

# WOMEN'S BRAIN HEALTH INITIATIVE IMPACT REPORT 2022



Women's Brain  
Health Initiative

## WOMEN'S BRAIN HEALTH INITIATIVE (WBHI)

# GAINING TRACTION

As Women's Brain Health Initiative (WBHI) enters its second decade, we are so grateful for our many supporters' ongoing patronage and heartened by our mission's growing momentum.

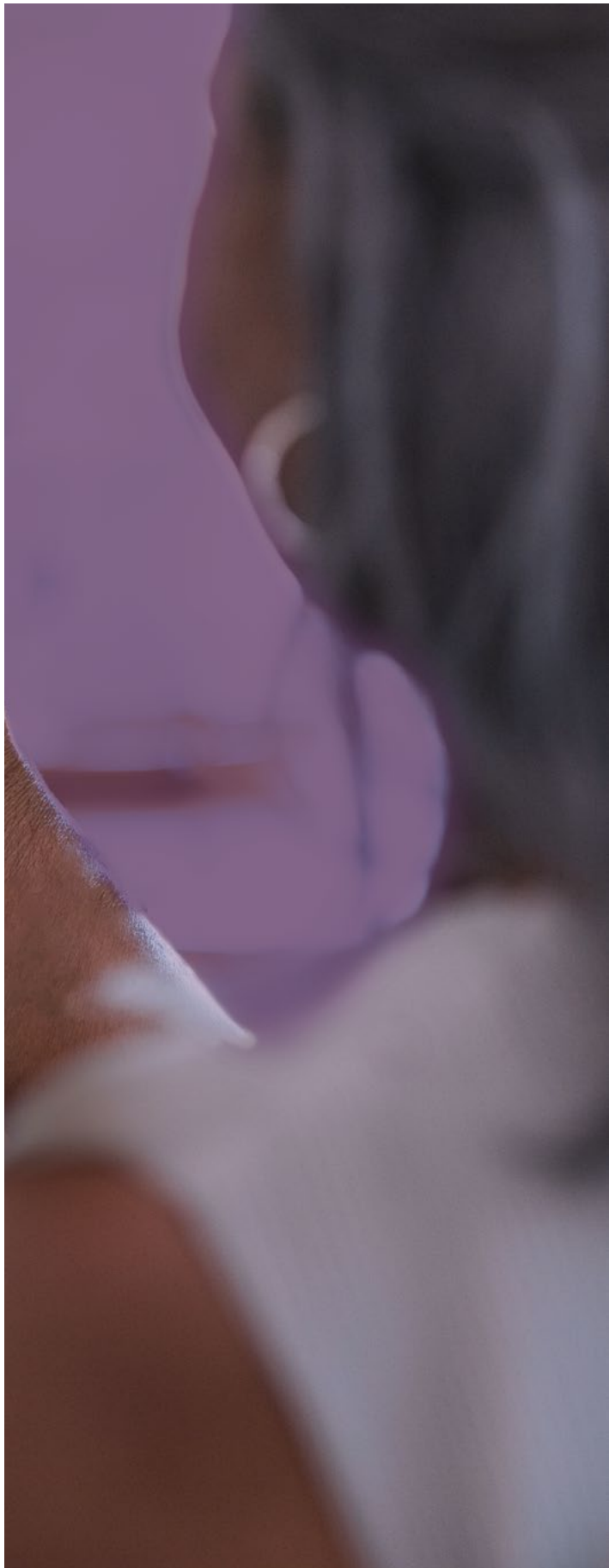
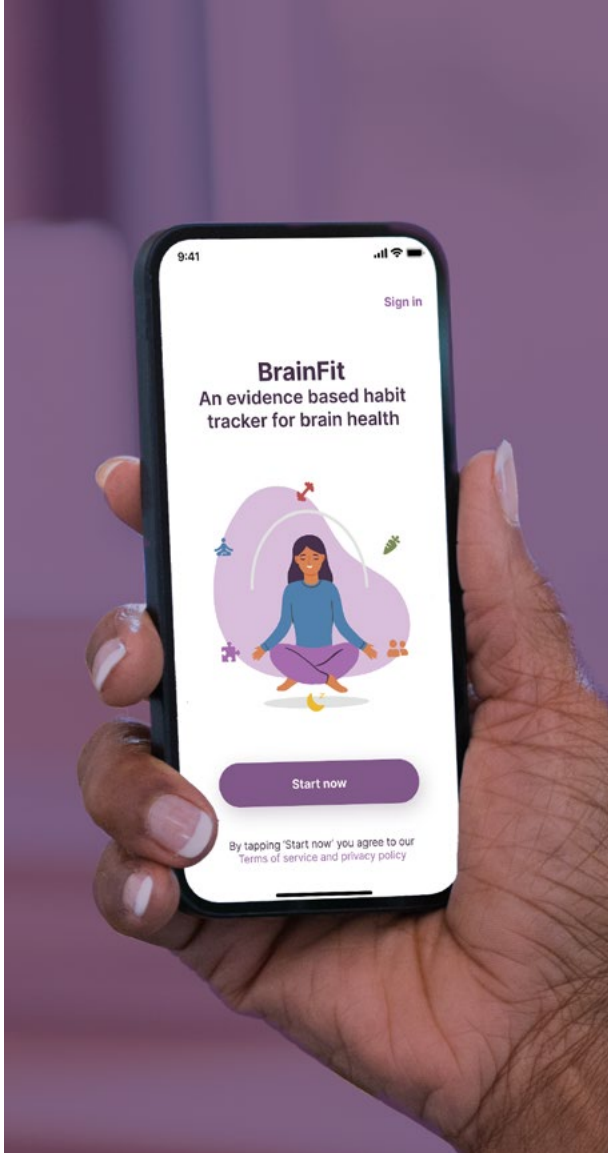
When WBHI was established in 2012, we were one of the few organizations advocating for funding ground-breaking studies on the sex differences that characterize brain-aging illnesses and advocating for brain health rather than focusing on sickness. We're encouraged to see more people catching up and paying attention to a crucial conversation in which we are honoured to take the lead.

