



# The MIND HEALTH REPORT

Secrets to Unlocking Your Mind for Work, Love and Life

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## Art Can Break the Shackles of Alzheimer's

More than 5.3 million Americans are fighting for dignity in their battle with Alzheimer's disease, a slow and unrelenting malady that robs patients of their identities and places great emotional and physical stress on family members. And the list is growing, as another person in the United States develops the disease every 70 seconds, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

As Alzheimer's disease progresses, brain cells die and connections between cells are broken. Medications currently available cannot cure Alzheimer's, though they can lessen or stabilize symptoms for a limited time.

Expressive arts, such as painting, music, drama, dance, poetry, and other forms of creative writing, are just beginning to be used as a therapy. But they already have shown remarkable results in restoring human dignity and quality of life. Benefits include lower levels of anxiety, depression, and aggression for people living with the disease; reduced need for medications and visits to doctors and hospitals; and much more rewarding relationships, leading to less stress and heartache for families.

To find out how creative arts benefit those with Alzheimer's, The Mind Health Report consulted Daniel Potts, M.D., a neurologist with a unique level of scientific understanding, personal empathy, and practical knowledge. In addition to being an associate clinical professor at the University of Alabama's College of Community Health Sciences and a partner at Alabama Neurology and Sleep Medicine in Tuscaloosa, he is the son of Lester Potts, who became an acclaimed water color artist after Alzheimer's robbed him of his ability to speak.

### Dr. Daniel G. Amen: Meditation Fights Depression

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### Dementia Blocks Communication

While caring for his father, Potts became a noted lecturer, writer, and educator on Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. He is also an advocate for dementia patients and their caregivers.

As a result of witnessing the dramatic impact of artistic expression on his father and the entire family, he founded the nonprofit Cognitive Dynamics Foundation to further expressive arts therapy. He also started Dementia Dynamics, a company that trains caregivers of patients with dementia. The American Academy of Neurology named Potts Advocate of the Year in 2008.

"Alzheimer's and other dementia diagnoses are

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considered hopeless,” Potts says. “But I discovered, over a period of 10 years with my dad, that there are many reasons to hold on to hope, and ways to improve quality of life for an individual with dementia while giving respite to caregivers.”

Communication is a part of life most of us take for granted. But that ability becomes blocked in people with Alzheimer’s and other types of

dementia, and it worsens as the disease progresses. As a result, the Alzheimer’s sufferer feels isolated — this is one of the key reasons why people with dementia become agitated, aggressive, and difficult to care for.

“Because their language ability is affected, they can’t relate to their environment; they can’t interact with caregivers, and they can’t interact with friends,”

## An Artist Born in His Twilight Years



**Lester Potts at age 70, when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s**

**Lester Potts (1927-2007)** had never painted a picture before he lost his faculty of speech to Alzheimer’s disease, but he went on to create more than 100 watercolors after being introduced to art at Caring Days, an adult day-care center in Tuscaloosa, Ala. His work has gained acclaim in the art world, raised awareness of the value of artistic expression by dementia patients, and inspired his son, neurologist Daniel Potts, M.D., and others to initiate art therapy programs to enhance the lives of dementia patients and their caregivers.

Potts describes his father this way: “A strong man. A man of his word. A humble, gentle man of God. He was born to sturdy Pickens County, Alabama, folk and learned the Great Depression work ethic through toiling in the family sawmill and farm. He never swayed or bent one inch from what he felt to be the righteous way.

“At age 70, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and eventually required professional caregiving. While at Caring Days, a volunteer art

teacher introduced him to painting, and a miracle occurred. Amazingly, his cognition improved, and once again a smile returned to his face.

“What subsequently happened could be compared to wildflowers blossoming from a fallen log in the Alabama woods. Beautiful florals, inviting still lifes, breathtaking landscapes, and heartwarming Christmas scenes came home with him, to the amazement of the family. And, more poignantly, a broken man was given once again something of which to be proud.

“His art, in many ways, parallels that created by other Alzheimer’s patients, with progressive loss of structure and characteristic form as the disease advances, becoming intensely poignant and depicting some of his earliest childhood memories.

