



Healthy Brain Healthy You

Diana Smith, MA, LPC, BCPCC – Counselor



Would you give driving lessons to someone whose car is broken down? A person with an unhealthy brain is akin to a car with a sputtering engine. As helpers, we can pass on valuable insights and lessons to someone we care about only to find that there is little ability to apply them practically, little memory retention, and even little motivation to get out of bed!

The health of your brain is directly tied to your ability to control your life (free will, decision-making) and your ability to relate to God and others (empathy, emotions). Brain health depends on four-fold care: social, spiritual, psychological and biological. When there is a problem, finding a starting point in treatment

can be difficult! As a counselor, one of the first things I rule out in assessment is the biological aspect, particularly with regards to the brain. After all, "as a man thinks...so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and we are supposed to care for them. When our brain chemistry is balanced, we can more readily make the changes necessary to become who we are created to be in Christ.

Have you ever wondered why one person can lose a parent and can grieve well while another becomes depressed? We are all born with a cushion of extra neurons that help us deal with stressors or injuries. The more reserve we have, the more life problems we can manage. Brain reserve is decreased by factors found in everyday life: excessive caffeine, chronic stress, negative thinking, too much TV or video games, lack of exercise and lack of sleep. Depletion also occurs with brain injuries, even from seemingly innocuous sports activities such as head-butting soccer balls. The SPECT brain scans of people who drink more than three alcoholic beverages a week look toxic, and four glasses of alcohol a week increase the risk of dementia. A good counselor can help you identify sources of depletion that are unique to your situation.

The good news is that we can build brain reserve by daily thankfulness and meditation, restful Sabbaths and worship music, positive thinking and good coping skills, exercise, daily multiple vitamins, fish oil, a healthy diet and wholesome friendships. In cases of severe depletion or "burn out," healing can be accelerated under the care of both a counselor and a medical doctor who practices nutritional biochemistry.

For further information on brain health, read *Magnificent Mind at Any Age* by Daniel Amen, MD.

Magnificent Mind at Any Age. Daniel G. Amen, Random House Inc., New York, 2008
Resource: Dr. Mark O'Neal Speight, Center for Wellness, Matthews, NC

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Diana graduated summa cum laude with a Masters in Christian Counseling from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Charlotte, She was inducted into the Psi Chi Scholastic Honor Society, and she completed internships with Hickory Grove Baptist Church and Carmel Baptist Church. Diana is a Licensed Professional Counselor in North Carolina, and a Board Certified Professional Christian Counselor.

Diana's cross-cultural background encompasses life in South America, the West Indies, the Dutch West Indies and the Southeastern United States. Her experience has broadened her understanding of people from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds, and of their struggles to live well.

Diana has provided individual and couples ministry in churches since 2000, and she joined Carmel Counseling Center in 2004. Her counseling approach integrates biblical truth with psychological principles, and she is experienced in prayer therapy. She addresses a variety of issues including anxiety and depression, grief and loss, identity and purpose, codependence, work-related matters, abuse, problem behaviors, chronic illness and disability, marriage, parenting, and other relationship issues. She has facilitated Divorce Care, Celebrate Recovery, and Disability support groups. Diana lives in Charlotte with her husband and two children.

To schedule an appointment, contact Gina Meinders, our Intake Assessment Coordinator at 704.849.0686.



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