



Brain Bulletin

Everything I Ever Needed To Know In Life...

Inside this issue:

Builder Spotlight	2
Recipe	3
Puzzles	3
Calendar	4

Everything I ever needed to know in life, I learned from logic puzzles. I first met logic puzzles in the third grade. These were the kind sometimes called “crosshatch,” “grid,” or “matrix” style, where you use one symbol to indicate a proven match and a different symbol to indicate a proven non-match.

After years of playing these puzzles during my spare time—a student in the 6th grade class where I was assisting asked my opinion of the O.J. Simpson trial that was in all the news. I told him I didn’t have enough evidence to form an opinion. He pressed me, “But what do you **think**?” “I **think** that I don’t know,” was my answer, “and after all the information has been filtered by reporters and lawyers, I’m not sure that anyone knows enough to render a verdict.” He continued to push, insistent that I must have formed some kind of idea around O.J.’s guilt or in-



nocence. The idea that I had not formed an opinion seemed completely incomprehensible to him. In other conversations, I became aware of similar patterns of thinking: skeptics assumed that anything that was unproven was false; believers would accept many claims as proven until disproven.

From cognitive psychology I would eventually learn that there is a strong tendency in human beings to sort things into two groups (i.e. X is *either* “true” or “false”), yet somehow I had learned to sort into three: *true*, *false*, and *unproven*. Moreover, I was more comfortable than many of my peers at holding an idea as “unproven” for long periods; most folks seem uncomfortable until they have sorted out where something belongs.

I can’t say for sure, but I strongly suspect that this was something I learned from

those puzzles. After all, in order to get good at the puzzles, I had to remember that there were actually three symbols, not just two: a blank square was a kind of symbol. To solve the puzzles, I had to hold the idea in my mind that a square was blank (neither proven nor disproven) until I was prepared to assign another symbol to it. To excel, I had to hold back my impatience that a particular match had not been proven either way, or I would jump to a false conclusion and mess up my results.

This was only one of the many great lessons I learned from logic puzzles. How about you?

What lessons—big or small—have logic puzzles taught you? If you’ve never tried them, www.puzzle-bridges.com has some great starter puzzles.

(join the discussion on the blog at www.brain-trainers.net)

Brain Builder Spotlight

(The Brain Builder Spotlight is an opportunity to get to know people who are working to improve their cognitive abilities. March's Brain Builder is **Anonymous**.)

Our Brain Builder for March attends classes every month at Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc. We sat down with her recently to ask about her choice to attend brain training classes:

Brain Bulletin: How did you hear about our events?

A: The daughter of one of Elmcroft's residents told me about the class.

BB: What do you hope to get out of brain training events?

A: My mom had Alzheimer's, so I wanted to learn some tips to help keep my brain healthy.

BB: How has brain training made a difference in your life?

A: I've enjoyed the suggestions on how to break routines. This class helped give me confidence to try new things. I joined a fitness center and started going to exercise classes by myself. I would have been timid to do this before the class, but now I like challenging my brain by stepping out of my comfort level.

BB: What have you learned at your trainings?

A: When you get into a routine, your brain relaxes and doesn't work as hard.



BB: What are your favorite brain exercises?

A: I enjoyed the bridge puzzles, wearing my watch on the opposite arm, and trying new routes in traffic.

BB: What topics would you like to see in future brain training classes?

A: I'd love to see either music and the brain, or adolescent brains.

Cognitive Tests Help Determine Who Can Drive After a Stroke



(This article was written by Pascale Michelon, Ph. D., for SharpBrains.com.)

The same way a brain fitness software program can help increase driving safety for older adults, simple cognitive tests may help determine whether a person can drive safely after a stroke.

A recent study analyzed 30 previous studies in which the participants' driving skills after a stroke were tested in an on-road evaluation. 1,728 individuals with an average age

of 61 were involved. On average, 9 months had passed between the stroke and the driving evaluation. Note that 54 percent of the participants passed the on-road evaluation.