In addition to our research, which is more suited to women's unique requirements, we disseminate the most recent results in brain health through our effective preventative health education programs, which help the public - women, caregivers, loved ones, those with the lived/living experience - better understand how to maintain their cognitive vibrancy and protect themselves against dementia and other brain-aging disorders.

Thanks to initiatives like ours, more and more individuals realize that dementia need not be inescapable. Instead, we can alter our lifestyles to safeguard and maintain the health of our brains.

2022 was our most productive year yet. WBHI values all that has been done over the last year and the past decade to advance the cause of women's brain health, especially the contributions from our many generous partners, donors, and team members. We remain appreciative of the help that allowed us to develop further and significantly impact so many people's lives.





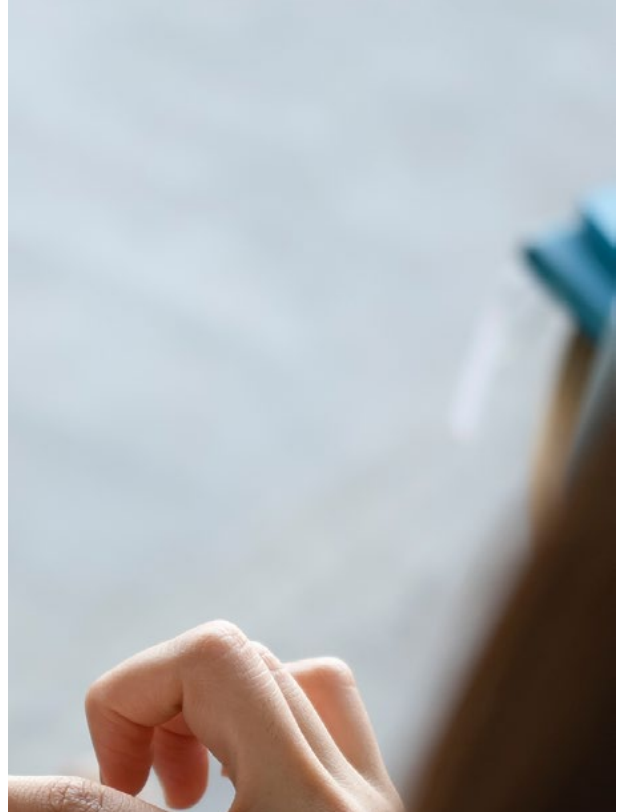
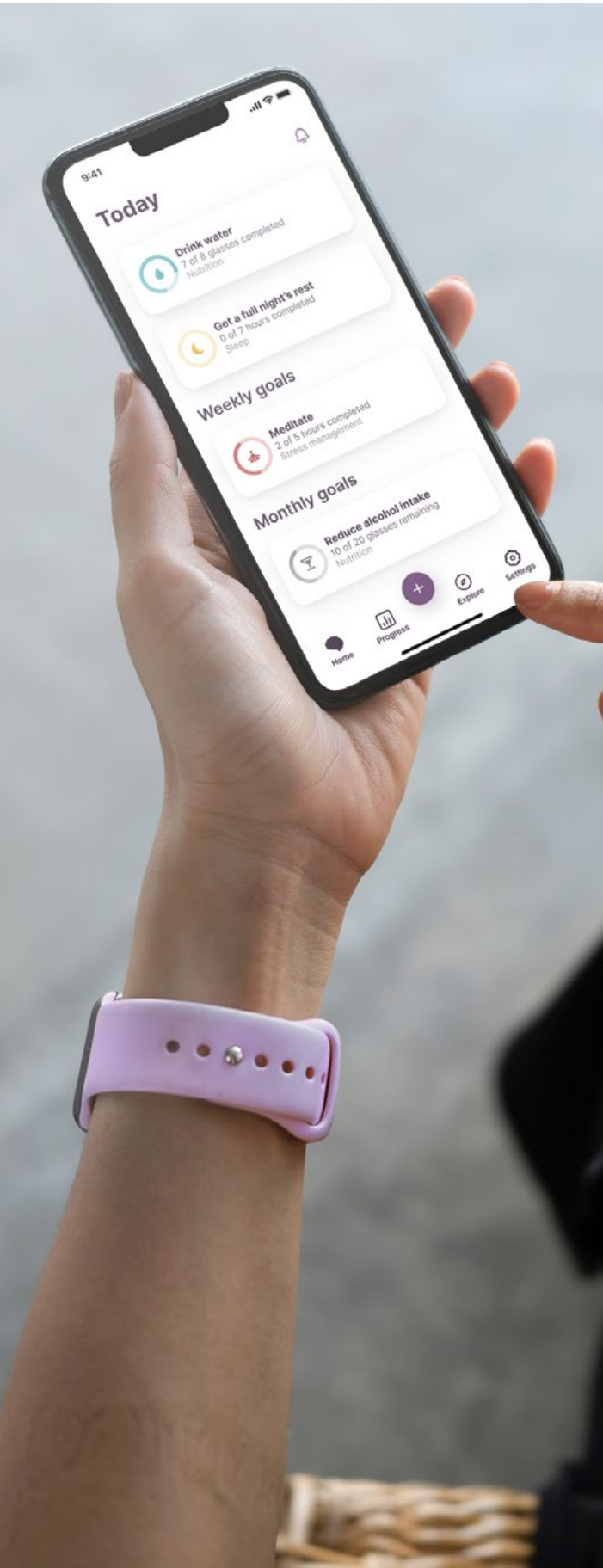
## OUR INITIATIVES

# BRAINFIT

Dementia is not inevitable; in fact, 40% of all cases of dementia can be avoided through our lifestyle choices. 40%! You might have the Alzheimer's risk gene and never get dementia. Or you might not have the risk gene and still succumb. The difference is the impact of our lifestyle choices and habits.

Ingraining good habits takes longer than we'd like to think. Many of us try out new habits to improve the quality of our lives. Establishing habits, however, can feel like a struggle, and there's often a gap between intention and execution. Most of us need a system to help give us those little pushes when the going gets tough. Having a tracking system allows us to stay committed.

Evidence shows that tracking behaviour can increase the likelihood that habits will become established, and ingraining healthy habits makes it easier for us to make the right choices repeatedly.



Our newest initiative is a mobile app called **BrainFit - Habit Tracker**, a valuable tool to help users build and maintain habits that can help reduce dementia risk. An integral component of our expanded Mind Over Matter® campaign, BrainFit is the only app that focuses on optimizing brain health with over 100 evidence-informed habits across all Six Pillars of Brain Health: Mental Stimulation, Sleep, Exercise, Nutrition, Social Activity, and Stress management.

Fully secure, personalized, and customizable, and available for iOS and Android, BrainFit - Habit Tracker launched in the App Store on December 2nd to celebrate Women's Brain Health Day.