“To me, the innate power of art lies in its ability to meld the heart and mind of the artist with that of the observer, to call to consciousness in another the depth of emotion, experience, spirituality and intellect behind the creation of the artistic work. In doing so, it bypasses dementia’s road blocks to communication with the outer world, promoting self-worth and human dignity.” □



**Watercolor painted by Lester Potts as part of his art therapy.**

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Potts says. As this happens, relatives and friends may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, and might stop coming to visit, which only intensifies the feeling of isolation.

“The person becomes walled-in because their normal channels of communication don’t function,” explains Potts.

Such communication obstacles obviously interfere with day-to-day life. But they are also harmful on another, deeper level.

“One of the most innate human characteristics is being aware of our own life story and being able to relate it,” Potts says. With progression of dementia, people are no longer able to relate their own stories. This can make it difficult to understand that others know you exist.

“This feeling is very detrimental to our sense of self, wholeness, and humanity,” he says.

## Artistic Expression Activates the Brain

Artistic exercises bypass the communication obstacles that occur with Alzheimer’s, and as a result, significantly enhance the lives of people with dementia. Case studies and clinical trials have documented these beneficial effects.

The Creativity and Aging Study at the George Washington University Center on Health, Aging & Humanities compared the effect of art therapy programs with other community activities for older people with dementia. The results of the study, which were published in the journal *Generations*, found that art programs enhanced the quality of life and level of independence for dementia patients more than other types of programs. Researchers also noted that imagination persists even when memory fails, and engaging imagination improves life for both the person with dementia and for their families.

Another study, published in the *Journal of the Neurological Sciences*, found that a combination of music and art therapy improved mental awareness and reduced depression and anxiety among dementia patients. These benefits persisted for about three weeks after the therapy sessions concluded.

A review of research published in *Gerontology* concluded that creative activities reduce isolation and depression, and improve overall well-being among people with dementia. In contrast,

researchers noted: “Creative research supports the idea that social and creative deprivation can actually impair brain function.”

Other studies have documented mental and physical benefits of artistic expression among older people in general. A review of research, published in the *American Journal of Public Health*, looked at the effect of music, painting, movement, and creative writing therapies on people with a variety of ailments, including:

- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Fibromyalgia
- Kidney disease
- HIV
- Physical traumas

It was found that such therapies can reduce anxiety, restore emotional balance, improve control of physical pain, calm the brain, and improve resistance to infection by enhancing the immune system. Separate research shows that engaging in creative arts also can lower blood pressure.

Creative expression activates neurons that otherwise would remain dormant, and that stimulation can improve overall cognitive function. For example, “When we listen and participate in music making, we’re using a large part of our brains to do that, waking up a web of connections that we may not have been using for a while,” Potts says.

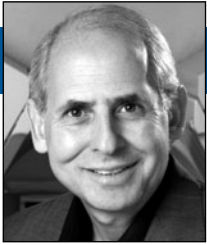
Among dementia patients, creative expression doesn’t change the course of the disease. However,

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## Daniel C. Potts



**Daniel C. Potts, M.D.**, is a partner at Alabama Neurology and Sleep Medicine in Tuscaloosa and associate clinical professor at the College of Community Health Sciences of the University of Alabama. He is a noted advocate, writer, lecturer, educator, and champion of dementia patients and caregivers. Selected as the 2008 Donald M. Palatucci Advocate of the Year by the American Academy of Neurology, Potts seeks to improve the quality of life for dementia patients and caregivers primarily through innovative approaches incorporating the creative arts.



By Dr. Daniel G. Amen

## Meditation Fights Anxiety and Depression

Are you tired of feeling stressed, worried, depressed, or anxious? Are you always waiting for something bad to happen? Have you lost interest in the things you used to love to do?

You're not alone if you answered yes to any of these questions. Anxiety and depression are reaching epidemic levels in the United States, with almost 40 million Americans affected each year, according to the National Institutes of Health.

