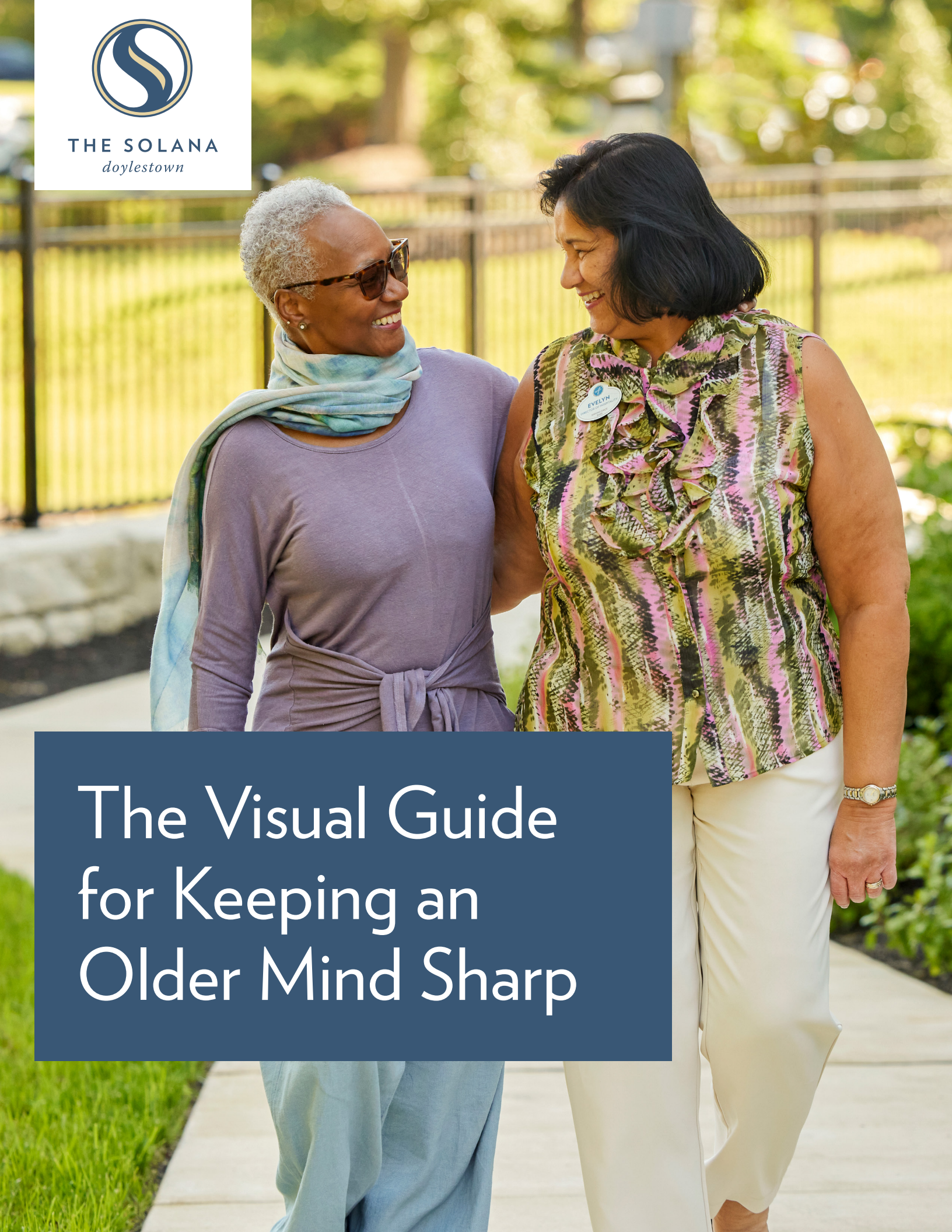
THE SOLANA
doylestown



The Visual Guide for Keeping an Older Mind Sharp

COMPLIMENTS OF



THE SOLANA

doylestown

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INTRODUCTION

Cognitive skills decline in humans as they grow older. This is a normal part of aging, just as slower metabolism, shrinking bones, and decreasing muscle mass are. In fact, research has discovered this mental decline can begin as early as age 45. But just because brains are prone to aging doesn't mean you have to accept it.

Like any other part of your body, the brain needs, and benefits from, exercise. The effects of working out your mind can actually strengthen it. Alternately, inactivity can weaken your brain or at least allow the decline of cognitive skills to take a firmer hold.

Keeping a sharp mind in retirement goes beyond the prevention of boredom and disengagement (although that's also important). The Alzheimer's Association estimates 5.5 million Americans have some form of Alzheimer's disease, and that number is expected to rise as more Baby Boomers reach their 70s. Continually engaging the brain addresses a vital health issue that our country is facing.

Now for the good news: the opportunities for seniors to sharpen their minds have never been more numerous, more social, more engaging, and more fun. This guide will explore many of the options available for older adults who want to keep their brains as young as possible.

AGING, MEMORY, AND COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS

The brain is a use-it-or-lose-it organ: the more you challenge it, the stronger it generally becomes. The term "senior moment" often references minor instances when someone forgets something, such as where he or she put the car keys or not remembering what he or she was just about to say. This is a normal part of aging and can be lessened with brain-stimulating activities.