**Entirely free to use, with hundreds of helpful tips, you can download BrainFit today to help you get and stay brain fit. Scan barcode or visit [womensbrainhealth.org/brainfit](https://womensbrainhealth.org/brainfit)**



The app's efficacy is being accessed by a research team at York University led by Dr. Lora Appel, Assistant Professor of Health Informatics in the Faculty of Health and an Adjunct Researcher at Michael Garron Hospital, and a Collaborative Scientist at OpenLab.

BrainFit is made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada and with support from TELUS, RBC, York University, BitBakery, The Citrine Foundation of Canada, and RB33.

# MIND OVER MATTER® PODCASTS & VIDEOS

A series of twelve engaging podcasts and the first four of eight informative videos were produced in 2022 as part of the expanded Mind Over Matter® campaign.

## PODCASTS



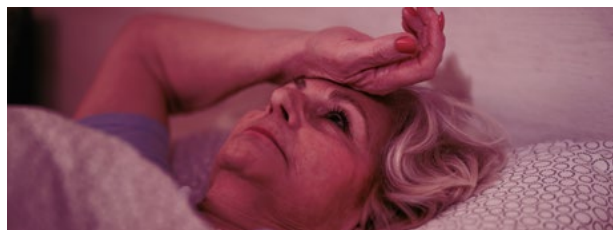
### HOW EXERCISE BENEFITS YOUR BRAIN

Dr. Jennifer Heisz, Canada Research Chair in Brain Health and Aging and Associate Professor, Department of Kinesiology, McMaster University, explains how exercise can prevent brain-aging diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia and provides tips on how to incorporate exercise into your own life.



### HOW FOOD CHOICES CAN IMPACT YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Leslie Beck, one of Canada's leading nutritionists and newspaper columnists, describes the best food choices to keep your brain sharp and explains how and why some foods can negatively impact the health of your brain. What you eat is as essential for cognitive health as what you don't eat.



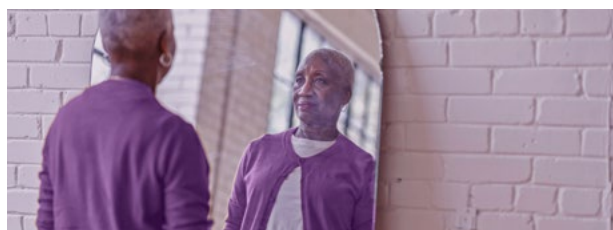
### WHY SLEEP IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR BRAIN HEALTH

Dr. Adrian Owen, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience and Imaging, University of Western Ontario, and the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience and Imaging at Western University, describes why sleep is so essential for laying down memories and clearing your brain of toxins that are the hallmark of Alzheimer's.



### MENTAL STIMULATION & BRAIN HEALTH

Dr. Sylvie Belleville, Professor at the Psychology Department of the University of Montreal and a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair on the Cognitive Neuroscience of Aging and Brain Plasticity, shares why ongoing learning helps build cognitive reserve and helps protect against cognitive decline.



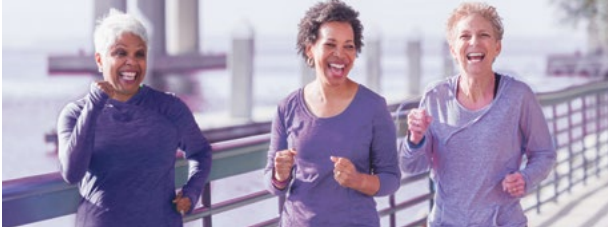
### STRESS MANAGEMENT & BRAIN HEALTH

Dr. Ellen Choi, organizational social psychologist and Assistant Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University, describes how harmful stress can be to your brain health and gives tips on keeping stress in check to keep your brain sharp.



### WHY SOCIAL ACTIVITY IS IMPORTANT FOR BRAIN HEALTH

Dr. Susan Pinker, Psychologist, Social Science Columnist, and author of *The Village Effect*, explains why we need social interaction to help keep our brain healthy and the types of activities that reduce dementia risk.



