

A top-down photograph showing several pairs of hands planting green basil seedlings into dark soil in various pots and trays. The scene is set on a light-colored wooden surface.

Keeping active outside!

A breath of fresh air for the brain



New

Brain Mail: Question from a reader

Inviting Mother Nature into your home

Getting outside to breathe some fresh air

Does a sunny day put an extra spring in your step? Make the most of that new energy by getting outside! Let yourself be inspired by our suggestions for outdoor activities.

Four stimulating outdoor activities

Exercise your brain while enjoying summertime with these four intellectually stimulating outdoor activities.

A greener plate

Eating greener—that is, developing more eco-friendly, sustainable eating practices—is good for your health, the planet... and your wallet! So, where should you start?

In this edition

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NEW

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The science is in! Nature appears to have a positive impact on brain health.

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To add a greenery touch to your everyday life.

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From left to right:
André, Marc-André and
Lucie Chagnon

PREFACE

From our hearts, with your health in mind.

Marc-André Chagnon at his grandfather André's 94th birthday.



A word from Marc-André

In 2014, I lost my grandmother Lucie to Alzheimer's disease. This may be a story you can relate to. With over 500,000 people currently affected by a neurocognitive disorder in Canada, my family is not alone in this ordeal.

After his beloved wife passed away, my grandfather André felt compelled to do something about the growing societal issue of neurocognitive disorders. A visionary and philanthropist, André—almost 90 years old at the time!—wanted to create a technology-driven solution that would help as many people as possible reduce their risk of cognitive decline by adopting healthy lifestyle habits.

That's how the idea for the Luci app was born, 8 years ago. Today, I'm honoured to hold the reins of the project on my grandfather's behalf. I'm both proud and moved to see his vision taking shape every day thanks to the contributions of a dedicated team that has rallied around a common cause.

To our readers, thank you for joining us on the path toward a brain-healthy lifestyle. I am hopeful that together, we can make a difference in the prevention of neurocognitive disorders such as Alzheimer's, one lifestyle habit at a time!

Marc-André Chagnon,
President of Lucilab and grandson of André and Lucie Chagnon



Luci will soon be bilingual!

Thanks to a [major grant](#) from the Public Health Agency of Canada and all the work our team has put in over the past six months, the Luci app will soon be available in English!

Together with the experts at the *Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation* (CABHI), a leader in the field of health and seniors care innovation, we will begin a series of user tests in the spring 2022 to evaluate and improve the first English version of the Luci app.

Ultimately, we hope to help as many Canadian adults and seniors as possible adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle habits—in both official languages!



**CENTRE FOR AGING
+ BRAIN HEALTH
INNOVATION**
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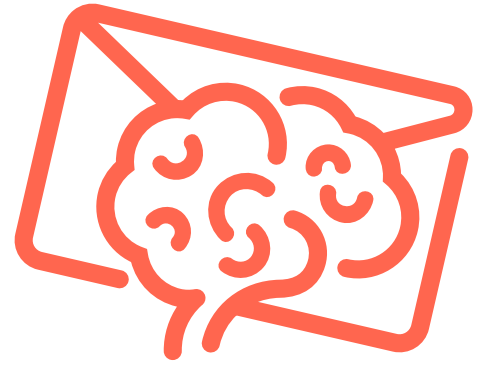


“What are the benefits of nature on brain health?”

ÉRIC

49 years old, Roberval (Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean)

Reading time: 2 min.



Mother Nature nurtures the brain

The science is in! Nature appears to have a positive impact on brain health. Spending time in natural environments (forests, parks, gardens, etc.) **may improve attention, working memory,** and other cognitive functions, in addition to **reducing mental fatigue.**

Could doctors soon be prescribing walks in the woods to prevent brain aging? The idea may not be as far-fetched as it sounds. Doctors in Canada can now prescribe national park passes to patients suffering from anxiety or depression. In Japan, the practice of “forest bathing” (*shinrin-yoku*) is becoming increasingly popular as a **stress relief method.** Many researchers have studied this phenomenon and observed significant benefits among the Japanese.

Should we literally be hugging trees?

According to one unconventional theory, simply wrapping your arms around a tree is enough to enhance your well-being. Interesting... though there is no proof to support it! One thing is for sure: **contact with nature is extremely effective at reducing anxiety** and improving one’s mood. It’s associated with decreased levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, in the body.

Numerous studies describe the relaxing effects of nature; some have even found that it alleviates depression. Furthermore, the more prolonged the contact, the greater the benefits.

Contact with nature also improves cardiovascular health (decrease in heart rate and blood pressure).

MORE GREEN = LESS LONELY?

This concept has not been widely studied, but some research indeed suggests that it holds true. According to a Dutch study involving 10,089 participants, people who live in an area with few green spaces feel lonelier than those who live in a more natural environment.⁰¹ To be continued!

01. [Maas et coll \(2009\)](#). Cited in [Les bienfaits de la nature sur la santé globale](#), a report produced for Sépaq by the EPIC Centre at the Montreal Heart Institute (2021).



Inviting Mother Nature into your home

Regular nature outings are out of reach? Whether you live in the city, the suburbs, or the countryside, there is a solution: bring Mother Nature to you! Here are some suggestions on how to add a greenery touch to your everyday life.

 Reading time: 3 min.

Balcony gardens: Fresh, fragrant, and savoury

You don't have to be a gardening expert to grow a small vegetable garden on your balcony. Much like taking a stroll through botanical gardens, gardening is beneficial to your health. It improves mental well-being, gets you moving, and reduces social isolation—not to mention that it provides a sense of satisfaction when you finally get to enjoy your harvest!