Dementia is greater than senior moments—it's a more serious mental deterioration. Cognitive functions decline, everyday tasks become more difficult, memory is seriously impacted, and judgment may be affected. And for most dementias, including Alzheimer's disease, no cure exists.

That said, studies have shown that people who engage in certain activities can reduce their chances of developing dementia, as well as lessen the effects of mild cognitive impairment or more severe dementia when diagnosed. Some of these activities are gardening, playing with grandkids, cooking, and listening to and playing music. Challenging and working the mind also provides a tremendous boost to brain health and cognitive function. The research on this is comprehensive, but what's just as important is engaging in brain-healthy activities that you enjoy. Without that enjoyment, the cognitive benefits might not be realized, so the immediate task is finding something you love or always wanted to do. Fortunately, the possibilities are plentiful.

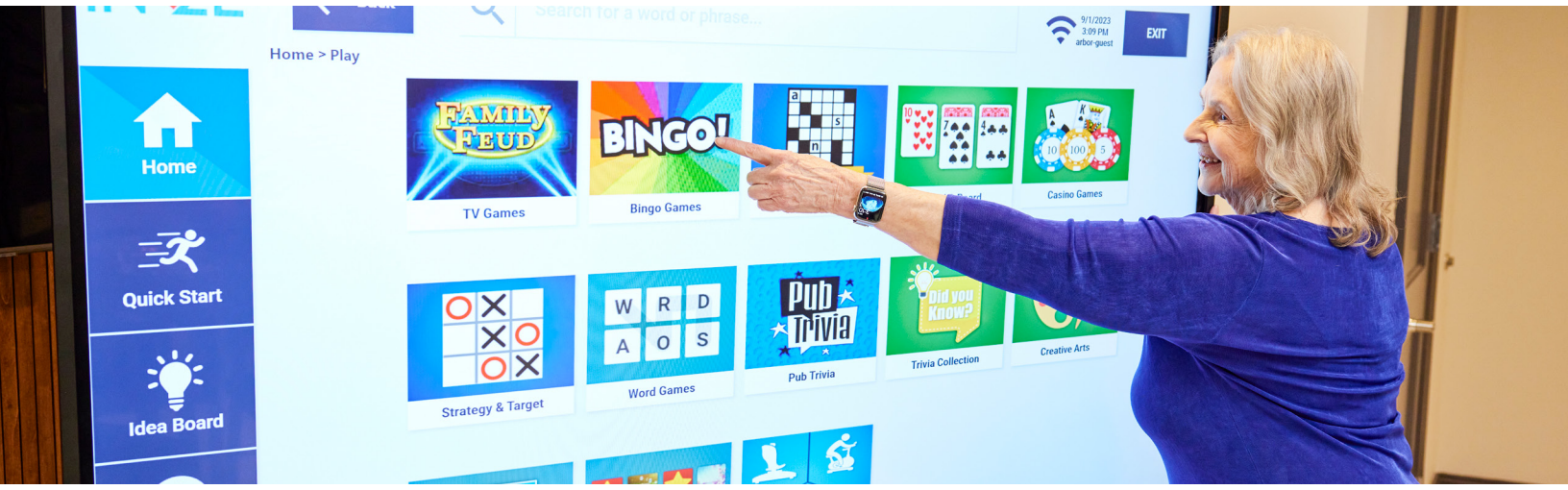
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TIPS FOR KEEPING THE MIND SHARP

The multitude of mind-sharpening activities for seniors is a far cry from even a few decades ago, when retirees were practically expected to dial their lives back and just "relax and enjoy" their twilight years. Today, seniors can get the most out of every day, use their brains, and still relax and enjoy retirement. Here are several ways to keep your mind sharp as you get older:

Keep Learning

For decades, as you raised your family and dutifully worked and led a busy life, there were likely moments when you thought you would go back to school, take up a new hobby, learn to speak Italian, finally write that novel, start painting, or become more active in your religious or neighborhood community. Here in your senior years, you finally have that chance—and following through does wonders to keep your mind sharp. One study, conducted by the University of Texas at Dallas, found that seniors who spent 15 hours a week developing a new skill showed improvements in memory. Consider the following options to keep learning and taking your brain to activities you may not previously have had time for:



Take a community workshop or class: Plenty of organizations, from community centers to churches to YMCAs to libraries, offer workshops, seminars, and lectures to help you learn a new skill or broaden your intellectual horizon. Or you can go back to school and work toward a degree (or a second degree!). Even just auditing college classes (which many colleges will let seniors do for free) can sharpen your mind.

Enroll in an online course: In today's digital age, going to class doesn't require setting foot in a classroom. Online courses provide convenience for seniors who might otherwise be hesitant to travel to a campus multiple times a week. These courses are also great if you want to learn a foreign language or to boost your cooking skills.

Join a debate, religious study, or public speaking group: Any one of these options challenges you to think critically, perhaps engage in some research, and share your gained knowledge with others.

Read a book on a topic that interests you: Nonfiction books are more popular than ever, and if there's a topic that piques your interest—from history to politics to self-help to science—there also is likely a great book or series of books for you to learn more from. And with audiobooks (both on CD and via subscription services), you can enjoy a good book without even reading it.

