

## Brain Experiments You Can Do On Yourself

Contributed by Steve Gillman  
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Some "tricks" to improve concentration, make for clearer thinking or otherwise boost your brainpower.  
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Regular readers of my blog and subscribers to my Brainpower Newsletter know that I'm a believer in safe self-experimentation. In fact, I regularly recommend trying things out that do not yet have scientific evidence proving their effectiveness. After all, why would science ever look into a new supplement or technique for improving ones health or mind if their was not first some anecdotal evidence?

{bot\_wrgoogle}In the newsletter I had the "brainpower contest" going for a while (in 2007), to see what "tricks" had worked for subscribers to improve concentration, make for clearer thinking or otherwise boost their brainpower. Many suggested foods, herb or other safe supplements. It doesn't get much safer than using foods and herbs and vitamins that we eat already. I did not even bother to say "check with your doctor" before trying almonds or fish.

Sometimes beneficial effects of foods and supplements are discovered by accident too. In the book "Mind Boosting Secrets," Ray Sahelian notes that there are often effects from nutritional supplements that are not emphasized in the studies done on them. For example, he noticed that when he took melatonin (often used as a sleep aid) his dreams became more vivid (I'll be trying that one). He also found that large intake of fish or flax seed oils (both high in omega-3 fatty acids) improves vision. We can all watch for these kinds of unexpected effects.

The examples above do not constitute scientific proof, but that isn't important. They are safe to try. So are eating fish or eating almonds and cheese in the morning, as one subscriber suggested. I want to point out again that the accumulation of anecdotal evidence is sometimes the only reason a scientific study is done in the first place. Rarely do researchers randomly choose a substance and randomly choose an effect, then watch to see if the first produces the second. They need a reason to explore something.

With that in mind, if you have a "recipe" or "technique" or "prescription" for better brain function, let me know. Don't just throw ideas at me though. Stick to things that have worked more than once for you or someone you know.

Meanwhile, I'll share my own little technique for "revving up" the brain, developed from experience. Long ago I noted that my brain began to work better as soon as I spent a couple minutes explaining something interesting to someone, as I just did above. I also noticed that I could "carry over" that effect into whatever mental work I needed to do at the time. The technique is that simple then; just talk about something interesting for a bit and then return to the task at hand.

As far as do-it-yourself brain experiments go, it doesn't get much safer than talking to a friend about something you are passionate about or interested in. Give it a try, and see if your mind feels more "awake" as a result. And now I'm going to use this boost in brainpower I just created to work on a book, which I'll hopefully have out next year.

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