

This is the year

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Every year, I love hearing what new years' resolutions are made. Most of them usually focus around losing weight, managing stress, or focusing on spiritual growth. Each year brings a great opportunity to set an intention. What would it look like if 2018 was the year we focused on keeping our brains healthy? Perhaps not the most glamorous new year's resolution, it may however, be one of the most life-changing. Maybe you're starting 2018 in perfect health. Maybe you are starting to notice some memory issues in your daily routine. Or maybe you have a family health history that causes worry. Wherever you are, there are tangible steps you can take to focus on keeping your brain healthy in 2018. Here are some of my favorite 'brain healthy' strategies.

- Learn a new skill.
 - Recently, I've had several family members start learning a new skill or hobby. No matter your age, learning to play piano or taking up crossword puzzles helps challenge your brain to think and learn in new ways.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet.
 - Research has shown that anything good for the heart is good for the brain. Eating a diet that is low in saturated fat and cholesterol can help support your cardiovascular health, ensuring good blood flow to your brain.
- Wait for it...exercise!
 - Diversify the way you exercise. I often find it challenging to make time for exercise before or after work. Try taking a walk on your lunch break for a little pick-me-up during the day. Group exercises can also be motivating and help with accountability in sticking to a good routine. Not only does exercise have a variety of health benefits, it's also great with managing stress.
- Manage your stress.
 - Chronic stress can greatly impact your health, not to mention your quality of life.
- Socialize.
 - One of my personal favorites of this list. Research has shown that isolation and loneliness contribute to poor health. By staying engaged with family, friends, and your community, not only are you supporting your brain, but you are also supporting everyone else's around you.

Although there is still a lot we do not know about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, these strategies for brain health are current suggestions that could make a difference in how you feel now and in the future, which sounds like a good intention for 2018 to me.

For more information about Memory Moment articles & Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out their website at www.effinghamalz.org. If you are a caregiver & have

specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nosbisch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.