TWO TIPS TO GET STARTED:

Choose the right plants.

Ideally, your balcony should face south or southwest. That said, some plants do well in a north-facing garden. Ask a gardening pro for advice on what varieties to choose.

Choose the right pots.

Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and strawberries take root in large pots (18 to 24 inches in diameter). Herbs and edible leaves, such as lettuce, arugula, and watercress, prefer planters.

Indoor gardening: Let there be light

Light is the *sine qua non* for a successful indoor garden. Green plants will happily flourish next to a south-facing window (or near one, in the case of shade-loving plants). Don't get much natural light in your home? You could use grow lights to substitute for sunshine.

If you're new to indoor gardening, opt for low-maintenance plants, such as *Sansevieria*, *Zamioculcas*, and *Pothos* plants. And don't forget herbs! Parsley, basil, and dill thrive on windowsills.



Long live mushrooms!

Are oyster mushrooms and shiitakes often on your grocery list? What if we told you they can be grown right on your kitchen counter? Thanks to growing kits, harvesting mushrooms is less complicated than you might think. The process involves soaking a block of mycelium (the underground root system of mushrooms) and occasionally spraying it to keep it moist. One growing kit produces up to 4 harvests, or about 1.5 pounds of mushrooms. The mycelium can then be used to sow your garden... and it's time to savour your delicious homegrown mushrooms! [Learn more.](#)

More adventurous gardeners may be interested in learning the ancestral art of growing mushrooms on tree rounds or logs. For information from an expert source, [click here.](#)

If you need some gardening advice, plan a trip to the nearest garden centre. You can also do your own research online by typing keywords like tips + gardening + balcony, etc. into your web browser.



Urban chickens: Fresh eggs every morning

Enthusiasm for urban agriculture has reached unprecedented levels in recent years. One of the most popular activities is raising laying hens. Interested in giving it a try? Great! Before getting started, however, it's important to do your homework and make sure you develop the right skills. Are chickens allowed in your municipality? Under what conditions?

What will your responsibilities be? What are the **health risks for humans and chickens**? Hens live for 5 to 10 years and gradually produce fewer eggs as they age. Raising chickens is therefore a **long-term project**. If you enjoy do-it-yourself projects, consider building your own chicken coop for a particularly creative and mentally stimulating activity!



[Urban Chicken Coops](#) was founded in 2015 with the mission of helping people, cities, and organizations learn to raise laying hens safely and responsibly in urban settings. It even offers online training.

Harvest your own honey

Urban beekeeping is also becoming increasingly popular. More and more city dwellers are taking to raising these pint-sized pollinators to help maintain ecological balance—and treat their taste buds! We recommend joining a collective if you are starting out so that you can benefit from the expertise of experienced beekeepers. Responsible urban apiculture requires **mastering the ins and outs of the practice**. Many organizations offer a turnkey service that includes training and the installation of the hives at your home. Before going any further, make sure you have a secluded area to install the hive. It should be easily accessible, but sheltered from direct sun, wind, and other stressors (noise, dust, etc.), and near a water source. For more information, get in touch with a company that specializes in urban beekeeping, such as [Alvéole](#), or contact a local bee farm.

SHARING IS CARING!
To avoid eating too much of this sugary ingredient, why not share some of your precious harvest with family and friends?



LISTEN TO THE SOUNDS OF NATURE: RELAX WHILE YOU LEARN

Lose yourself in the immersive documentary podcast [Wild Sounds of Canada](#). Travelling the great outdoors has never been easier, more soothing, or so educational!

Audio content Subscription required **EN** In English



STUARDO BONILLA DUQUE, B.Sc.

Healthy lifestyle advisor at Lucilab



Getting outside to breathe some fresh air

Does a sunny day put an extra spring in your step? Make the most of that new energy by getting outside! During physical activity, increased blood circulation brings more oxygen to the brain, which promotes brain health. To enjoy the benefits of physical activity while getting some fresh air, try these outdoor activity suggestions from Stuardo, one of our healthy lifestyle advisors.

 Reading time: 3 min.



Walking and hiking

No need to plan a trekking expedition just to stretch your legs! Getting outside every day can be as simple as choosing to walk instead of driving to places like the grocery store, the library, the pharmacy, the subway, or a friend's house. Wish you had a hiking buddy? You could join a local walking club! Asking friends and neighbours if they know of any could help find one.

Cycling

Given the growing popularity of this activity, the chances of crossing paths with someone you know while biking on a nice day are pretty high. Like regular exercise, meaningful social interactions are good for your health, so taking the opportunity to chat is a great way to get the most out of your bike rides.



Going to the park: Three ideas

1. Meeting up with family and friends at the park is always a good time. You can play catch, Frisbee, or even try your hand at pétanque or volleyball, depending on the facilities available.
2. Outdoor tai chi and yoga classes have become increasingly popular in recent years. In most cases, participants are only asked for a voluntary contribution. Look for ads at community centres, in local media, or on your favourite studios' social media accounts!
3. Some parks feature outdoor gyms with Trekfit, Benchfit, or boot camp-style exercise equipment.

Rock climbing

Rock climbing is a demanding but incredibly satisfying activity. Climbers have to use their large muscle groups to pull themselves up the climbing surface, as well as their smaller muscles to secure a good grip. If you want to learn more about [outdoor climbing](#), contact a local climbing centre. The staff will be able to provide helpful advice. Who knows, you might even meet an experienced guide or climbing partner who can show you the ropes!

