



## Connecting Generations Through Mental Workouts

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**Ka 'Aha**

Weaving Generations to Build Healthy Communities

An Intergenerational and Aging Program

Fun, daily activities that focus on strengthening connections between different generations help to build strong, healthy communities.

For more information about the Ka 'Aha program and other intergenerational programs, visit

[www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/kaaha](http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/kaaha)

Our brain is more powerful than any fancy computer, but in order to keep it strong, it needs regular exercise. How do you exercise it? Can crosswords really keep our brains sharp? Are there other activities that are better? To answer those questions, take a few minutes and watch keiki learn about and explore the world around them. They use their senses to see, touch, taste, smell, and hear. They ask questions. They experiment. They laugh. Each of these activities helps to develop a keiki's brain and also helps to develop an adult's brain.

One of the myths of aging is that at a certain age, we begin losing brain cells. The truth is that with a little effort and an understanding of our brain, we can continue building brain cells through our entire life. Our brain is just like any organ—if it's not used, it will weaken. The great news is that fun and challenging activities are what can keep it strong. Developing Alzheimer's Disease or other types of dementia is a real concern for some people. Although we can't completely eliminate our risk of these diseases, the following activities have been shown to be protective.

### Principles for building a healthy brain

**Be social!** Our brain is more active when we spend time with others.

**Move!** Anything that is good for the heart is also good for the brain.

**Eat right!** Those foods that keep our cholesterol down and manage our weight also protect our brain.

**Challenge yourself!** We are never too old or young to learn.

Being social is a critical step in maintaining a healthy brain. As you read the list below, think of how you can make each more of a social experience. Better yet, come up with ideas to make each activity intergenerational.

### Healthy brain activities

- Dancing
- Reading out loud to others
- Volunteering in the community
- Planning a party or family event
- Memorizing and sharing poems, stories, jokes, or songs
- Learning a skill and teaching it to another
- Laughing
- Travelling to a new place
- Playing games that challenge you
- Turning off the television and doing something active

### Tip

Choose an activity you normally do alone or with the same small group of people. Invite others who are much older or younger than you to participate. For example, go on a walk with a keiki or kupuna, have a dinner party with friends of all ages, join a dance or hula class with young and old participants. Be creative and have fun while building your mental muscle!