Even worse news is that anxiety and depression have been linked to increased risk for heart disease and Alzheimer's, obesity, and higher divorce rates.

What if I told you that there was a very simple way to reduce anxiety and depression that doesn't involve taking medications or require you to leave your home?

I'm talking about meditation. Decades of research have shown that meditation reduces depression, soothes anxiety, alleviates stress, and fosters relaxation.

A 2010 brain imaging study at the University of Pennsylvania found that a 12-minute meditation technique called Kirtan Kriya can have powerful effects on the brain, including enhanced blood flow to the parts involved in attention and emotion.

Another study used an electroencephalogram, which measures electrical activity in the brain, to show that people who meditated for eight weeks experienced changes in brain electrical activity that are typically associated with positive or joyful feelings.

Brain-imaging studies also have shown that meditation calms the anterior cingulate and basal ganglia, two areas of the brain associated with anxiety when overactive. In addition, a wealth of research indicates that people who meditate regularly have lower levels of stress.

### Learning to Meditate Is Easy

In my clinical practice, I often recommend meditation as part of a treatment plan. Many of my patients have reported that they feel calmer and less stressed after just a few minutes of daily meditation.

The Kirtan Kriya meditation exercise is an effective technique to reset your nervous system so you feel much more relaxed. It is very powerful, and you can do this whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or sad.

First, find a quiet place that's free of distractions. Lock the door to avoid interruptions and turn off your cell phone. Give yourself 12 minutes to meditate, once or twice a day, preferably before breakfast and/or dinner, and don't stop until this time is up. Check a clock occasionally or use a soft alarm, as a loud one might shock you out of your relaxation.

Close your eyes, sit comfortably, and consciously relax all your muscles from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head. Enjoy your calm attitude as you breathe slowly and deeply from your belly.

Stop your internal monologue. Cease thinking in words. This is often the hardest part about meditation for people who are new to the practice. When memories arise, imagine a broom gently sweeping them out of your mind. With practice, you will find that your thoughts become less intrusive.

### The Kirtan Kriya Technique

This 12-minute meditation involves chanting while doing repetitive finger movements. Do this every day for maximum effect.

- Touch the thumb of each hand to the index finger while chanting "saa"
- Touch the thumbs to middle fingers chanting "taa"
- Touch the thumbs to ring fingers chanting "naa"
- Touch the thumbs pinkie fingers chanting "maa"
- Repeat the sounds for two minutes aloud
- Repeat the sounds for two minutes whispering
- Repeat the sounds for four minutes silently
- Repeat the sounds for two minutes whispering
- Repeat the sounds for two minutes aloud

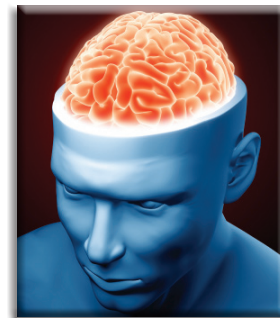
When you finish, sit quietly for a minute or two, and try to merge your calmed mind and body with your regular mode of being. □

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**Daniel G. Amen, M.D.**, is a psychiatrist, brain-imaging specialist, and the CEO and medical director of Amen Clinics, Inc. (ACI) in Newport Beach and Fairfield, Calif.; Tacoma, Wash.; and Reston, Va. ACI has the world's largest database of functional brain scans related to psychiatric medicine and the clinics have seen patients from 75 countries. Dr. Amen is an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry and human behavior at the University of California, Irvine School of Medicine. He is the author of 22 books and wrote and produced two PBS specials.

# Exposing The National Brain Decay Epidemic

The Statistics Are Alarming, Which Is Why Early Prevention Is Critical



**W**e all dread the thought of losing our cognitive abilities as we get older. With some 4.5 million Americans suffering from Alzheimer's, and many millions more experiencing memory impairment, age-related cognitive decline can sometimes seem unavoidable. But brain decay is actually less inevitable than you might fear, with evidence mounting that nutritional factors play a major roll in its prevention.