Water sports

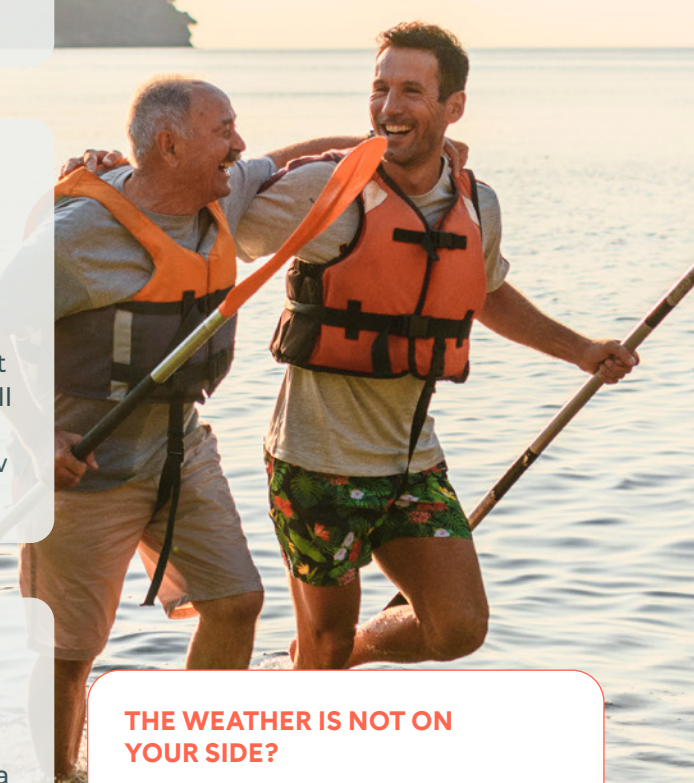
Water sports are ideal for working your legs, arms, and core. Kayaking, canoeing, sailing, and paddle boarding can require a lot of strength, muscular endurance, and sometimes balance, but you can learn at your own pace. Many water sports clubs offer introductory courses year-round, or close to it.

Housework—it counts too!

That's right: outdoor work around the house can be another form of exercise. Washing the car, cleaning the windows, painting, doing minor repairs, gardening—all of these are good examples of activities that exercise the heart, muscles, and joints.

THE WEATHER IS NOT ON YOUR SIDE?


Just because the forecast is less than ideal doesn't mean you can't still exercise outdoors. Thanks to modern sportswear technology, you can comfortably do most activities in any season, rain or shine, as long as you're wearing the right gear. Imagine going for a walk in a light drizzle while being serenaded by birds, enjoying a soft breeze on your face as you jog through the park, or flying a kite with your kids and grandkids. Who says you need blue skies to have fun? After all, you're not made of sugar!





Four stimulating outdoor activities

Intellectually stimulating activities such as creative and educational pastimes are to the brain what physical activity is to the body. The more you do, the better you may feel! Exercise your brain while making the most of summertime with these four intellectually stimulating outdoor activities.

 Reading time: 2 min.



1

Go on cultural outings to learn something new

Public art tours, historical tours, nature parks, botanical gardens, and nature and wildlife interpretation centres are just a few of the many open-air learning opportunities. Check with your municipality and regional tourism offices for activities in your area.

2

Create an herbarium to reconnect with your inner child

Many people have fond memories of collecting natural specimens when they were kids. If keeping a collection doesn't appeal to you, you can still get outside to create a scrapbook of photos and drawings. Need inspiration? Type "herbarium" in the search bar of your browser. You will find a plethora of ideas to choose from!

3

Explore mycology and learn about local mushroom species

Mycology societies have mushroomed in recent years! It's never been easier to sign up for an initiation workshop and join a group of experienced enthusiasts for a walk in the woods. For more information, check out the websites of amateur mycologists in your municipality or region.

4

Meditate and breathe in the benefits of nature

Who says meditation must be done indoors? You can practise mindfulness virtually anytime, anywhere! Meditating while going for a walk, especially in natural environments, is a great example. There are many active guided meditations available online at little to no cost.

To get the most benefits

STEP OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Your brain likes novelty: discovering a previously unknown activity or returning to one you have only done a few times in the past is particularly good for stimulating attention. So be bold and try something a little different. Chances are you will end up enjoying yourself!