The authors of the analysis looked for tests scores that could predict the actual driving evaluation outcome. They identified 3 simple cognitive tests that did quite well:

- * a Road Sign Recognition test (assessing traffic knowledge and visual comprehension)
- * a Compass task (assessing visual-perceptual and visual-spatial abilities and mental speed)
- * the Trail Making Test B (assessing visual-motor tracking and visual scanning abilities)

Participants' scores in these tests correctly predicted whether the actual driving test would be failed for

80 to 85 percent of the unsafe drivers. A very interesting alternative to time-consuming and expensive on-road tests.

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Dr. Michelon has a Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology and is a Research Scientist at Washington University in Saint Louis, in the Psychology Department. She conducted several research projects to understand how the brain makes use of visual information and memorizes facts. She is now an Adjunct Faculty at Washington University, and teaches Memory Workshops in numerous retirement communities in the St Louis area.

# March's Brain Healthy Recipe

Dessert: Banana Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

(contributed by carrotsncake.com)

**INGREDIENTS**

- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup rolled oats (not instant)
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- 1 Tbsp ground flaxseed meal
- 1/4 cup agave nectar
- 1/4 cup soy milk (can substitute regular milk)
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp canola oil
- 1 ripe banana
- 1/2 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup walnuts, chopped

**PREPARATION**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Mix well until batter is blended evenly.
3. Use a tablespoon to portion cookies on a greased baking sheet, approximately 1-2 inches apart.
4. Bake cookies for 12-15 minutes.
5. Remove cookies from baking sheet and allow to cool on wire rack.

**Makes: 25 cookies**

## Puzzle Corner

**Insight**

**The Eighth Letter**

Which letter comes next in this sequence?

O T T F F S S

**Rhyming Riddle**

Spelled left to right, it's a man's first name, or a protective guard, for certain. Spelled right to left, it's what you do with a bow, a blank page, or a curtain. *What is it?*

**What's Going On?**

On his way home, Paul runs round a corner and sees a masked man waiting for him. He's worried, but he redoubles his speed and dashes straight at the masked man.

*Why would he do this?*

Answers from last month:

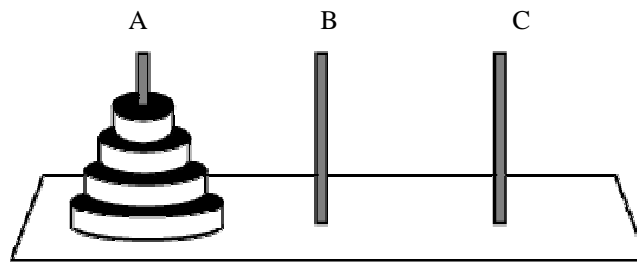
**Frame Games:** Last one standing; rough seas; dancing cheek to cheek; space travel

**Two Mathematicians:** Eight sets of ages total 36: 36-1-1; 18-2-1; 12-3-1; 9-4-1; 9-2-2; 6-6-1; 6-3-2; and 4-3-3. The totals for these sets are all different, except for 9-2-2 and 6-6-1, both of which total 13. Since the number of windows was not enough to solve the problem, the answer must be one of these two sets, and we must eliminate the other six sets. The final clue is that Steve has an "oldest boy," which he would not speak of if his oldest two were twins (6-6-1). Therefore, his oldest boy must be 9, and he has two 2-year old twins.

**Logic**

**Tower of Hanoi**

This tower is made of four stacked discs with a peg running through them. The goal is to move all the discs from peg A to peg C. Only one disc may be moved at a time. A disc can be placed either on an empty peg or on top of a larger disc. Try to move all the discs using the smallest number of moves possible.



**Don't Forget the Ham!**

If a hen and a half lays an egg and a half in a day and a half, how many eggs will three hens lay in one day?