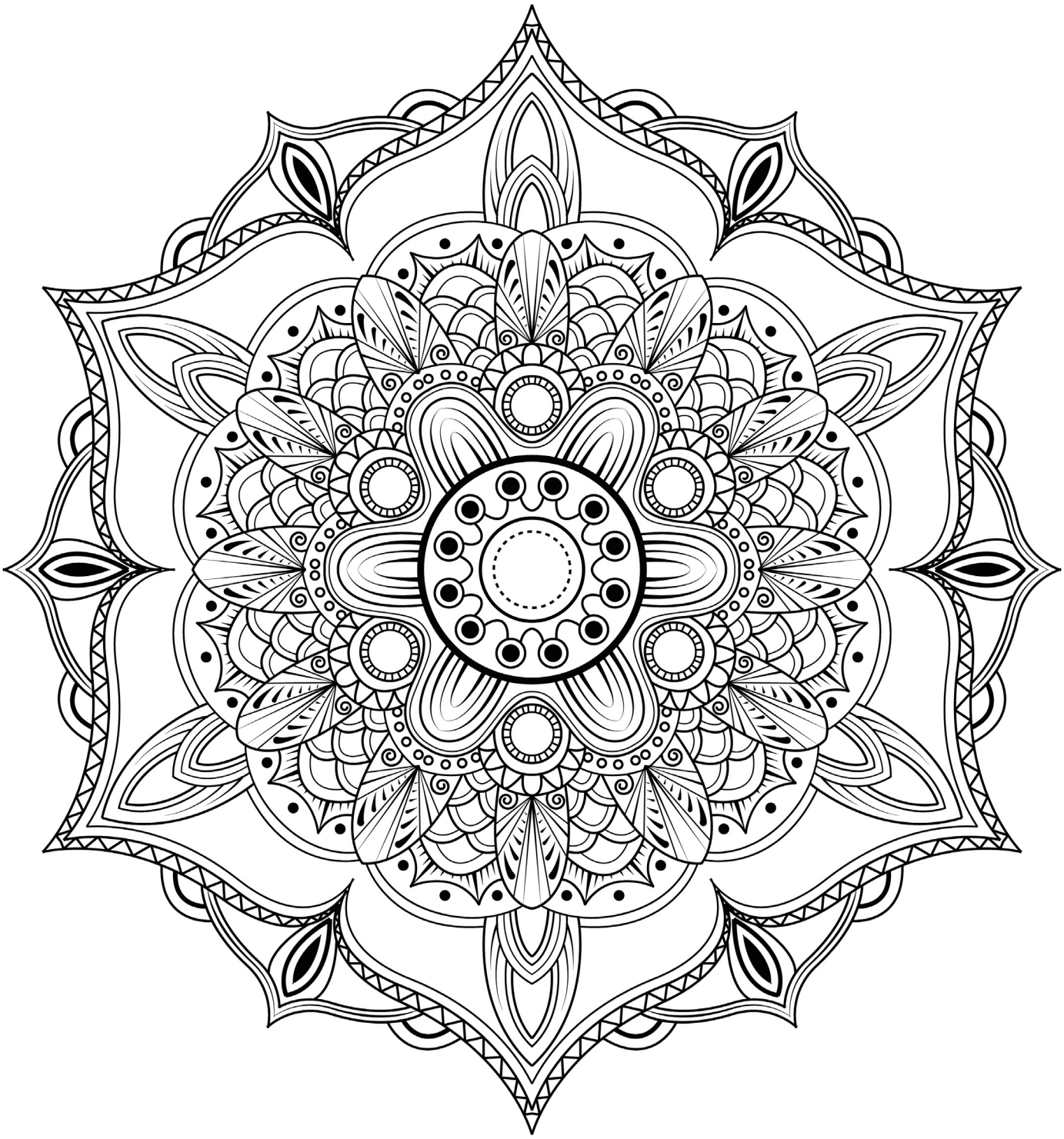
Podcasts: Speaking of audio entertainment, podcasts are also wildly popular in this digital age. And though some podcasts simply discuss the issues of the day, many focus on history and science and offer an opportunity for real learning.

Art: Artistic pursuits inspire and strengthen the creative parts of your brain. Whether you have artistic talent or not doesn't matter (in fact, if you do not know how to, for example, paint or sculpt, it's a chance for more mind- sharpening development as you learn), as long as you gain enjoyment and stimulation from the activity. And you don't even need to be too elaborate— adult coloring books are a current popular pastime that allows you to be artistic with little mess and minimal time commitment. Check out some of our sample mandalas to try your hand at coloring (see pages 8—10 for examples). If you enjoy these, coloring books can be found online or even at your local grocery-store checkout line.

Writing: Maybe you don't want to tackle writing the Great American Novel, but just starting a blog or a journal gets your words out of your brain and onto paper. Or consider writing your family's history, which could involve worthwhile ancestry research.