VARY YOUR ACTIVITIES

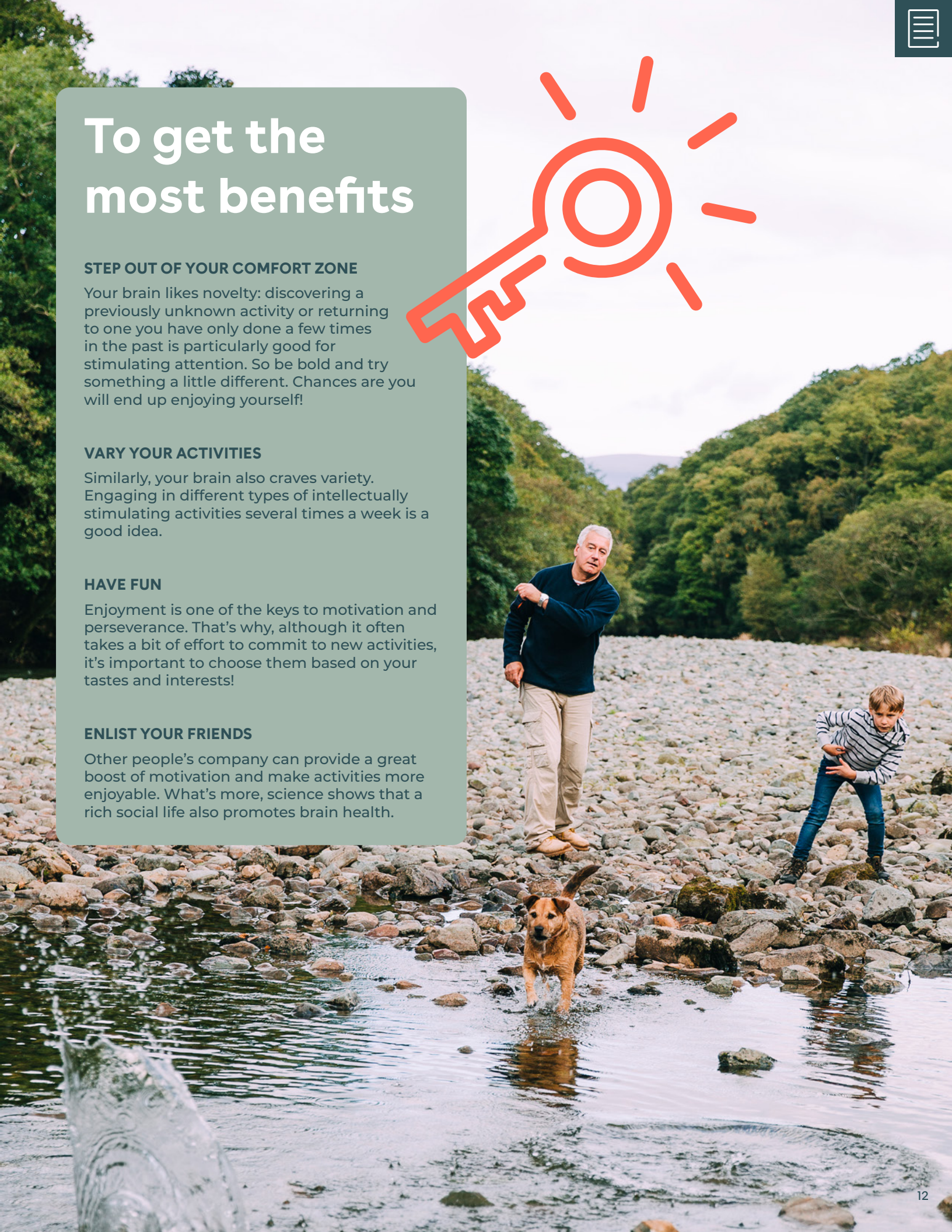
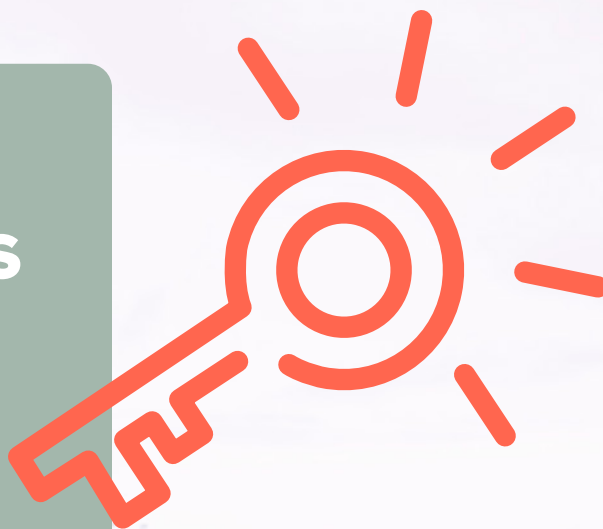
Similarly, your brain also craves variety. Engaging in different types of intellectually stimulating activities several times a week is a good idea.

HAVE FUN

Enjoyment is one of the keys to motivation and perseverance. That's why, although it often takes a bit of effort to commit to new activities, it's important to choose them based on your tastes and interests!

ENLIST YOUR FRIENDS

Other people's company can provide a great boost of motivation and make activities more enjoyable. What's more, science shows that a rich social life also promotes brain health.





A greener plate

Eating greener—that is, developing more eco-friendly, sustainable eating practices—is good for your health, the planet... and your wallet! So, where should you start? What products should you choose? Here are some ideas.

Reading time: 2 min.

Three cheers for plant-based eating!

The health benefits of a well-balanced plant-based diet, such as a vegetarian or vegan diet, are backed by numerous studies. Plant-based eating may even promote brain health and help preserve cognitive function.⁰² Conversely, red meat and deli meats are associated with an increased risk of several diseases, including heart disease and certain cancers.

^{02.} [Medawar et coll.](#) (2019)

Wondering how to make more room for plant proteins on your plate? Here are a couple of suggestions:

LEGUMES

Lentils, peas, and beans of all shapes and sizes are good sources of protein that cost a fraction of the price of meat. Legumes are rich in fibre, vitamins, and minerals and can be used in a wide variety of dishes, such as salads, soups, and stews.

SOY AND SOY-BASED PRODUCTS

Tofu, tempeh, soybeans (edamame), and textured vegetable protein (TVP) are excellent meat alternatives that are easy to cook with. Opt for organic and local soy products whenever possible. See Soy in all its forms for recipe ideas (p. 16).

FOR THE HEALTH OF OUR PLANET

Meat contributes more to global warming than any other food. The practice of raising animals for human consumption is responsible for no less than 14.5% of the world's greenhouse gases.⁰³ It also contributes to deforestation and requires huge amounts of water. Plant proteins such as legumes require little water to produce and generate far fewer greenhouse gases. For example, the production of 100 grams of soy protein generates roughly 15 times fewer greenhouse gases than the production of 100 grams of bovine protein.⁰⁴ Reducing your meat consumption in favour of plant proteins is a step toward a healthier planet!