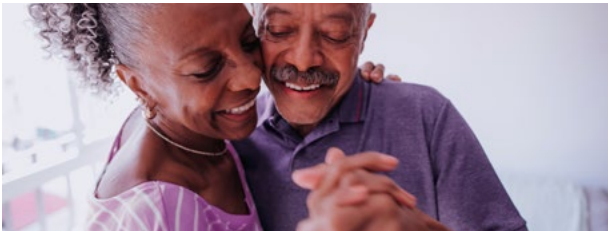
## THE HEART & BRAIN CONNECTION

Dr. Thais Coutinho, Division Head of Prevention and Rehabilitation, University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Ottawa, Chair of the Heart Institute's Canadian Women's Heart Health Centre, explains why a healthy heart leads to a healthy brain and some unique risks women face.



## WHY DO MORE WOMEN GET ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE?

Dr. Gillian Einstein, the world's first Research Chair in Women's Brain Health and Aging and Professor at the University of Toronto, discusses what she's discovering in her work and why studying sex and gender is so important to find answers into why women are disproportionately affected by dementia.



## LIVING WITH ALZHEIMER'S

Phyllis Fehr was diagnosed with Alzheimer's at the age of 53. Almost a decade later, she describes the journey of what it's like to live with dementia, dispels myths about it, and tells us how we can better support loved ones who are diagnosed and help those with the lived experience.



## THE INITIATIVE ON WOMEN'S BRAIN HEALTH

Lynn Posluns, President & CEO of Women's Brain Health Initiative, explains what and who inspired her to launch a charity to fund research on brain-aging disorders that disproportionately affect women and describes the effective preventative health education resources WBHI has created to prolong cognitive vitality.



## CAREGIVING FOR A LOVED ONE WITH DEMENTIA

Lisa Raitt, a former Canadian politician, shares her personal and emotional story about caring for her husband, who was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's and talks about the challenges caregivers face and some strategies on how to cope.



## WHAT IS ALZHEIMER'S AND CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Dr. Lisa Genova, neuroscientist and author of *Still Alice*, and a leading voice in brain-related disorders, explains what Alzheimer's is, provides tips on the best ways to prolong cognitive strength, and why we need to erase the stigma around mind-robbing diseases.



Special guests on this inaugural podcast series include fashion entrepreneur Jeanne Beker and Juno award winner Sean Jones.

## VIDEOS



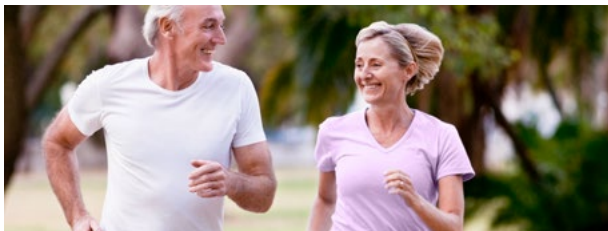
### KNOW YOUR SIX PILLARS OF BRAIN HEALTH

Discover the most important lifestyle choices that protect your brain health as you age and what habits increase your risk for cognitive impairment from Lynn Posluns, the Founder and President of Women's Brain Health Initiative.



### MINDFUL EATING

You can keep your brain healthy by adding smart foods and eliminating harmful choices from your diet. What you don't eat is just as important as what you do. Discover more about how food impacts your brain health with Nutritionist and Author Rose Reisman.



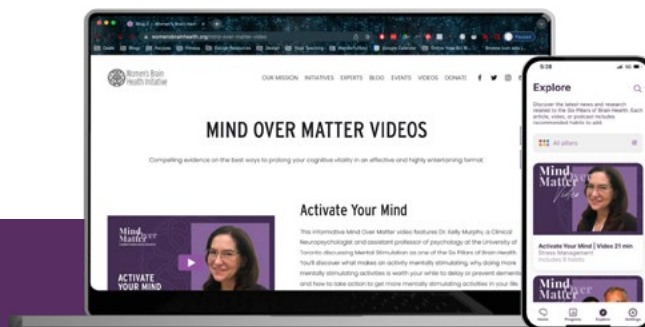
### PUMP UP YOUR BRAIN

Getting your heart pumping improves cerebral blood flow helping to bring nutrients to your brain and removing waste products from your brain, both important for brain health. Find out why exercise is one of the six pillars of brain health in this informative video featuring Dr. Laura Middleton, Associate Professor and the Associate Chair of Applied Research, Partnerships and Outreach in the Department of Kinesiology and Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo.



### CALM YOUR MIND

Chronic stress can prematurely age your brain and can increase your dementia risk. The key to managing stress is to control what you can control and accept what you cannot. You can control the way you behave, the way you think, and the lifestyle choices you make. Discover the ten best strategies for mastering stress with family physician and a stress and change management consultant Dr. David Posen.