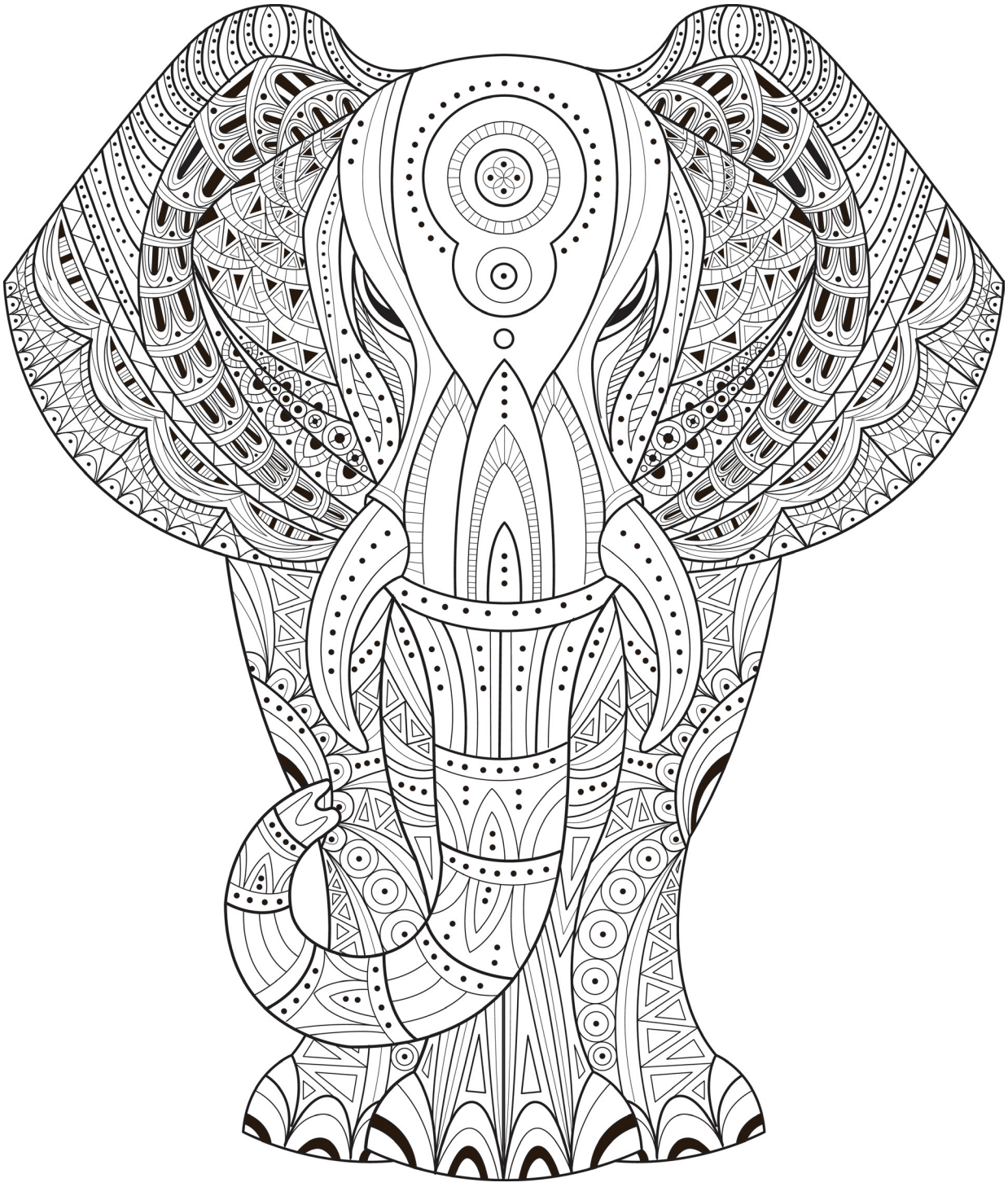
COLORING MANDALA



Instructions:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place where you will not be interrupted.
2. Take a moment to relax your mind and body. You can do this by taking a few deep breaths.
3. Lay out all of your coloring utensils and simply start coloring. Don't give much thought to the colors you choose or if they match; let your instinct choose. There is no wrong way to color.
4. Once you are finished coloring in the mandala, take a moment to look at it. Notice the colors and the shapes and how they make you feel. You may also find that getting out your journal and recording your thoughts may be helpful.