Remember that Logic and Insight are different skills, and must be exercised differently. To learn more, see our classes on Creativity and Logic

Brain Trainers  
Mental Fitness LLC



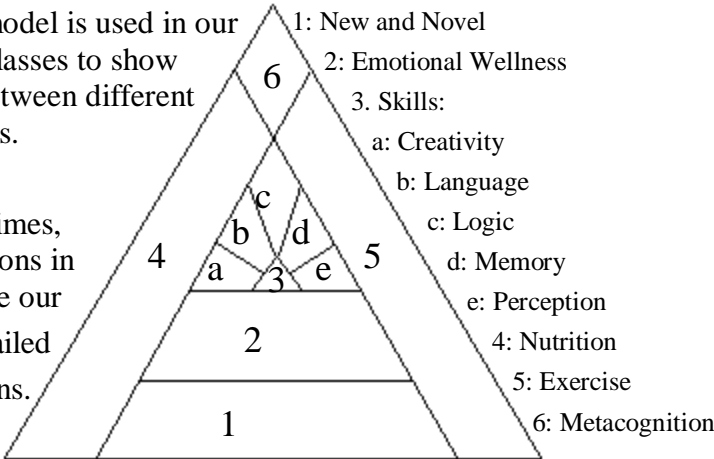
**Your Brain, Only Better.**

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# The Brain Fitness Pyramid

This pyramid model is used in our brain training classes to show relationships between different mental exercises.

See below for times, dates and locations in your area, or see our website for detailed class descriptions.



# March

| Date | Location                   | Time     | Class Name                       | Pyramid Level         |
|------|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 3/2  | Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc | 11 AM    | <b>Death, Taxes...and Stress</b> | 2: Emotional Wellness |
| 3/3  | Allegro of Fleming Island  | 10 AM    | <b>Young at Brain</b>            | 1: New & Novel        |
| 3/10 | Orange Park Senior's Ctr   | 11:30 AM | <b>Death, Taxes, and Stress</b>  | 2: Emotional Wellness |
| 3/17 | Allegro of Fleming Island  | 10 AM    | <b>Clue Chasing</b>              | 3c: Logic             |
| 3/24 | Allegro of Fleming Island  | 10 AM    | <b>Mastering Memory</b>          | 3d: Memory            |
| 3/29 | Allegro of St. Augustine   | 1 PM     | <b>Young at Brain</b>            | 1: New & Novel        |

# April

| Date | Location                   | Time     | Class Name                               | Pyramid Level                     |
|------|----------------------------|----------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4/6  | Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc | 11 AM    | <b>Special Topic: Music on the Brain</b> | 2: Emotional Wellness & 3: Skills |
| 4/7  | Allegro of Fleming Island  | 10 AM    | <b>Box Breaking</b>                      | 3a: Creativity                    |
| 4/12 | Allegro of St. Augustine   | 1 PM     | <b>Death, Taxes...and Stress</b>         | 2: Emotional Wellness             |
| 4/14 | Orange Park Senior's Ctr   | 11:30 AM | <b>Young at Brain</b>                    | 1: New & Novel                    |
| 4/19 | Allegro of Fleming Island  | 10 AM    | <b>The Ways of Words</b>                 | 3b: Language                      |
| 4/26 | Allegro of St. Augustine   | 1 PM     | <b>Clue Chasing</b>                      | 3c: Logic                         |
| 4/28 | Allegro of Fleming Island  | 10 AM    | <b>Powers of Perception</b>              | 4: Perception                     |

## Hosts & Locations

|                                                                 |                                                                                   |                                                                            |                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Allegro of Fleming Island</b><br>3651 Highway 17<br>278-4442 | <b>Allegro of St. Augustine</b><br>1101 Plantation Island Drive South<br>417-8902 | <b>Elmcroft of Timberlin Parc</b><br>7620 Timberlin Park Blvd.<br>647-4560 | <b>Orange Park Senior's Center</b><br>414 Stowe Avenue<br>269-4731 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|