^{03.} [FAO](#) (2015).

^{04.} [Our World in Data](#) (2020).





Less-polluting animal proteins

If you want to continue eating meat but still want to reduce your environmental footprint, there are solutions.



1

DAIRY PRODUCTS, EGGS, POULTRY, FISH, ETC.

In general, dairy, eggs, and poultry are more eco-friendly choices than beef or lamb. Fish and seafood from sustainable fisheries and aquaculture are also good options. Ask your fishmonger for more information!

At the grocery store, choose small fish species (which are considered more sustainable), such as mackerel, herring, anchovies, and sardines. You should also aim to buy local products (scallops, oysters, etc.).

For more information, consult the list of fish and seafood recommended by *Ocean Wise* in Sépaq's tool [A Guide to Sustainable Seafood](#).

2

BUY ORGANIC, BUY LOCAL, BUY LESS

Free-range eggs, organic milk, all-natural vegetarian grain-fed chicken, pastured lamb or beef—lingo like this often indicates a local product. That's good news! Their environmental impact due to transportation will be smaller, and you'll be supporting your local economy by buying them.

There is one caveat, however: eating "eco-friendly" animal proteins is a little more expensive. More and more people are choosing these products while simply eating less of them to avoid ballooning their budget. You can eat meat less often, reduce portion sizes, or replace some with plant-based proteins in your favourite recipes. For instance, you can replace half the ground meat with lentils in your shepherd's pie or half the chicken with tofu in stir-fries. Going almost vegetarian can be a good compromise!

3

PASTURE-RAISED MEAT

While it's true that the production of red meat is generally more polluting than that of other animal proteins, it's still important to distinguish between production methods. Smaller organic or environmentally conscious local farms have nowhere near the impact of industrial-size breeding facilities, either in terms of environmental impact or animal welfare.

For example, pastured beef, often called "grass-fed" beef, is considered relatively sustainable. Due to the specific conditions in which the cattle are raised (outdoor pastures, herd movement, etc.), part of the greenhouse gas emissions from the animals is sequestered in the soil as carbon, which limits soil depletion and stimulates plant growth.

BEWARE OF ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS!

Fast food and commercial foods and beverages produce a lot of waste because of excess packaging. They're also rarely nutritious (salt, sugar, fat, food additives, etc.). A growing number of studies indicate that these foods are particularly harmful to brain health, appearing to affect memory and learning ability. Cooking more regularly at home to reduce your consumption of ultra-processed products is a good strategy to promote both your health and that of our planet!



Beyond your plate

Changing your diet and eating less meat and more legumes is a good start. But what more can you do to reduce the environmental impact of your diet?

HERE ARE A FEW IDEAS:

- **Make a grocery list** of what you need and avoid shopping on an empty stomach. These are great tricks to prevent impulse purchases so you don't end up with extra food that might go to waste.
- **Plan your meals around ingredients you already have on hand**, picking up an item or two if needed by walking or biking to the grocery store. Not only does this minimize your environmental footprint, but the extra physical activity is also good for your body and brain.
- **Buy products sold without packaging or in recyclable containers** (cans, glass, etc.). For example, choose local, seasonal, or bulk foods. They are often cheaper than you think!
- **Drink tap water** instead of bottled water or sugary drinks. Tap water can be filtered and flavoured with fresh fruits and herbs to improve the taste.
- **Find out the [actual shelf life of products](#)** so you can better assess “best before” dates and avoid wasting food that’s still edible.
- **Compost.**