**Mind Over Matter® podcasts and videos can be accessed on WBHI's website, through the Explore section of the BrainFit app, or scan the QR code.**



Made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada and with support from TELUS, RBC, York University, BitBakery, The Citrine Foundation of Canada, and RB33.



## BRAINABLE™

The impact of the pandemic has laid bare the urgent need for greater attention on mental health, especially for students in their formative years. Children who learn about the importance of brain health are more likely to adopt healthy habits that support brain function. This improves memory and concentration, helps reduce mental health problems, safeguards against violent behaviour, and prevents brain disease later in life.

With its focus on brain health rather than mental health, the Brainable™ program is stigma-free and teaches students in grades five through eight about the brain and the importance of their choices to keep it healthy—from what they eat to proper sleep, staying physically and socially active, ongoing learning, and keeping their stress in check.

In addition to these 'Six Pillars of Brain Health,' that for the students we call BRAIN BOOSTERS, the program also teaches students to avoid certain behaviours that increase the risk for poor brain health outcomes, such as untreated mental illness, substance abuse, concussion, and too much screen time. We refer to these as BRAIN BUSTERS. Notably, the program emphasizes how healthy choices benefit physical and mental health.

The program focuses on students in their formative years to be proactive about providing this knowledge while there is the maximum time for healthy behaviour changes to have an impact; most mental illnesses begin in childhood and adolescence. Proactively educating today's youth about brain health aids in creating healthy communities for the future.

This unique program is offered in English and French and supplements the current Ontario Ministry of Education middle school health and science curriculums. The program includes



a 75-minute interactive lesson delivered in the classroom by a board-certified and qualified educator. It includes an engaging short video about the best brain tips and several follow-up materials designed to reinforce what is learned in the lesson: a Student Magazine and Brain Pen, a Teacher Resource Guide, and a Parent Tip Guide.

Analysis of exit slips students complete after receiving the program was conducted by researchers at Queen's University, Dr. Erna Snelgrove-Clarke and Dr. Heidi Cramm. When students who receive the program are asked what the one thing they will do more to protect their brain health, regardless of age, is exercise. When asked what the one thing they would do less of to protect their brain health, again across all ages, interestingly, was less screen time.

In its inaugural year (Jan-Dec 2022), and thanks to initial support from the Ontario Ministry of Education and several generous philanthropists, a total of 317 Brainable presentations were delivered to 7725 students across 13 public school boards and several private schools in the GTHA and five out-of-province locations to ascertain the transferability of Brainable to other Canadian cities.



To learn more about bringing Brainable™ to your school, please visit [brainable.ca](https://brainable.ca).





## MIND OVER MATTER® MAGAZINES

Mind Over Matter® magazines promote healthy living and practical strategies for lowering the risk of dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment. The understandable, fact-based articles are a valuable tool for preserving mental wellness. The information encourages compassion, combats stigma, and aids those who are suffering from dementia and other mental diseases, as well as those who provide care for them.

Thanks to the ongoing and tremendous support from our partners, Brain Canada Foundation and Health Canada, WBHI created and produced two editions of Mind Over Matter® in 2022.

Our 14th volume featured social activist and model Shina Novalinga with her mother Kayuula on the cover, hailing from the small Inuit community of Puvirnituk, Nunavik, in northern Quebec, and was distributed across Canada in May.

Broadcaster Pooja Handa and her mother, Aruuna, were featured on the cover of Volume 15, hoping to encourage more conversations about dementia in the South Asian community, which was distributed nationally in November.

157,500 copies of each issue, printed in both English and French, were delivered to homes across Canada through The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, Ottawa Citizen, and Montreal Gazette, to doctors' offices, at WBHI events and speaking engagements, and made available online. 2023 will see the release of volumes 16 and 17.

# THE BOOK CLUB & SOCIAL GROUP INITIATIVE

Requests for Mind Over Matter® magazines continued throughout 2022. We now have 199 Book & Social Group Clubs in Canada, 17 from the U.S., and 1 from Europe, and with the support of Brain Canada, can provide even more people and diverse communities with access to the valuable brain health information contained in the magazines. Individual requests, which were successfully fulfilled, totalled 1450.



