

SMART BRAIN

HEALTHY BRAIN

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR
MEMORY & BRAIN HEALTH



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INTRODUCTION

Why I wrote this book

I have written this book because I believe there are many things that can be done to improve our brain health and our memory. Everyone should know about these things – at least be aware and be informed. And once you are aware and informed, then you can decide whether or not you want to do something about it. The choice is always yours.

My mother had Alzheimer's disease and suffered for many years until passing away in 2000. Her name was Alice. She was a very strong and healthy woman with a very clever and active mind. She always looked immaculate, was very organised, and worked extremely hard. She was always helping others, did a lot of voluntary work for the church, hospitals and charities, and, with Dad, raised four children.

We lived very close to shops so never needed a car to do the grocery shopping. We always walked. Mum loved walking and was very fit. One day while coming home from her shopping she tripped on an uneven footpath, fell over and hit her head. It was a shock for her – as it would be for anyone. But what annoyed her most was the fact that the council had

left the footpath in such a state of disrepair, creating a hazard for everyone.

Mum appeared to recover quite well from the fall. She mentioned feeling a little dizzy every now and then but seemed to be okay otherwise. It was quite some time later that she had another fall – a more serious fall – and broke her right hip.

We were waiting anxiously to see Mum after she came out of surgery. We were naturally worried and hoped that the operation was a success and that life could get back to where it was before the fall.

When we saw her, she looked okay. She recognised Dad instantly and smiled, and then looked at me with a puzzled expression. Didn't she know me? I was absolutely shocked. We asked the doctor, who explained that this was quite normal – that it was only a temporary thing. He said that Mum would be back to her old self whenever the anaesthetic wore off. So we waited. We waited days, weeks and months. This never happened – she never did get back to her normal self after the operation.

Dad started caring for Mum at home almost full time and she was gradually deteriorating. He was absolutely worn out and needed to have some respite. But he didn't want to put Mum into care, even temporarily. Eventually, however, we had no other choice; Dad's health wasn't good either. We found a nursing home with respite care and that appeared to be okay and so we organised for Mum be cared for there for a couple of days.

But Mum didn't recognise where she was. She was unhappy and didn't understand why she wasn't at home. And where was Dad? She was surrounded by strangers and she was confused. She wanted to go home. So she tried to climb over an outside fence to escape and go home, and fell. This time she broke her left hip. It was exactly one year to the day after she fell and broke her right hip.

We asked the doctors if they could use a different type of anaesthetic because of how badly it affected Mum in her first operation. We didn't want her to get any worse than she already was. But, unfortunately, this didn't happen.

After the operation, Mum was much worse. I don't know why they didn't listen to our request. It wasn't long after her second hip operation that Mum needed full-time care and she had to go into the nursing home – permanently.

It was such a tragedy. My mother, who was so fit and healthy with a very strong constitution before her first operation, was reduced mentally and physically to a shell of her former self. The hip operation with anaesthetics had totally taken her happy and healthy life away from her. Forever!

I had just started my final year of nutrition studies when Mum passed away. It was very difficult getting through the rest of the year. After finishing my nutrition course I decided to study homeopathy, another natural medicine. Three years later I graduated with a Diploma of Homeopathy on top of my Diploma of Nutrition.

Ever since Mum passed away I've been researching Alzheimer's disease. I needed to find out if there was

something that could be done, either through nutrition or homeopathy, that might help prevent this disease. I was told that Alzheimer's may be hereditary. So, in part, I wanted to know what I could do to prevent it from happening to me.

This book is the result of what I have found out for myself. It is now 13 years since Mum passed away. I no longer believe Alzheimer's disease is hereditary but that hasn't changed my constant and strong focus for learning all I can about how to prevent it. There is a lot of information I want to pass on and share, and I feel it is so important for you to know.

Now is the time to get started.

Louise Hallinan

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What's in it for you?

This book is not about Alzheimer's disease. There are many wonderful books written in great depth and detail about what to do if and when you or a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

This book is about **prevention**. It's about what you can do for yourself today to keep your brain as healthy and your memory as good as it can possibly be for tomorrow.

The fact is that memory problems are among the earliest signs of Alzheimer's disease. So this is where I have started my book. I wanted to know why my mother got Alzheimer's disease in the first place. What was it that triggered the onset? How could it have happened? Why her? I had many unanswered questions that I needed answers to. I wanted to know if I was going to be affected when I got to a certain age. Was it hereditary? All these unanswered questions led me on a quest that has resulted in this book.

You may not have any memory problems at the moment. But my need to find the answers to these questions has taught me that **the causes** of memory problems begins much

earlier than the symptoms, which is a very important part of this book.

I have focused specifically on the causes of memory problems because I believe that if the **causes** can be addressed and treated early, when you first become aware of them, this may prevent them from worsening.

I have a very optimistic view when it comes to brain health. There is so much that can be done to improve your brain health and memory. What is also a fantastic thing to know is that you don't have to wait till your memory starts becoming a problem to do something to help yourself.

You can be doing all these things now – as soon as you've finished reading this book. This will put you in the driver's seat on the road to avoiding memory problems in the future. As I say and will continue to say: **Prevention is so much better than cure.**

There is evidence for just about all the causes of memory problems I present in this book. I have dug deep and found a wonderful collection of information. Some of the information may be a little different from what you may have heard or read about, or contrary to what you may have been told. There were many times during my research when I stopped and thought *Can this be right?* And in most cases it was – it was just contrary to what I previously thought I knew.

