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Are We Training Our Brains or Distracting Them?
PACIFIC NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE®
Brain Wellness & LIFESTYLE

Pacific Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Newsletter | MAY 2026

## Spotlight Story: Dual-Tasking vs. Multi-Tasking

### ❋ Are We Training Our Brains or Distracting Them?

**Ryan Glatt, MS, CPT, MES, NBC-HWC**
Brain Health Coach | Director, FitBrain Program

Terms like **multitasking** and **dual-tasking** are often used interchangeably, but from a brain health perspective, they are very **different** concepts.

Understanding these differences may help explain why some forms of divided attention can impair focus and memory, while others may actually **support cognitive and physical functioning.**

One of the most misunderstood concepts is multitasking itself. In many situations, the brain is not truly performing multiple demanding cognitive tasks simultaneously. Instead, it is often **task-switching**—rapidly shifting attention between activities. For example, someone responding to emails during a Zoom meeting may feel productive, but their brain is continuously shifting attention between the conversation and the emails. Each switch incurs a cognitive cost, meaning we are **less efficient when switching** between the two tasks.

This constant task-switching can interfere with sustained attention, concentration, and memory encoding. When attention is fragmented, the brain may **not fully process** or store information efficiently. This helps explain why people often **forget details** from conversations while scrolling on their phone, lose track of why they entered a room, or reread the same paragraph multiple times while **distracted.**

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## Dr. Miller's Memory Minute

### ❋ Staying on Task

**Karen Miller, PhD**

Senior Director, Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Program

**Avoiding distractions** and staying in the present can help **improve** your attention and recall.

I am guilty of **multitasking.** These days on many evenings, I browse or order gifts on my phone while watching the news. This month, I am challenging myself to watch 20 minutes of the news **without any phone distractions**. My goal is to improve my **attention and recall** a few more details from what I watched.

## Dr. Miller's Memory Challenge

### ❋ Explore the Outdoors

Improve your **attention with intention**. Challenge yourself to **reduce one multitasking habit** in your daily life with the goal of improving overall focus and attention.

Also, try engaging in a dual-tasking activity—**keeping your mind engaged while your body stays in motion.** The weather is perfect for longer walks.
As you walk, name as many trees, flowers, and plants as you can. Or choose another category, such as birds or cars. Try to come up with 20 or more names, say them out loud, and then continue **recalling** them as you walk.

This activity demonstrates the best of **dual tasking** by stimulating **attention**, engaging working memory through **active recall**, and strengthening **short-term memory** skills while staying physically active.

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## The Balanced Plate with Molly

### ❋ Practicing "Good Enough" Eating

## Molly Rapozo, MS, RDN

Registered Dietitian & Senior Brain Health Coach

Lately I've been inspired by two books our community is exploring: **Tiny Habits**, which reminds us that small steps create big change, and David Epstein's new book, **Inside the Box: Why the Best Ideas Are Often the Most Obvious.**

Both offer a refreshing message: we don't need to overhaul our lives to be healthier. Often, the simplest, most realistic choices are the ones that actually stick.

In that spirit, this month's Balanced Plate is all about embracing **good enough**. Not perfect. Not optimized. Just steady, doable choices that make you feel nourished rather than defeated. When it comes to food, that often means focusing on what we can **add** to support brain health instead of what we think we should take away.

## ❋ Three Ways to Practice "Good Enough" Eating

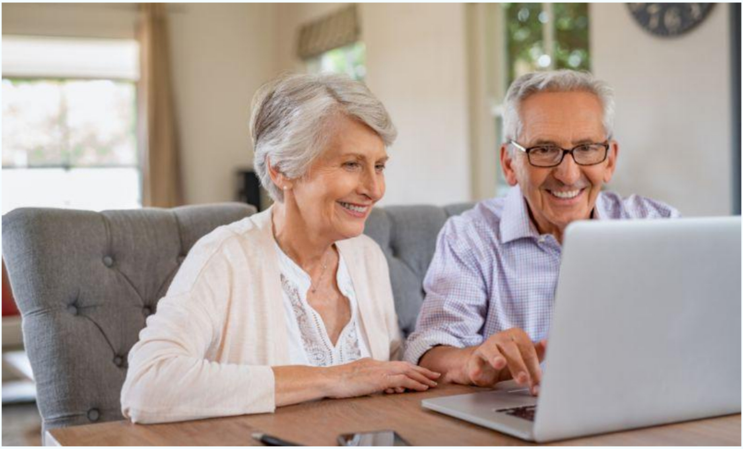
**Add before you subtract.**
Instead of cutting out favorite foods, try adding a handful of berries, a drizzle of olive oil, a serving of leafy greens, or a spoonful of beans. These small additions naturally shift your plate toward brain-healthy patterns without feeling restrictive.

**Let consistency be the goal.**
A "good enough" breakfast you repeat most days is more powerful than a perfect meal you make once. Tiny habits, like keeping nuts on the counter or choosing whole grains, make healthy choices the easy default.

**Choose what feels supportive, not stressful.** Healthy eating should fit your real life. That means room for joy, comfort foods, restaurant meals, and imperfect days. When your approach feels kind and realistic, you're far more likely to sustain it.

## Brain Health Resources

### ❋ Strengthen Your Brain Health This Season



If you're noticing subtle memory changes, navigating a new diagnosis like Parkinson's or MCI, or simply wanting to stay sharp as you age, personalized support can make a meaningful difference. Research continues to show that lifestyle changes are **more effective, and more sustainable**, when guided by a **trained brain health specialist.**

The COCOA Study (J. Alzheimer's Disease, 2023) found that a healthy lifestyle supported by a brain health specialist produced a greater treatment effect than Lecanemab, a costly medication with notable risks. Participants who worked with a specialist were the most likely to sustain **improvements** in **cognition,** mood, and daily functioning.

Molly Rapozo, MS, RDN, served as the brain health specialist for the COCOA Study and has over 20 years of experience helping adults build healthy, brain-supportive routines. Her one-on-one work integrates nutrition, movement, sleep, stress resilience, and cognitive training with memory techniques.

As we move into summer, consider taking an active step toward **clarity, confidence, and long-term brain wellness.** Individual sessions and multi-session packages are available.

Schedule a Consultation

## Support Group for Dementia Caregivers

Join our online support group designed for caregivers taking care of a loved one living with any stage of dementia. Sessions are **FREE in July** with rolling enrollment:

July 15, 22, & 29, 2026 | Wednesdays, 3 - 4 pm PT

>> Register Today

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