# THE YOUNG PERSON'S CABINET, ENGAGING MILLENNIAL MINDS®, & BRAINSUITE™

The earlier in life you begin to establish brain-healthy habits, the stronger the protective effect will be. Women's Brain Health Initiative's Young Person's Cabinet wants to encourage young adults to start caring for their brain health immediately.

Engaging Millennial Minds® (EMM) is an interactive, comprehensive, coordinated series of public events with a primary target audience of 20-40-year-olds who have indicated the importance of social interaction and informal networking as their preferred means to gain and share knowledge.

*Friends with Benefits*, the final event in the series, which was generously presented by RBC for five years, emphasized why strong social ties help reduce loneliness and depression while stimulating attention and memory.



Thanks to support from the new Presenting Sponsor, CIBC, these events, which aim to help prevent dementia by highlighting the risk for cognitive decline and dementia to an audience of young adults, were rebranded in the Fall of 2022 to BrainSuite™ and will commence in 2023.



## MEMORY MORSELS®

Food has an impact on our brain health. According to increasing evidence, eating healthfully is one of the best ways to keep our brains operating how we want them to. Even as we age physically, we may maintain mental health by incorporating wise foods into our diets and removing bad ones.



Memory Morsels® is a social media initiative dedicated to nutrition and brain health, including leading chefs (featured foodies), delicious recipes, superfoods, and tips (our morsels) about what to eat and why.

Each Featured Foodie and their delicious recipes are showcased on the Memory Morsels website and in one of the Mind Over Matter® magazines.

2022 featured Suzanne Barr, cookbook author, restaurateur, a judge on Food Network Canada's series, *Wall of Chefs*, and one of North America's most respected chefs in Volume 14. Volume 15 showcased recipes by Sir Corp.'s Director of Culinary Development, Chef Gordon Mackie.



## THE STAND AHEAD<sup>®</sup> CHALLENGE & WOMEN'S BRAIN HEALTH DAY

As a result of our work, the Government of Canada officially proclaimed December 2nd as Women's Brain Health Day in 2019 to raise awareness of the significance of brain health and the requirement to incorporate sex and gender concerns into research.

Presenting Sponsor Bank of Montreal Financial Group made the fourth Women's Brain Health Day both enduring and motivating. Hosted for the third year by CTV's Anne-Marie Mediwake and Pattie Lovett-Reid, the sold-out 2022 live and virtual event featured comedian and mental health advocate Mary Walsh.

Special guests included the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health, and Juno-award winner Sean Jones.





Women's Brain Health Day also featured the fourth annual Stand Ahead® Challenge. This year's challenge was a simple coordination-based exercise to improve how our muscles work together to improve brain function and learning. Conceived by Steve Koven and suitably named 'The Conductor Challenge', participants were asked to draw an imaginary vertical line (a 1-2 count) with one hand while drawing an imaginary triangle (a 1-2-3 count) with the other at the same time.

As always, at the heart of this initiative was fundraising to support research and educational programs that better support the needs of women. For the fourth year in a row, WBHI's valued partner Brain Canada generously matched donations for women's brain research up to \$250,000. And thanks to philanthropists Margaret Nightingale and Sylvia Soyka, a generous matching gift from The Citrine Foundation of Canada, and many extraordinarily charitable donors, WBHI successfully raised over \$1 million!

The Stand Ahead® Challenge has raised over \$3 million in its brief existence and has already established itself as a potent weapon for combating gender disparities in research and raising awareness of brain aging diseases that disproportionately affect women.





## FROM HER LIPS TO OUR EARS® EDUTAINMENT EVENTS

Another outstanding From Her Lips to Our Ears® live and virtual event took place in 2022, thanks to the ongoing and generous Presenting sponsorship of CIBC.

Featuring award-winning journalist, editor and author Tina Brown joined us for the second time in Toronto, this time in conversation with *Your Morning's* host Anne-Marie Mediwake to discuss her latest book *The Palace Papers*.

Music-award winners Marc Jordan and Amy Sky also treated guests to an exceptional musical performance.







## RESEARCH

WBHI supports research to fight brain-aging disorders that disproportionately impact women. Dr. Gillian Einstein, the Joyce and Wilfred Posluns Chair in Women's Brain Health and Aging, continues to be backed by WBHI and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) in her efforts to learn how midlife experiences affect later women's brain health and determine why more women than men develop Alzheimer's disease.

The Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration and Aging (CCNA), a multifaceted research effort involving researchers and clinicians across Canada to find out more about age-related neurodegenerative illnesses like Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia, also receives support from WBHI for its Sex & Gender cross-cutting theme.

Sex and gender expansion grants with an emphasis on aging, neurodegeneration, or stroke are funded by WBHI and Brain Canada. These grants are funded through the Stand Ahead® Challenge, WBHI's annual campaign to support women's brain health and raise money for vital sex-based research and preventative health education.

Under the guidance of Dr. Erna Snelgrove-Clarke, Vice-Dean & Director, School of Nursing, Associate Professor, and Dr. Heidi Cramm, Researcher, OT Reg (Ont), and Associate Professor, both at Queen's University, research on the Brainable student program commenced in 2022.

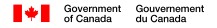
The impact of the expanded assets with the Mind Over Matter® campaign is being studied by researchers at York University under the leadership of Dr. Lora Appel, whose expertise is in applying design thinking and science methodologies to healthcare innovation and designing new technological interventions that provide care in the pursuit of a cure.



# WITH GRATITUDE

The perseverance, tenacity, and imagination of the many devoted WBHI friends, supporters, and team members greatly inspire us to be the recognized leader in advocating for and safeguarding the brain health of women and their families.

## PARTNERS



# WOMEN'S BRAIN HEALTH INITIATIVE OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

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# AMPLIFYING THE IMPACT OF YOUR DONATION

WBHI LEVERAGED UP ITS DONOR SUPPORT WITH MATCHING FUNDS BY PARTNERING ON SEVERAL OF ITS INITIATIVES INCLUDING;

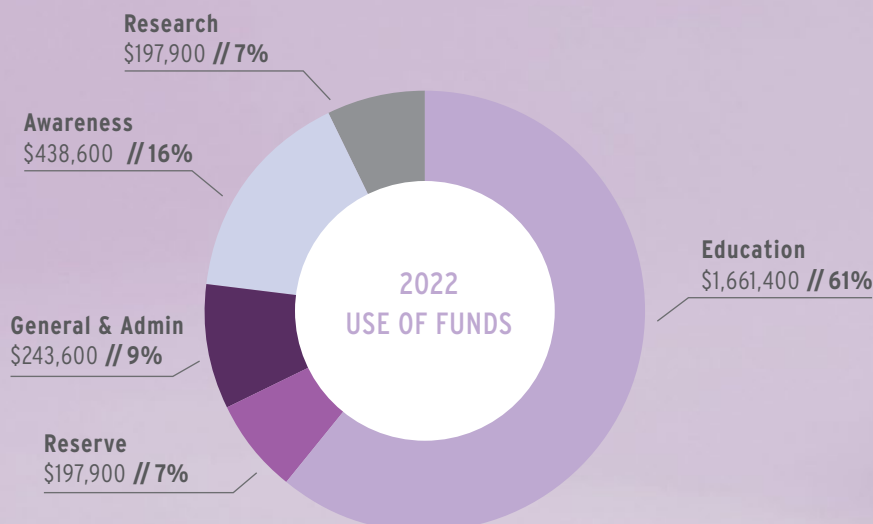
- » Mind Over Matter® with Brain Canada Foundation and Health Canada and The Citrine Foundation of Canada
- » Women's Brain Health and Aging Research Chair with CIHR, CABHI, OBI, and The Alzheimer's Society of Canada
- » The Stand Ahead Challenge® with Brain Canada Foundation and Health Canada and The Citrine Foundation of Canada

## YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

WBHI raises funds for research and preventative health education initiatives through its knowledge-learning events, sales of its exclusive Hope-Knot® product, private donations, federal and provincial government financial support, and funds from corporations and foundations.

In 2022 Women's Brain Health Initiative raised just over \$2.73 million CDN. A very prolific year, \$2.54 million (93%) was used for the charity's activities, programs, and operations. \$186,450 (7%) was held for future activities.

Women's interests, needs, and voices are today more than ever powerful motivators for success, consumerism, and significant worldwide impact. Women's Brain Health Initiative collaborates with donors and partners who wish to better serve women's unique needs.



# INVEST IN YOUR BRAIN'S FUTURE. WE DO.



Follow us for daily brain health tips  
@womensbrains

**WBHI.ORG // 1-877-927-2011**

900-30 St. Clair Ave W, Toronto, ON M4V 3A1

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Health Initiative