## The Statistics Are Grim

Experts are alarmed by the sharp rise in the rates of people experiencing cognitive decline. The fact is, if you plan on living into your 80s (which most of us do), then your chances of suffering from brain decay are as high as 50%.

## Know The Early Warning Signs

Some people think that being "forgetful" is just a part of getting older. However, it could in fact be an early warning sign of cognitive decline. And since early detection tests have yet to be perfected, it could be your *only* warning sign. Other early signs can include confusion, poor memory and mental fatigue.

### Common Signs of Early Brain Decay

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Slow Recall         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Losing Things              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fuzzy Memory        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low Mental Energy          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Confusion With Time | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Withdrawal From Activities |

## You Can Reverse This Process...Starting Now

The latest research is very promising. Breakthrough studies from around the world show that there are safe, natural and effective methods to preventing, and even reversing, cognitive decline and keeping your mind and memory sharp.

## Specific Nutrients Are Critical For Brain Function

Dietary supplements can provide extremely powerful results if taken in the correct combination and dosage. Most important to optimizing brain function is CoQ10, DHA, Curcumin, Alpha Lipoic Acid and the antioxidant properties in berries. There have been miraculous results credited to these ingredients.

## Saving The Lives And Memories Of Thousands

An innovative and exciting new product called Brain Energizer<sup>®</sup>, developed by the best-selling author of *Your Miracle Brain*, Jean Carper, has been receiving accolades from scientists, doctors and experts in the field. This proprietary blend is the first to include the 6 most effective ingredients in one convenient formula:

- 100 mg of Ultra Absorbable Kaneka<sup>™</sup> CoQ10
- 100 mg of *life's*DHA<sup>™</sup> Vegetarian Omega-3s
- 200 mg of the potent C3 Complex<sup>®</sup> Curcumin
- 200 mg of Alpha-PURE<sup>™</sup> Alpha Lipoic Acid
- 30 mg of VitaBerry<sup>™</sup> Fruit Extract Blend
- 10 mg of Vinpocetex<sup>™</sup> Vinpocetine

Brain Energizer<sup>®</sup> is guaranteed to sharpen your mind and boost your memory. Beyond the proven effectiveness of this formula, it is also extremely affordable. If you were to purchase each ingredient separately you would pay over \$100 per month, but Brain Energizer<sup>®</sup> is priced as low as \$19.95 per bottle!

**Try Brain Energizer<sup>®</sup> RISK FREE!**  
**Order Today & Get Free Priority Shipping**

### Three Easy Ways to Order:

- 1. Toll-Free:** 800-627-9721 (Reference Code: BRAS87)
- 2. Online:** [www.StopAgingNow.com/brain87](http://www.StopAgingNow.com/brain87)
- 3. By Mail:** Complete the below order form and mail to:  
 Stop Aging Now, Attn: Orders Dept,  
 8825 Boggy Creek Road, Orlando, FL 32824



**BEST DEAL** 6 bottles - \$119.70 (\$19.95 per bottle)

- INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING SPECIAL GIFTS (a \$157.00 value):**
- FREE Consultation with a Certified Nutrition Expert (a \$99 value)
  - FREE 1-Year Subscription to the *Live in the Now* Newsletter (a \$48 value)
  - FREE Report: *CoQ10 - Everything You Need to Know* (a \$10 value)

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  - FREE 6-Month Subscription to the *Live in the Now* Newsletter (a \$24 value)

**GOOD SAVINGS** 1 bottle - \$29.95

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### SPEEDY RESPONSE BONUS

ACT NOW to also receive a FREE bottle of High Potency Vitamin D3 (a \$14.95 value)



**STOP AGING NOW<sup>®</sup>**  
 AMERICA'S BEST ANTI-AGING VITAMINS & SUPPLEMENTS

NOTE: This is NOT an automatic ship plan. No other charges will be made other than your initial order. Free shipping applies to ground shipments within the U.S. and Canada, as well as all U.S. APOs, territories and protectorates. Shipping fees will apply to all other destinations and for express delivery. Coupons cannot be applied to this offer.