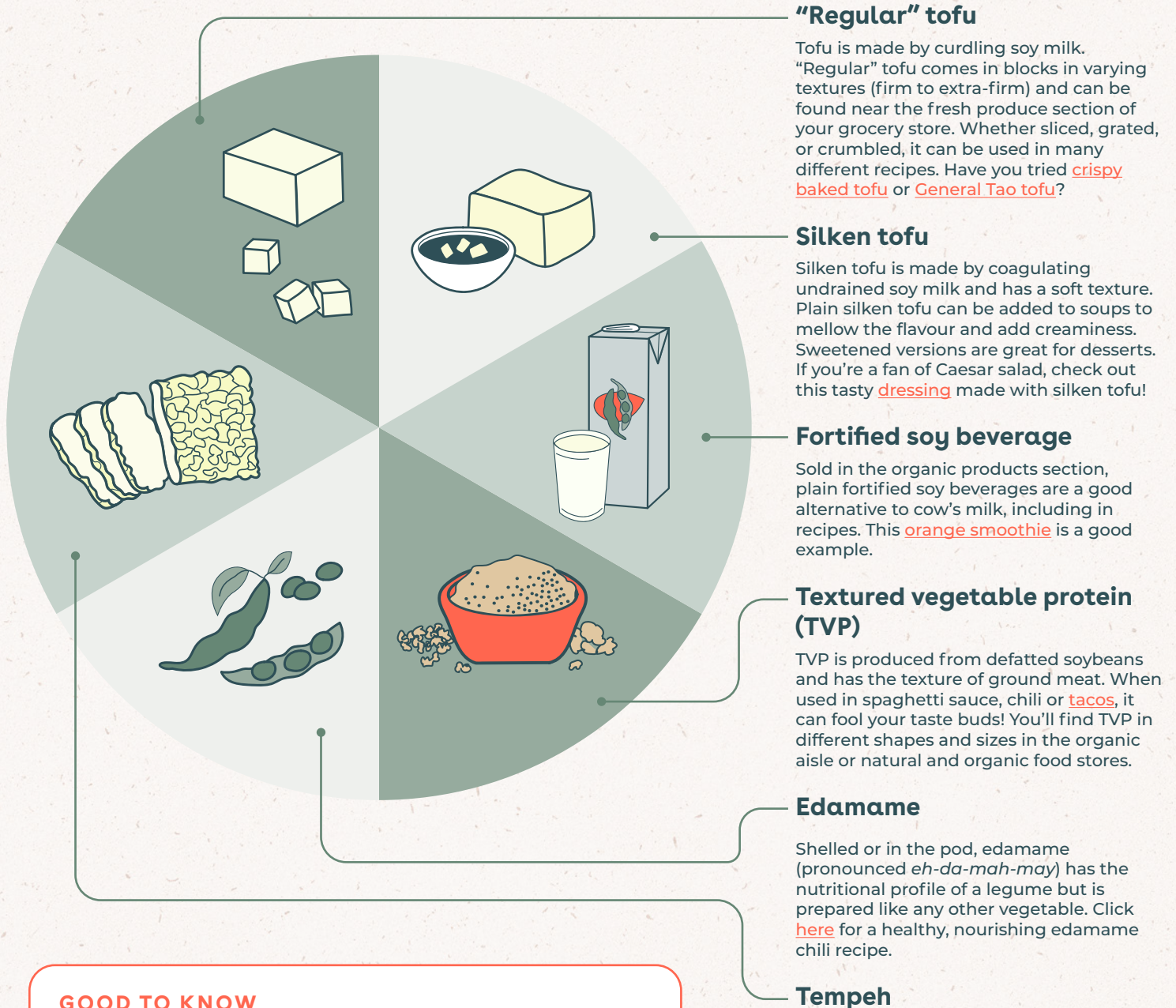
Soy in all its forms



Tempeh



Textured vegetable protein (TVP)



GOOD TO KNOW

Many companies offer products such as vegan sausages and patties. These fast food-style, often soy-based, options are generally loaded with fat and salt. It’s best to limit their consumption and consider making your own versions from scratch. You could try these [breaded tofu burgers](#).

CINDY LAPLANTE

Writer-editor specialized in health at Lucilab



Writing and editing

Using words and images to promote health

In a process similar to an assembly line, the articles and educational tools in the Luci application go through a series of steps before being published in the library. Cindy, a writer-editor specialized in health, sheds light on Lucilab's editorial process.

 Reading time: 3 min.**Step 1****PICK A THEME**

The team draws on the scientific literature and the needs and interests expressed by the Luci program participants to choose a theme related to brain health and healthy lifestyles. This is our raw material!

Step 2**GROW THE IDEA WITH THE CONTENT COMMITTEE**

Time to brainstorm! With the help of Lucilab's research team and healthy lifestyle advisors, we take a deep dive into the subject, exchange reliable reference material, and establish the key messages we want to convey. As a result, we get the skeleton of our future article.

Step 3**WRITE AND EDIT THE TEXT**

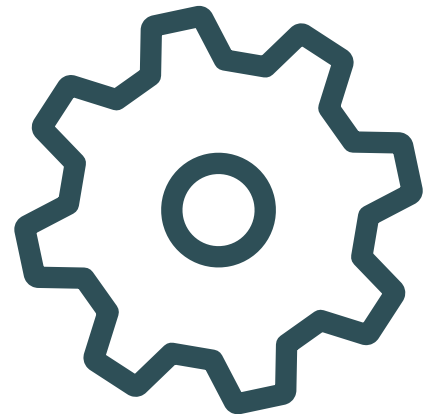
The writer-editor works with other writers to refine the prototype developed by the content committee. The right words are chosen, and Luci's editorial style is applied, almost like a coat of varnish. We focus on using accessible, positive, and engaging language.

Step 4**REVIEW THE SCIENCE AND THE LANGUAGE**

Next up is the meticulous scientific review stage, where Lucilab's neuroscience, nutrition, and physical activity experts make sure that every statement is backed by science. We also perform a linguistic review to weed out (to the best of our ability!) any grammatical imperfections.

Step 5**ADD THE FINISHING TOUCHES**

This is one of the most creative steps in the process. The text is enhanced with colours, photos, and images to make it easier to read and to get the reader's attention.



The article is now ready to be added to the content library!



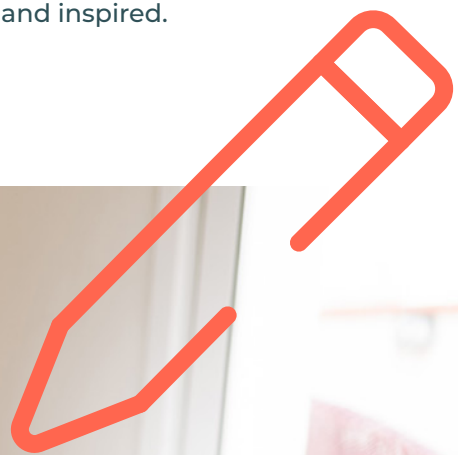
What advice do you have for readers interested in starting a writing project?

Actively seeking inspiration is a great place to start: read novels, visit museums, go to the theatre, browse social media and blogs, etc. You never know where you might find an idea that gets those creative juices flowing! Write them down as soon as they pop into your head so you don't forget any.

To beat writer's block, simply try putting pen to paper without any pressure on yourself. Just the act of writing can often spark inspiration. Don't get stuck trying to find the perfect turn of phrase. You can always refine your sentences later.

To keep your project moving forward at a steady pace, pencil writing time into your schedule. For example, you could start by setting aside 15 to 30 minutes at a time to focus only on your project, without interruption.