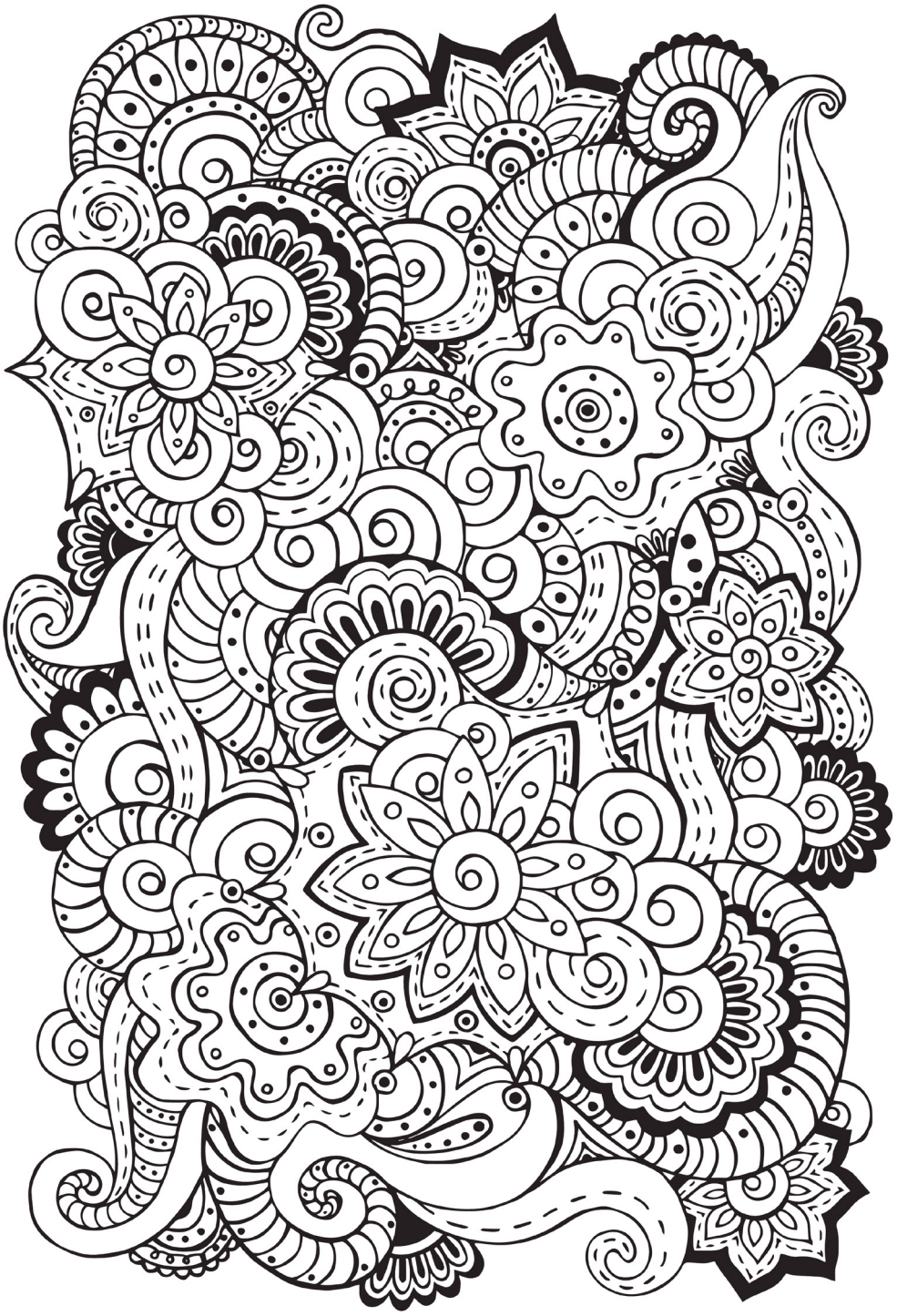
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SOLVE PUZZLES

Puzzles activate the brain in unique ways, requiring focus, problem-solving, and participation. Crossword puzzles, for instance, can help delay the onset of memory decline, up to 2.54 years on average, according to a 2011 study. Puzzles are also a great alternative for relaxation time over mindlessly watching whatever is on TV. Putting on some soft music and attacking a challenging puzzle is a great way to both stimulate your brain and wind down. And with today's technology, you can enjoy puzzles on an iPad, smartphone, or other mobile device (which is great for seniors with rheumatoid arthritis or other writing limitations). Here are some puzzle options to consider:

Crossword puzzles (page 14): The study referenced in this section specifically used crossword puzzles to measure its subjects. Crosswords require deduction to find the word that fits, memory recall to come up with answers to clues, and possibly additional investigation to find answers online to clues that are especially befuddling (we promise we won't tell!). Other word puzzles, such as word searches and the daily Jumble, offer similar benefits.

Sudoku (page 13): Math puzzles, including Sudoku, Kakuro, and Kenken, do not require any special knowledge you might find in a crossword but do engage your logic skills as you attempt to fit the correct numbers into the grid.

Mysteries: Whether you are reading mystery books and trying to figure out whodunit, interacting with a mystery game app on your mobile device, or solving word-based logic puzzles, mysteries stimulate your brain to put all the pieces of a story together and arrive at a solution.

Jigsaw puzzles: Besides activating the visual functions of your brain, jigsaw puzzles are a great social activity to solve while enjoying time with friends and family.

