

Health Focus

Brain Health A Challenge for Seniors

Chris Knack joins Home Care Assistance of Northern Arizona as a Director of Community Relations and as the company's Cognitive Therapeutics Method Interventionist.



Home Care Assistance of Northern Arizona, the leading provider of in-home care for seniors in northern Arizona, welcomes Chris Knack as Director of Community Relations. Chris' role will largely focus on building partnerships with referral sources within the medical, social and communities. In addition, Chris will be the subject matter expert, trainer and lead practitioner for the company's Cognitive Therapeutics Method™ approach to care.

Chris attended the University of Memphis where he received a BA in Psychology, a MS in Community Agency Counseling and an additional MS in School Counseling. Prior to joining Home Care Assistance, Chris accumulated 20+ years of experience in a variety of clinical and managerial roles including ten years as a Cognitive Behavioral Therapist. In addition, he was recently the CEO for a Private Psychiatric Facility in Prescott Valley, AZ.

Can't remember why you walked into the kitchen or where you left your eyeglasses? Many assume changes to our cognitive abilities are a normal part of aging. The reality is that we have much more control over our brain health than we realize.

There are several ways to address brain health that are supported by science and are simple to incorporate into our lives.



1. Social Activity - Research shows that people who tend to be isolated are less healthy, have increased depression, and higher mortality rates. The solution can be as simple as having conversations, expressing emotion, or visiting a friend. This is a workout for your brain, testing memories, encouraging creative thought, engaging executive functions of your brain. It's like going to the gym for your mind!



2. Nutrition - What we put into our bodies effects our entire body including our brain. There is an abundance of information on healthy eating and enough scientific data to support the idea that some foods or diets can boost brain health, though those touting "miracle food" status should be regarded with some skepticism. Despite the fad diets and "nutrition pop science", there are some hard and fast, scientifically based, facts that you can rely on.

- avoid red meats, trans fats, saturated fats

- Free fructose can have a negative impact on brain health
- Avoid alcohol, drink lots of water
- Fish, nuts, dark chocolate, blueberries, and olive oil help reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes, and promote blood flow to the brain.
- Eat in moderation
- Taking supplements is not the same as getting nutrients from food, and food should be "processed" in your gut- not a factory!



3. Stress - Issues such as depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and even psychosis can result from stress. Research suggests that when seniors who engage in recreational activities at an appropriate levels can improve focus, energy and mood. Those without, present a 250% increased level of risk for developing dementia. Community senior centers, home based programs with an emphasis on cognitive exercises, and facilities with recreational activities help senior brain health.

The future of treatment for brain health and decreasing the risk for dementia and cognitive decline is a balanced approach with an emphasis on nutrition, physical and mental stimulation, personal enrichment, and focus on Sense of Purpose. These are the cornerstones of a healthy life, and you are in charge.

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