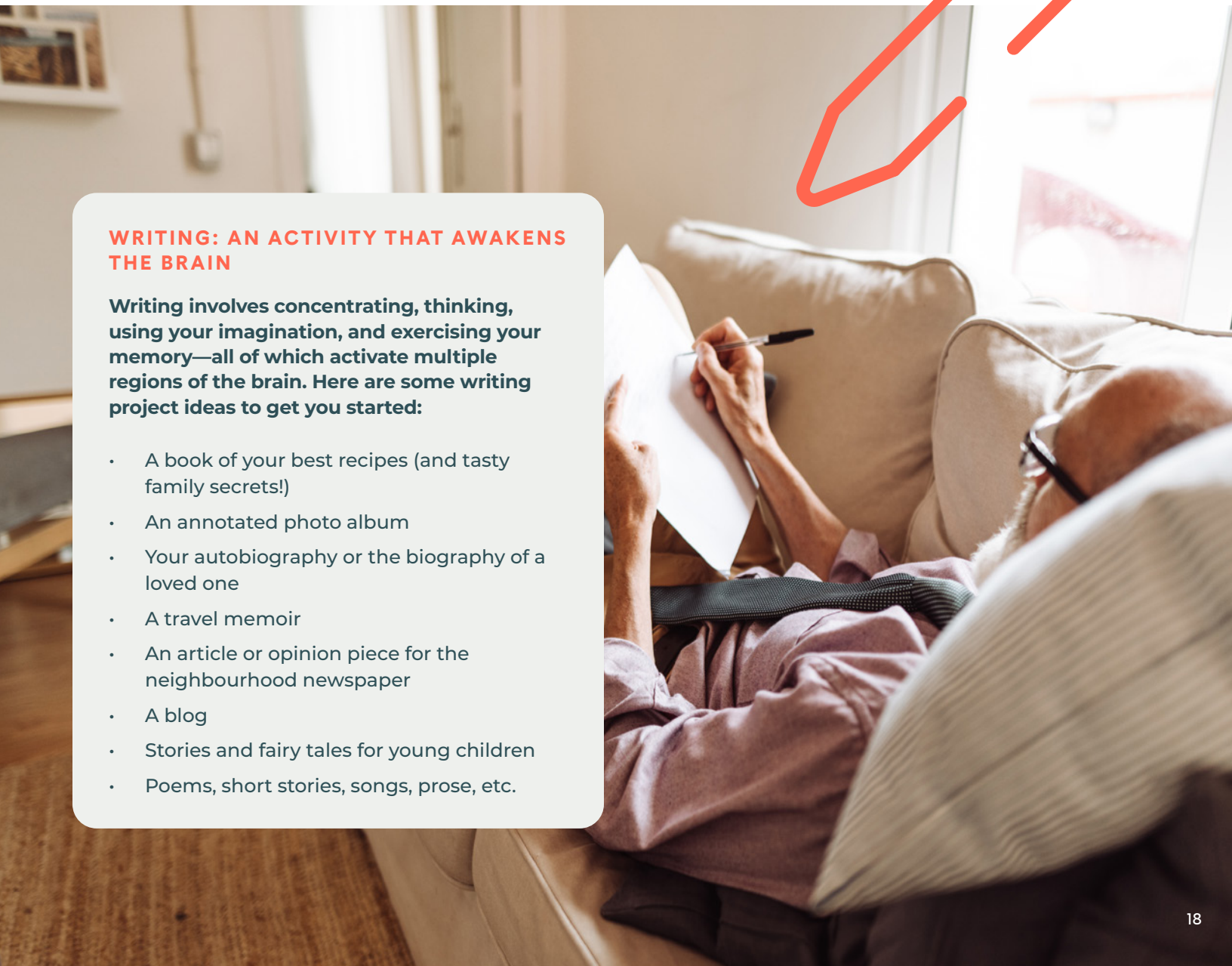
And last, but not least—have fun! It's one of the keys to staying motivated and inspired.



WRITING: AN ACTIVITY THAT AWAKENS THE BRAIN

Writing involves concentrating, thinking, using your imagination, and exercising your memory—all of which activate multiple regions of the brain. Here are some writing project ideas to get you started:

- A book of your best recipes (and tasty family secrets!)
- An annotated photo album
- Your autobiography or the biography of a loved one
- A travel memoir
- An article or opinion piece for the neighbourhood newspaper
- A blog
- Stories and fairy tales for young children
- Poems, short stories, songs, prose, etc.





Apps to help you make the most of nature

Think nature and technology don't mix? Au contraire! Enhance your outdoor activities using the following apps, which you can download onto your smartphone or sports watch.

- Free apps
- Available in several languages



APPS FOR IDENTIFYING PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Are you an avid birdwatcher? Do you often stop to admire the trees, flowers, and fungi along your route? Thanks to apps such as [Merlin Bird ID](#), [PictureThis](#) and [Mushroom Identifier](#), you can learn interesting facts about flora and fauna with a simple click. These apps allow you to identify species you're looking for or come across on your hikes from a single photo.



STRAVA

If you like running, cycling, swimming, or cross-country skiing, this app is for you! Whether you're a weekend warrior or a more experienced athlete, [Strava](#) puts the community spirit first. Athletes of all levels can cheer each other on and share tips and favourite routes, while compiling statistics on their performance. A great choice to boost your motivation!



ALLTRAILS

Try this app to take your hiking experience to the next level! With its vast trails directory, [AllTrails](#) makes planning your next hike a breeze. Each listing includes details like route information, elevation gain, and difficulty level, so you get to know your trail inside out. This app is also great for mountain bikers!