## Where to Find Art Therapists

**Check local adult day-care centers, universities with art therapy programs, and therapist directories on these websites:**

- Visual art: Art Therapy Credentials Board, [www.atcb.org](http://www.atcb.org)
- Music: For therapists, email [findMT@musictherapy.org](mailto:findMT@musictherapy.org) or, for information, visit [www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org)
- Dance: American Dance Therapy Association, [www.adta.org](http://www.adta.org)
- Drama: National Association for Drama Therapy (resources/private practice), [www.nadt.org](http://www.nadt.org)
- Poetry and other writing: National Association for Poetry Therapy (resources/NAPT member sites), [www.poetrytherapy.org](http://www.poetrytherapy.org)

**Art and Cultural Programs and Educational Resources:**

- Cognitive Dynamics is a nonprofit foundation that works with academic and other organizations to improve the lives of people with cognitive disorders and their caregivers, especially through art therapies. Cosponsored

programs include Art to Life at the University of Alabama: [www.cognitivedynamics.org](http://www.cognitivedynamics.org)

- ARTZ is an organization that links volunteer artists with people who are living with Alzheimer's, and initiates museum programs and other cultural events to enrich the patients' lives: [www.artistsforalzheimers.org](http://www.artistsforalzheimers.org)
- Dementia Dynamics provides training to professional caregivers of Alzheimer's patients; this year, it also will start providing educational materials for family caregivers about using expressive arts and other caregiving strategies: [www.dementiadynamics.com](http://www.dementiadynamics.com)
- *I Remember Better When I Paint* is a documentary on how the creative arts can restore quality of life to people with dementia: [www.IRememberBetterWhenIPaint.com](http://www.IRememberBetterWhenIPaint.com)
- The Alzheimer's Association offers tips for using art and music. Search for "art": [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
- The National Guild for Community Arts Education helps locate arts programs: [www.nationalguild.org](http://www.nationalguild.org) □

*Continued from page 3*

the opportunity to communicate through the arts taps into abilities that have not been destroyed, bringing out positive emotions and associations, and enhancing the lives of both patients and caregivers.

### Art Therapy Brings Tangible Benefits

People with dementia often are agitated and tend to wander. Expressive therapies can prevent such occurrences, making a person with dementia easier to take care of, Potts says.

"These therapies facilitate positive interaction between the patient and the caregiver," he explains.

Fewer visits to the doctor's office are another benefit, reducing stress for family members.

Any type of art therapy also can help people with dementia recover their confidence and their overall sense of well-being. Consequently, they will be more likely to come out of their shells and interact, Potts says.

Potts' youngest daughter Maria never got the chance to know her grandfather, Lester, before Alzheimer's stole his speech. Lester often became

frustrated because he couldn't talk to her, but painting opened a window of communication between the two. Maria admired the images and colors in her grandfather's paintings, and despite his inability to use language, he responded.

"They could communicate and relate to each other, and it took away that agitation and frustration," Potts says.

### Harness the Power of Art at Home

Art therapy programs for people who have Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia include painting, singing or playing a musical

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## Mind Health Insights

### Eat Like a Greek for Better Mental Health

The Mediterranean diet is a longtime favorite for maintaining a healthy heart and reducing the risk of cancer and diabetes. But more recently, it has been recognized as a regimen that protects against mental decline.

Following the traditional Greek diet significantly slows down mental aging, according to a study of nearly 4,000 Midwestern Americans 65 and older, published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. These are some ways to implement a Mediterranean diet in your life:

- Share, savor, and enjoy freshly prepared meals with others whenever possible.
- At most meals, eat plenty of vegetables, especially a variety of non-starchy types, raw, grilled, or steamed without sauces or saturated fats. After cooking, drizzle a little extra virgin olive oil on vegetables and, if you prefer, season with herbs and spices.
- Favor fish and seafood over meat.
- Keep meat portions small and choose lean cuts. For example, ground beef should contain no more than 10 percent fat.
- Include whole grains and fruit in most meals.
- Don't shy away from poultry, eggs, and small amounts of cheese, nuts, and seeds.
- Flavor food liberally with herbs and spices.
- Keep dessert portions small.
- Enjoy Greek yogurt by itself or with fruit.
- Drink plenty of water and drink wine in moderation.

