Attainable:* Is it possible for you to achieve this goal? If the answer is “yes”, keep the goal.
If “no”, modify the goal to something you can truly achieve at this time.
- Realistic:* Is your goal realistic given your current life circumstances?
How much time do you realistically have to dedicate to this goal?
- Time Bound:* Establish a deadline for achieving the goal (e.g., I want to exercise for at least 30 minutes EVERY DAY). Another example of a goal is that you want to have lunch with a friend once every 2 months. The key is to give yourself a deadline for when the goal should be achieved.

Putting SMART Goals into Practice

Now, it's time for you to create your own SMART goals! On pages 7-8, I have included printable SMART Goal Templates for up to 4 goals. Feel free to print as many copies as you would like, and try to align the SMART goals you create with the top 4 goals you identified in step #2 (on page 4).

NOTE - Do not worry if your SMART categories overlap.

As long as your goals are specific and clearly defined, you are on the right track!

SMART Goal #1 (example) :

Beside each letter below, explain how your goal is:

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time Bound.

SMART goal # 1 :

Get together and keep in contact with friends

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| S Specific | <i>Get together with friends to play cards</i> |
| M Measurable | <i>I want to get together with 1-3 friends for an afternoon (2-4 hours)</i> |
| A Attainable | <i>Yes, it is an attainable goal</i> |
| R Realistic | <i>Yes, it is realistic for me to get together with friends on the weekend</i> |
| T Time Bound | <i>I want to get together with friends 1x per month</i> |

Printable SMART Goal Template

Beside each letter below, explain how your goal is:

Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time Bound.

SMART goal #____:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| S Specific | |
| M Measurable | |
| A Attainable | |
| R Realistic | |
| T Time Bound | |

SMART goal #____:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
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| | |
|------------------------|--|
| S Specific | |
| M Measurable | |
| A Attainable | |
| R Realistic | |
| T Time Bound | |

Tool #2 - Create a Habit Tracker Sheet

Keeping track of how often you achieve your SMART goals is a key to success, as it helps improve confidence and builds momentum for you to keep going.

While you may want to achieve some goals daily (e.g., exercise), you might only want to reach other goals (e.g., lunch with a friend) once every 2 months. In this case, you'll need to create two separate habit trackers: a weekly one to track exercise and a monthly one to monitor your goal of having lunch with a friend.

Below I have included a sample of MY WEEKLY habit tracker; but, when you create your own tracker (using the printable templates), think about how often you want to achieve your goals. For weekly habits, see page 10. For month-based habits, see page 11. Use the habit tracker template(s) that are appropriate for your goals.

*“You can’t improve what you don’t measure”
- Peter Drucker*

| Habit | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|------------------------------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>Exercise 30-mins/day</i> | X | | | X | X | | X |
| <i>Drink 2L water/day</i> | | | X | X | | | |
| <i>write for 1hr 2x/week</i> | | X | | X | | | |
| <i>Chat with friends</i> | X | | | | X | | |

Note on MY WEEKLY habit tracker (above):

I only exercised 4 days out of the week, even though my goal was to exercise daily. To help increase my chances of achieving my daily physical exercise goal next week, I need to spend some time reflecting on what might be keeping me from reaching this goal. For example, my mornings are busy with work and sometimes I don't have time to exercise. A possible solution is to get up an hour earlier each day, and use this time specifically to get in my 30-minutes of exercise.

Printable **WEEKLY** Habit Tracker

Use this template to keep track of your SMART goals on a weekly basis.

| Habit | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

| Habit | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | |

| Habit | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-------|-----|------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|
| | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | |

Printable **MONTHLY** Habit Tracker

Use this template to keep track of your month-based SMART goals (6-month duration).

| Habit | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
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**Fill in your own months below*

| Habit | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | |

| Habit | | | | | | |
|-------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
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| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

Need help creating your Brain Boosting plan?

Not on social media? Email me directly at andrea@brainshape.ca. I am here to help!

Stay up-to-date!

To learn about the latest research on brain health and wellness for aging adults, listen to our weekly **BrainShape Podcast**.

Stay in Touch!

Follow us on social media [@BrainShapeTO](#) (Facebook, Instagram & Twitter).

Not on social media? Not to worry. By subscribing to our website: www.BrainShape.ca, you will get all of the updates you need to stay in the loop about the latest information on brain health.