Participant success stories



PRACTISE YOGA TO SPARK CREATIVITY

Diane, 63 years old, Montreal

"I'm a visual artist and a writer, so I've never lacked intellectual stimulation. But over time, physical activity has disappeared from my routine. Thanks to the Luci program's small-step approach, and with the help of my advisor, I'm exploring different types of exercise. Two months ago, I discovered yoga. It's an enjoyable way to get moving, and I've noticed a difference in my strength, muscle tone, and energy levels. To stay creative, I need to be active!"

To see Diane's magnificent artwork, [click here](#) > (French only).

EAT BETTER AND STIMULATE YOUR BRAIN: EFFECTIVE TIPS FOR HEALTHY AGING!

Denis, 56 years old, Capitale-Nationale region

"I discovered Luci shortly after learning that someone close to me had developed Alzheimer's disease. It's an excellent program that's helping me improve my lifestyle!

I've started eating a lot more fruits and vegetables. I now have a veggie platter as an appetizer before dinner. I've incorporated plant-based proteins such as tofu into my lunches. My advisor has also suggested some fun games and apps to stimulate my brain. With its personalized approach, the Luci program has really made me aware of the healthy habits I can adopt both at work and at home. Thank you, Luci!"



Thank you to our participants for sharing their stories!

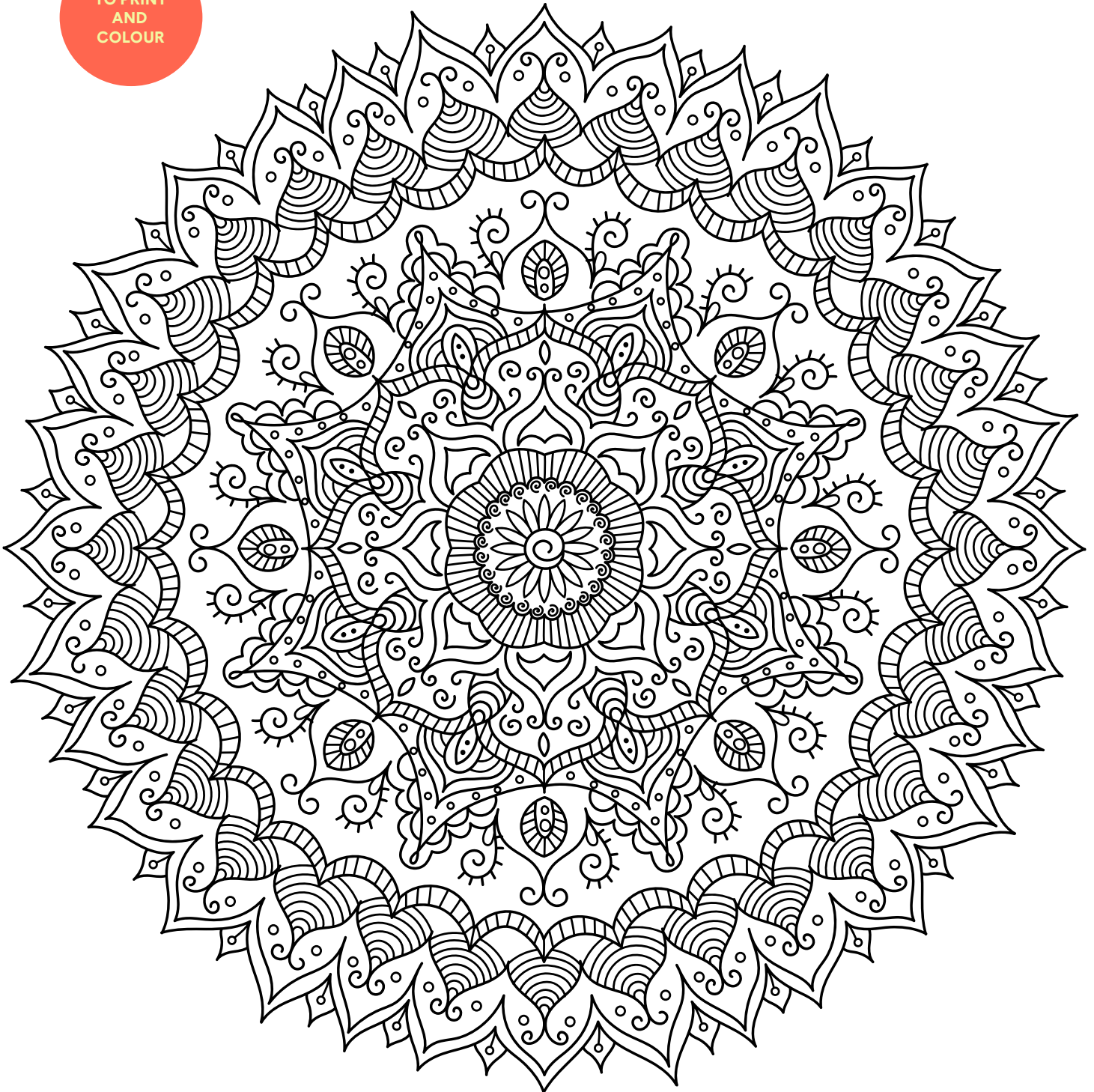
If you are participating in the Luci program, don't hesitate to share your stories, successes, creations, etc., by clicking on luciidme.ca/contact/ >



Mandala

A meditative drawing to relax and promote concentration

TO PRINT
AND
COLOUR





We hope you enjoyed this first English edition of the Luci eBook!

Get even more brain health tips by subscribing to our monthly newsletter.



Subscribe

Notice

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