Whenever I came across a questionable fact or claim, I thoroughly investigated it, keeping an open mind to the possibility of it being true or making sense. That's why I back up everything I say in this book with evidence of research

and studies. I have been conscious of not presenting mere theories.

But the sole purpose of this book is for me to inform you about what I know – to help you take care of your brain health and improve your memory *now*, so that in the future you may be able to prevent any memory problems and/or Alzheimer’s disease.

Throughout the book, which is based on my research, information given is supported by studies or evidence and references can be found at the back of the book. As you read, you may notice that I mention a few points or themes about certain subjects or matters quite often. This is because I feel they are important enough to be reiterated consistently.

The book takes you on a journey from the beginning with:

- what signs to watch out for
- finding out the many causes of memory problems
- what tests are important to have done
- what are the best brain foods and nutritional supplements
- giving your brain a workout
- the great benefits of physical exercise
- looking at your lifestyle
- natural medicines that may help with your overall health.

This book provides an opportunity for you to change or improve your brain health and memory. So let’s get started!

Memory problems – what should you be aware of?

Hardly a day goes by without hearing someone say ‘I’m starting to get very forgetful or ‘I’m just having a senior moment’ or other similar statements referring to their memory.

And a question I am often asked is: ‘Is losing my car keys something I should worry about?’ or ‘What are some of the signs I should watch out for?’

Below you will find a table describing the differences between just normal forgetfulness and early signs of memory problems. This may also called ‘mild cognitive impairment’ or MCI for short – a term you will see a lot in this book.

Cognition /cognitive function means mental function involving memory, language abilities, visual and spatial skills, intelligence and reasoning.

If you notice a few signs of early memory problems in yourself or someone close to you, then **now** is the best time to do something about it. Do not put it off, as timing is most crucial.

I believe that **prevention is so much better than cure** and you will learn what steps you can take yourself to improve your brain health and prevent memory problems.

If each person takes responsibility for their own health, specifically brain health, which you can do once you are better informed on how to, then together we can do a lot to reduce the numbers, one by one, of people being diagnosed with early Alzheimer’s disease.

The secret – once you are informed and know how – is to take action!

To help you begin to understand the difference between a real memory problem and just plain forgetfulness, have a look at the following table.

Normal	Not normal
Sometimes forgetting names or appointments but remembering them later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory loss that disrupts daily life • Forgetting recently learned information • Forgetting important dates • Asking for the same information over and over • Relying on memory aides (e.g. reminder notes or electronic devices) or family members for things you used to handle on your own

Normal	Not normal
Misplacing things from time to time, such as a pair of glasses or the remote control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps to find them • Putting things in unusual places • Sometimes accusing others of stealing, which may occur more frequently over time
Sometimes having trouble finding the right word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New problems with words in speaking or writing • Trouble following or joining a conversation • Stopping in the middle of a conversation and having no idea how to continue • Repeating yourself • Struggling with vocabulary, having problems finding the right word • Calling things by the wrong name (e.g. calling a watch a hand clock)
Making occasional errors when balancing a cheque book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges in planning or solving problems • Changes in your ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers • Trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills • Difficulty concentrating and taking much longer to do things than you did before

Normal	Not normal
Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion with time or place • Losing track of dates, seasons and the passage of time • Trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately • Forgetting where you are or how you got there
Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure • Often finding it hard to complete daily tasks • Trouble driving to a familiar location • Trouble managing a budget at work • Trouble remembering the rules of a favourite game
Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawing from work or social activities • Starting to remove yourself from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports • Trouble keeping up with a favourite sports team • Trouble remembering how to practise a favourite hobby • Avoiding being social because of the changes you have experienced

Normal	Not normal
Vision changes related to cataracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships • Having vision problems or difficulty reading • Difficulty judging distances and determining colours or contrasts
Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in mood and personality • Becoming confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious • Becoming easily upset at home, at work, with friends or in places where you are out of your comfort zone
Making a bad decision once in a while	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased or poor judgement • Changes in judgement or decision making; poor judgement when dealing with money, such as giving money to telemarketers ¹

If you are experiencing anything in the right-hand column of this table, it's time to take some positive action.

As a result of my research, I have put together this five-step guide that will help you to have a smart and healthy brain. It is important to follow these five steps as each step plays an important role.

The steps are as follows:

- Step 1: Identifying the causes of memory problems
- Step 2: Avoid these foods

- Step 3: Testing
- Step 4: Prevention
- Step 5: Lifestyle.

In the first step we investigate the many causes of memory problems. They are divided into medical causes and lifestyle causes.

In Step 2 we look at foods you should avoid if you want to prolong your memory – you won't believe the harmful substances that are in our packaged foods.

In Step 3 we talk about testing, which will help you to see where your health is at the present time and use that as a baseline for improvement in the future.

Step 4 is all about Prevention and improving your brain health and memory. We look at foods that are really good for your brain, and what vitamins, minerals and supplements can do for your overall health and brain health. The famous saying 'you are what you eat' could never be more true. Also included in this step is training your Brain and using homeopathic medicine if required.

Then, in step 5, we talk about changing and/or improving your lifestyle for a smart and healthy brain. There are so many things, such as physical exercise, stress management and socialising that will definitely improve your brain health.

So now let's start by looking at some of the causes.