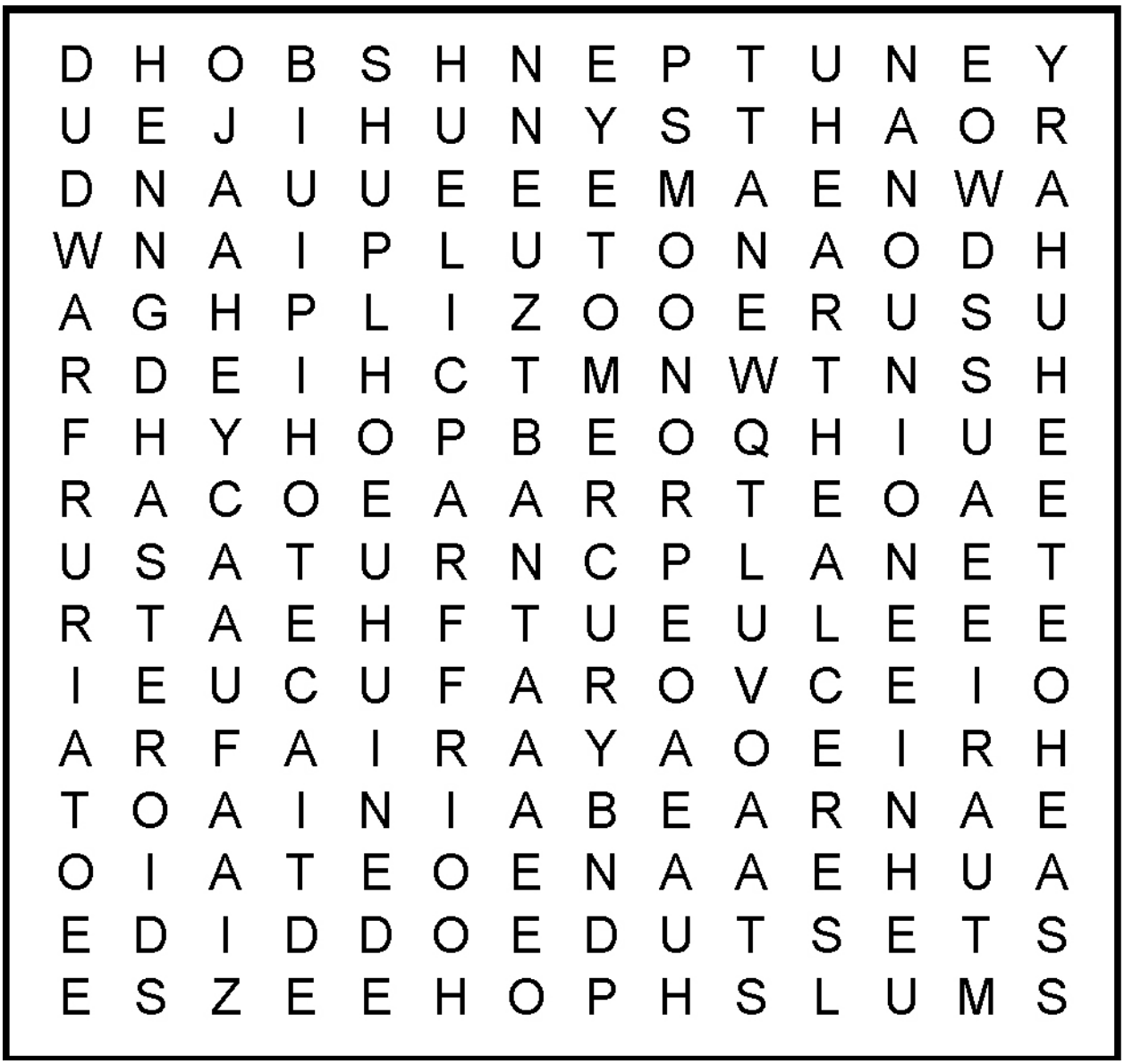
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SUDOKU

	1	2		3	4	5	6	7
	3	4	5		6	1	8	2
		1		5	8	2		6
		8	6					1
	2				7		5	
		3	7		5		2	8
	8			6		7		
2		7		8	3	6	1	5

Instructions:
The object is to fill all empty squares so that the numbers 1 to 9 appear exactly once in each row, column, and 3x3 box and the sum of the numbers in each area is equal to the clue in the area's top left corner.