### Banish Pre-Exam Jitters

If you're learning new skills and taking tests, or know someone who is, there's an easy way to reduce the pre-exam anxiety that can lead to poor test grades among smart students. Anxious students scored higher marks after writing about their exam-related anxieties for 10 minutes before the actual test, according to a study of ninth-grade and college math students, published in the journal *Science*. Other anxious students who sat quietly or wrote about unrelated emotional events did not experience any improvement.

### Brushing and Flossing Help Memory

People with fewer teeth, or no teeth, are significantly more likely to have some form of memory loss or even early stage Alzheimer's disease, according to a study of more than 4,000 Japanese adults 65 or older.

Although it previously was known that when memory is impaired, people tend to visit dentists less frequently, this research shows a new connection between dental and mental health.

"Infections in the gums that can lead to tooth loss may release inflammatory substances, which in turn will enhance the brain inflammation that causes neuronal death and hastens memory loss," said lead researcher Nozomi Okamoto. "The loss of sensory receptors around the teeth is linked to some of the dying neurons."

Gum disease is the most common cause of tooth loss in adults. Regular brushing and flossing and dental checkups and cleanings help to prevent and

control the condition.

The study was published in BioMed Central's open access journal *Behavioral and Brain Functions*.

### Money Doesn't Buy Long-Term Happiness

Increased wealth doesn't drive long-term happiness, according to a study of 37 countries that lasted an average of 22 years in each country. When economies recover from downturns or collapses, there is a short-term upswing in happiness, researchers at the University of Southern California found. But in the longer term, happiness does not parallel increasing wealth.

For example, in Chile, China, and South Korea, per capita income doubled in less than 20 years. During that period, life satisfaction of people in China and Chile declined slightly. In South Korea, happiness increased mildly in the 1980s but declined in the longer term.

Health and family life may play more significant roles in happiness than accumulation of material goods, according to the study, published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

### The Fat That Protects the Brain

DHA (docosahexanoic acid), one of the key healthy fats found in fish, seems to protect brain tissue from damage by traumatic injury, according to an animal study at West Virginia University in Morgantown, W.Va., published in the journal *Neurosurgery*. DHA, one of the key fats that make up the brain, can be obtained by eating fish or taking dietary supplements of fish oil or DHA from algae. □

instrument, creative writing, storytelling, drama and dance, or visits to art museums to view and discuss art works.

In addition, expressive arts can be harnessed at home or in other caregiving settings to reduce agitation and frustration and improve life for a loved one with dementia, as well as improving conditions for the family and other caregivers.

### **Potts recommends:**

- Have dementia patients listen to familiar music, especially favorite songs from their teens and early 20s, as this restores a sense of comfort and calms agitation.
- Play their favorite TV comedy shows. The best types of programs are situation comedies and DVDs that highlight funny moments in short segments, such as Johnny Carson or Carol Burnett skits.
- Old, funny movies also can be helpful, depending on the individual's attention span.
- If someone with dementia was interested in or involved in a particular form of creative expression earlier in life, give him an opportunity to express himself that way.

However, creative activities should not be limited to those enjoyed earlier in life.

- When a person with dementia paints or writes, let her know that you value her work and experience, and encourage her to tell you more in whatever way she can. Never judge the content, form, or technical quality of the expression.
- If those with dementia participate in art therapies in which they perform — such as singing, playing a musical instrument, dance, or drama — record their performance, if possible, watch it with them, and talk with them about it to encourage communication.
- To encourage storytelling, pull out old photo albums and show photos of situations that relate to pleasant memories. Reminisce with them, and talk about pleasant things that were happening when a photo was taken. Encourage them to tell you about the people in the photos, and show your appreciation of the stories you hear.

Although memory and cognition die off with progressive dementia, the ability to feel and express emotion does not decline at the same rate.

