



HOLY FAMILY  
PARISH

## PARISH NURSE MINISTRY NEWSLETTER

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# Neurobics

## *Aerobics for your brain?*

*Jn. 14: 26 the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and make you remember all that I have told you.*

**W**e know exercise does the body good, but few people realize the health benefits associated with exercising our brains. Until recently, conventional wisdom held that our brains were hard-wired computers – what we were born with was all we would have. Age wore down memory and the ability to process information – and few interventions could reverse this process. But, increasingly, scientific evidence suggests that neurobics (exercises for the brain) can alter specific brain regions, making radical improvements in the brain that can prevent memory loss and increase mental fitness

While aerobic exercise brings oxygen to muscles and makes the body stronger, neurobic exercise causes chemical reactions in the brain that strengthens its ability to function. Contrary to what many people think, brain cells do not die off as people age. Instead, branches of brain cells, known as dendrites, thin out and become less effective.

Research in this area indicates that by using one's senses in new and unexpected ways, a chemical (neurotrophin) is produced in the brain. Neurotrophin works as a sort of mental Miracle – Gro allowing dendrites to lengthen shortening the gaps between nerve cells. This allows nerve cells to “fire” more effectively while transmitting impulses along the nervous system.

This is the key to neurobics – using all of your senses in new ways. It involves getting away from traditional ways of thinking about things, ditching your daily routine and trying something new. When you do these things, you are actually heating up those neural pathways. Thinking in unique ways has a physical effect on your brain. Neurobic exercises use your five physical senses plus you “sixth sense” (your emotions) in unexpected ways by encouraging you to “shake up” your everyday routine. If you're right-handed, try using your left hand to dial the phone or brush your teeth. Changing which hand you use to do everyday tasks fires up under-used brain pathways and exercises them.

You can give your brain a good workout by making just a few modifications to your daily life. Try these examples of neurobic exercises to fire up the neurons in your brain:

- Close your eyes and use your other senses (touch, smell and spatial memory) to unlock a door, find the hall closet or an item in your purse or briefcase.
- Change the arrangement of your furniture.
- Rearrange your kitchen cupboards and refrigerator.

These types of activities promote flexibility in newly created or existing brain pathways. While rearranging things may seem a waste of time at first, it's actually remapping your brain by making you consciously “find” things you're going to use during the day.

“The data is clear that engaging in activities that require multi-step thinking such as crossword puzzles, Sudoku, card games, word games and board games are the most effective at stimulating cognitive processing,” said Stuart Kanter, D.O. Kanter is a staff geriatrician and medical director of New Horizons, Summa Health System's adult day care program located at SummaWestern Reserve Hospital in Cuyahoga Falls. “The mind is a terrible thing to waste – if you do not use it, you LOSE it!” For more information, call (330) 971-7142.

*Article from: ATTITUDE for a healthy outlook on life, a publication of Summa Health System, January 2011. The information in ATTITUDE is provided by Summa Health System to help you make informed decisions about your health. This information should not be considered medical advice or treatment, nor should it be used as a substitute for a physician consultation.*

***God bless you, Your Holy Family Parish Nurse.***

To contact Holy Family Parish Nurse Ministry call 330-688-6412, ext. 462 or view at [www.holyfamilystow.org](http://www.holyfamilystow.org).