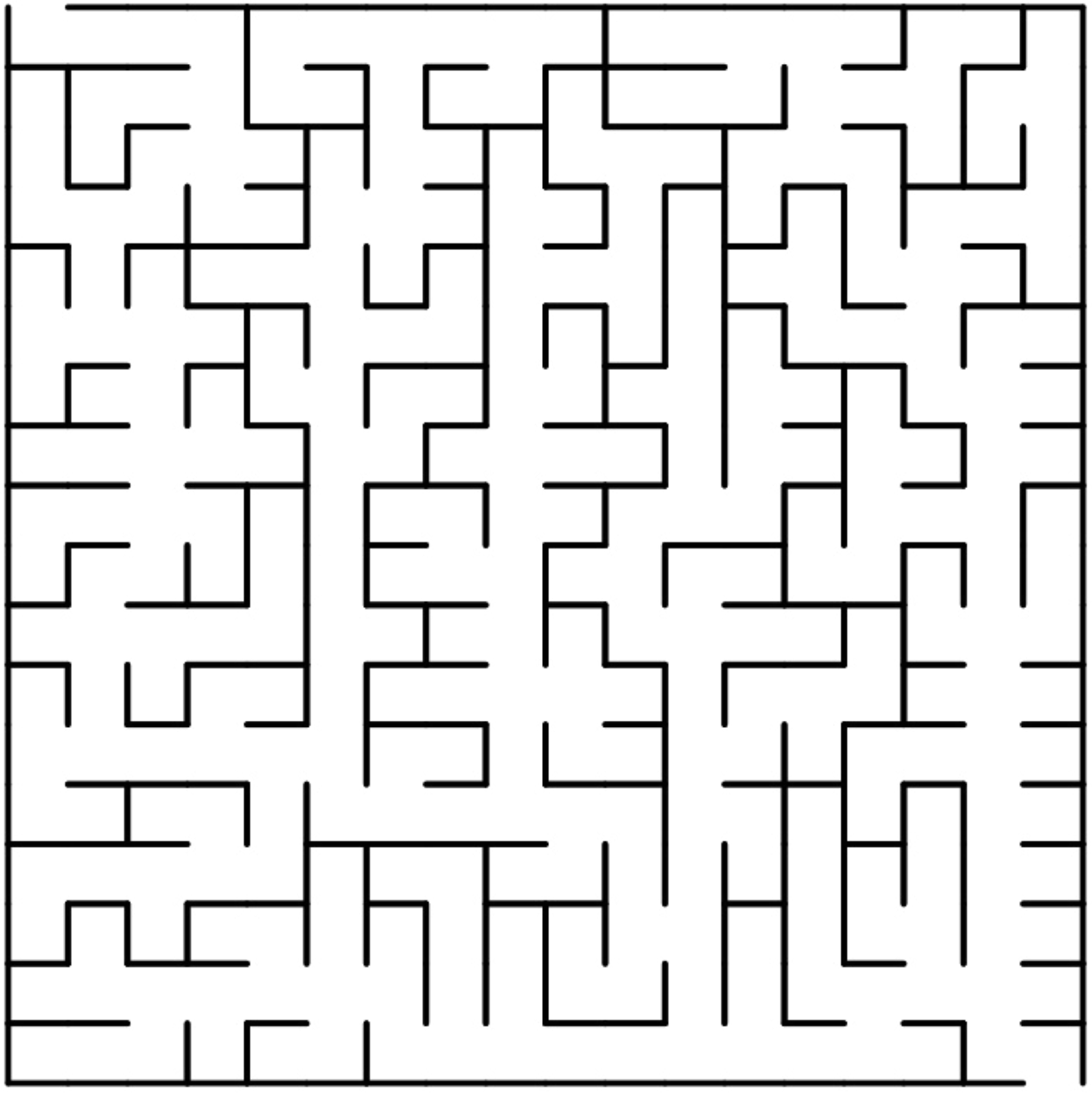
WORD FIND



Instructions:
Search up, down, forward, backward, and on a diagonal to find the hidden words.

MAZE

START



END

Instructions:
The object of the game is to move from the entrance to the exit with only one line.

BRAIN GAMES

In recent years, mobile applications have emerged that are specifically designed to improve brain function. Lumosity, A Clockwork Brain, Brain Age, Peak, and Elevate are among the most known apps, and programs specifically designed with seniors and/or memory care patients in mind, such as Clint and Clevermind, are also available. Also, AARP offers a selection of online games aimed at keeping the brain sharp.

Besides apps specifically designed with brain function in mind, you can enjoy plenty of mainstream mobile games that require more thought than launching a temperamental bird. Pictoword, WordBrain, 2048, Drop7, Threes, The Room, Dots, and Quell (which features a perfectly soothing soundtrack) are just a few of the games that both entertain and challenge the brain.

That said, you don't need a smartphone or computer to engage in brain exercises that stimulate cognitive function. For example:



Repetition: If you want to be sure to remember something, whether a task you must complete, an item you don't want to forget, or a new person you just met, say the name of the task, item, or person out loud or write it down.

Mnemonics: A mnemonic device is any association or system that helps you remember something. For example, "righty-tighty, lefty-loosey" is a mnemonic reminder on which way to turn a screwdriver. Inventing and applying mnemonics to things you want to remember, including lists, people's names, and passwords forces the brain to become creative with memory tasks and helps you remember. One popular mnemonic device is to create little musical jingles of what you want to recall.

Utilizing all your senses: Engaging all your senses in every new situation you encounter also better engages your brain. For instance, smell is a powerful stimulus that people often overlook as they take in their surroundings. Try this: The next time you are at a new restaurant, pay special attention to what you hear, smell, and even taste (see if you can pick out individual ingredients). Not only will you remember your meal better, but you also might better recall the conversation you were having, the mood you were in, and so on.

Besides apps specifically designed with brain function in mind, you can enjoy plenty of mainstream mobile games that require the thought needed to keep the mind sharp!

CARD AND BOARD GAMES

The image of two old men playing chess in the park or a senior women's bridge group may seem like a stereotype, but it emphasizes that senior minds are still as strategic as ever. Board and card games also bring a social element to the table—and socialization is an important consideration in keeping the older brain sharp. Most of the games listed here are sold in your average department store, if not on Amazon. Can't readily find a partner to play with? Many board and card games offer electronic versions so that you can play on a tablet or computer. Here are some options for card and board games that appeal to seniors:



The classics: The old standards are always fun: chess, checkers, backgammon, dominoes, mahjong, Scrabble, Yahtzee, and Rummikub. These games are rich in strategy and problem-solving—perfect for minds that want to stay sharp and crave a challenge.

Card games: The great thing with card games is that they are as social as they are strategic. Bridge, cribbage, gin rummy, hearts, spades, euchre, and poker (though we do not recommend playing for money beyond penny ante) create the opportunity to interact while engaging the brain. Solitaire games also offer mental stimulation and are well-suited for mobile devices. Finally, some great card games that don't use a traditional deck provide variety from the classics. Uno immediately comes to mind, but also check out newer games such as No Thanks!, Phase 10, and For Sale.

