

BrainTrain Bugle

Brains Matter!

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Thinking Outside the Gym: Cognitive Training vs. Aerobic Exercise



The decline of cognitive abilities associated with aging is not just an unfortunate, minor inconvenience. Due to the aging of the baby boomers generation and the fact that people are living longer than ever before, the nation is facing an epidemic of age related dementia and other cognitive impairments that could wreak wide-range devastation both on a personal and economic level. Any intervention that holds promise of even just delaying the onset of dementia could save millions of dollars. Within recent years, a whole plethora of approaches to help stave off age related cognitive decline has hit the news and the marketplace.

It is generally accepted that both cognitive training and aerobics contribute to improved cognitive functioning. However, the question of which is more effective - or whether the combination provides a greater benefit than either approach individually - has remained largely unanswered. Now, a recently published study by Dr. Evelyn Shatil in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience* offers new insight on this question.

Over a period of four months, four

groups of seniors (ages 66 to 93) participated in a controlled research study that compared the efficacy of cognitive training with aerobic exercise and also examined the results of combining the two approaches. The first group ($n = 33$) engaged in cognitive training only, the second group ($n = 29$) only in mild aerobic training. The third group ($n = 29$) combined cognitive training and aerobic activity, and the fourth group ($n = 31$) engaged in reading books.

The results of the study showed significant improvement in cognitive abilities for those older adults who took part in cognitive training, separately or combined. Compared to the two groups who participated in either mild aerobic exercise only or who read books, the two cognitive training groups (one also engaged in aerobic training) demonstrated significantly greater improvements in seven areas. As a result of cognitive training, their hand-eye coordination, global visual memory, working memory, long-term memory, processing speed, visual scanning, and naming skills significantly increased. Since the two groups that included cognitive training did not differ in their results, the findings suggest that cognitive training, whether or not it was used in conjunction with aerobic exercise, was the active intervention that resulted in the significant improvements obtained for the numerous cognitive abilities assessed. Read the full study [HERE](#).

BrainTrain's Captain's Log MindPower Builder is a complete mental gym that provides the flexible options, controls and ease of use clinicians need to create a cognitive rehabilitation or cognitive enhancement program for individuals with a wide variety of different cognitive deficits, including learning,

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memory, or neurologically based disorders. The MindPower Builder provides 18 short cognitive tests (nine for children, and nine for adults) which the program uses to automatically configure a targeted brain training plan. Learn more [HERE](#).

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