“We believe that Alzheimer's patients still have an emotional self that may be fairly intact,” Potts says. “The arts help us to get to that self.” □

## **Use Decor That Reduces Disorientation**

People with dementia see their environment in a different way than the rest of us, and can become confused and disoriented easily. Patterns in carpets or wall coverings might look like snakes. Similar colors can make objects disappear — for example, a white toilet in front of an off-white wall may be invisible and therefore hard to find.

**“By creating an environment that minimizes confusion, we can improve behavior,” says Potts, who recommends:**

- Use solid colors without patterns for flooring and wall coverings.
- In general, minimize clutter.
- In the bathroom, use contrasting colors to identify the toilet: dark on a light background or vice versa.
- Make the bathroom easy to find. Use tape or a solid-color rug that creates a trail along hallways.

- When serving food, use plates without patterns, which contrast with the color of food; serve dark food on a light plate and vice versa.
- Make the person's favorite locations, such as a chair or a certain room, easy to find by using a contrasting color as a landmark. For example, if the colors of living room furniture are all neutral shades, put a bright, contrasting throw pillow on the person's favorite chair.
- To prevent wandering, make exit doors blend with the surrounding walls by using the same or very similar colors and continuing any crown molding, wainscoting or decorative accents across the door.
- A large black floor mat in front of a door also can prevent wandering because it will look like a hole in the floor to people with dementia, and they will not want to step on it. □

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## Ask the Doctors

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The Mind Health Report editors seek out top doctors across the nation to provide answers to your mind health concerns. Please include your full name, city, and state when submitting. If you have a question, please e-mail it to: [mindreport@newsmax.com](mailto:mindreport@newsmax.com).

**My husband had a stroke and has recovered quite well, but his sight has suffered. Is there any treatment that can help?**

— Susan, Chicago, Ill.

**Dr. Todd responds:** Because the visual pathway travels



through most of the brain, damage to the brain or optic nerve from strokes or other acquired brain injuries can cause vision loss. In such cases, the lost field of vision can be recovered

to varying degrees with a new treatment called vision restoration therapy, or VRT. I have seen some amazing recoveries in patients who used VRT.

Studies involving hundreds of people over a period of about 15 years have shown that six months of VRT restored, on average, 5 degrees (we primarily depend on the central 10 degrees) of visual field where it had been lost. This is a significant improvement, as it enables individuals to perform most day-to-day activities such as reading, watching television, sewing, or participating in hobbies, although it may not be sufficient for driving.

VRT is performed at home with a computerized device that maps areas of loss and then presents visual stimuli to those areas in such a way as to rebuild connections and expand the field of vision. VRT requires a screening test and prescription from a physician. More information and a free online visual field test are available at [www.helpforvisionloss.com](http://www.helpforvisionloss.com).

**David Todd, O.D.**, is a neuro-optometrist and faculty member at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, Calif. He specializes in diagnosis and treatment of vision disorders and research in brain-based restoration of vision.

**There seem to be a lot of dietary supplements that can help the brain, but I can't see myself taking handfuls of pills every day. What is a good starting point?**

— Bart, Albuquerque, N.M.

**Dr. Yurgelun-Todd responds:** I would suggest starting



with a very basic, essential nutrient that improves the health and performance of the brain in multiple ways. Listed on labels as citicoline, CDP choline or Cognizin, it contains choline, which is found in meat, nuts, eggs, and other foods, but is not well absorbed as we age.

To solve the problem of poor absorption, citicoline contains choline and another ingredient, cytidine, which acts as a catalyst. The blood transports this formulation rapidly into brain cells, where it is very well absorbed.

Studies show that the supplement provides essential building blocks for energy production in the brain; protects against tissue injury; improves memory, focus, concentration, and mood; and reduces cognitive impairment.

Brain scans demonstrate that it activates certain regions of the brain. And it increases the release of two neurotransmitters: dopamine, which fosters a sense of well-being and is associated with good attention; and norepinephrine, which contributes to better mental performance.

My studies have used Cognizin, a specific brand of this nutritional supplement ingredient. We found that 500 mg daily (250 mg with breakfast and another 250 mg with dinner) was an effective amount.

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