Ticket to Ride: Many of the classic board games such as Monopoly, Risk, and Sorry! still hold up, but there is a whole new generation of games that are easy to learn, entertaining, and incredibly strategic (and don't drag out as long as Monopoly and Risk sometimes can). Ticket to Ride is our top recommendation: This train game has players collecting cards, completing routes, and trying to outmaneuver opponents. It's also a fun game to play with grandkids of at least grade-school age. Other newer board games to consider include Qwirkle, Blokus, Can't Stop, and Carcassonne.

Apples to Apples: Party games can be great fun in senior living communities, encouraging residents to socialize, laugh, and maybe sharpen their minds. Apples to Apples is a perfect example of a party game that engages all participants and is never dull. Other great party games for seniors include Dixit, Say Anything, and the classic Pictionary.

MAINTAIN PHYSICAL HEALTH

Study after study has shown that regular exercise not only improves physical health but also provides a boost to brainpower. Some of the most recent research comes from the University of British Columbia, which found that seniors who had mild cognitive impairment from mini-strokes and who briskly walked or engaged in other aerobic exercise for three hours a week showed improved cognitive function, memory, and selective attention.





Three hours a week of exercise is only a half-hour a day with one day off — hardly a big commitment to keeping mind and body healthier. And if walking isn't your thing, any sort of moderate aerobic activity will do, including:

- Swimming
- Water aerobics
- Light jogging
- Equipment-based exercise such as cycling or rowing
- Tennis, pickleball, or badminton
- Bocce or horseshoes

Research has also shown a link between good nutrition and increased cognitive function in seniors. Specifically, one study discovered that seniors who ate a Mediterranean-type diet, emphasizing vegetables, fruits, beans, and cereal, had heavier brains with more gray and white matter. Other research found that people following similarly healthy diets were up to 54 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. The bottom line of these findings: Smart, nutritious diets help mind and body.

STAY CONNECTED

Loneliness continues to be a serious problem with seniors. Studies have shown that seniors who experience feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression are more likely to suffer from serious, age-related health problems. Just as alarming, loneliness has been linked to increased cognitive decline. A Dutch study found that dementia-free seniors dealing with loneliness are more than 2.5 times likelier to develop dementia after three years than seniors with a strong social support system.

Therefore, staying connected with friends and family is just as important as the daily crossword or a 30-minute walk to keep your mind sharp. With technology, this is easier than ever. Adult children and grandkids can text and exchange pictures. Skype and FaceTime turn telephone conversations into video calls, thus allowing you to see and converse with your grandkids as if they were in the same room. Social media enables you to interact with friends from decades past, as well as new acquaintances. Everyone feels lonely sometimes, but in today's world, overcoming that loneliness isn't as daunting.



COMMUNITY LIVING AND SENIOR HEALTH

Many of the mind-sharpening activities discussed in this guide are available to seniors still living at home or residing in a senior living community. After all, a crossword puzzle on your porch is the same as one in the garden of an independent living community.

However, some activities are not as feasible at home. You may not have the means to get to a rec center to swim or play pickleball. Your home might not be sufficiently wired for internet access. Or meeting friends to play mahjong or bridge isn't as easy as it once was.

Community living offers amenities and opportunities to sharpen seniors' minds, as well as live a purposeful life day after day. The suggestions presented in this guide are all attainable at a senior living community.



BENEFITS OF SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES

Expanded learning: The best senior living communities offer art classes, seminars, lectures, and book clubs on site, as well as transportation services to get seniors to classrooms and community centers to attend classes and workshops.

Digital games: Setting up Wi-Fi can be a bit intimidating for homebound seniors, but communities do all the work for residents and will show them how to log on and stay connected.

Card and board games: Unless you prefer solitaire, a senior living community offers plenty of opportunities—and friends—to start and maintain a regular poker, bridge, or Trivial Pursuit game.

Nutrition: Outstanding senior living communities are dedicated to providing chef-prepared meals that not only adhere to high nutritional standards but also make dining a social, mind-sharpening experience.

Socialization: As already discussed, loneliness can hasten cognitive decline; senior living communities that emphasize community will help residents feel less isolated.

The bottom line:
Senior living communities are a great avenue to keep your brain engaged, make new friends, and achieve the intellectual goals you may now have time to pursue.

CONCLUSION

Keeping the mind sharp is important for people of any age, but it takes on added relevance for seniors. Older brains face added obstacles, but they still teem with potential and the ability to learn, engage, and thrive. The key for seniors is to seek opportunities to challenge their minds and then follow through on those opportunities. Often, an ideal environment for these challenges is a senior living community, where residents enjoy plenty of options to sharpen their brains, socialize with friends, and lead the life they want to lead. The Arbor Company focuses on these goals and can provide the lifestyle that physically and intellectually active seniors want to achieve.

With nearly three decades of experience, The Arbor Company sets the standard for excellence in senior living, and we believe in maintaining a progressive clinical and competitive edge that embraces both resident and family needs. Our service vision is to engage and enrich the health and spirit of our residents. We listen, we respond, and we care. Find an Arbor community near you by visiting ArborCompany.com/Locations.





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