

Choosing a Class for You, and Your Brain Health!

The following tips are brought to you by Memorial BrainWorks. Make your enjoyment of the South Museum of Art a contribution to your long term health as well.

- 1) **If your goal is stress reduction**, choose something you enjoy and do it at a level that requires focused attention and a little bit of a stretch to your current skill level. Often when we are deeply involved in something we enjoy and that requires our focus, we reach a state of “flow” in which our brain is very relaxed and time flies.
- 2) **If this is your first time taking a class**, choose a class that closely ties to something you've perhaps wanted to try but haven't had the time to try before. Exploring things that hold our interest keep us wanting to know a little more. Continuing our education on a top is healthy for our brain.
- 3) **If you routinely take art classes and want to try something new**, try something that uses a different medium or skill set than what you're used to using. Things that are new create new neural connections. A good decision would make it different, but ultimately not so far outside realistic that you'll find it it anxiety producing to think about participating.
- 4) **If part of your objective is to make new friends and be part of a social circle**, choose a program at the Art Museum that seems interactive and/or that might have opportunities to try things in team, pairs, or choose to volunteer for the museum. Being a part of a community keeps us plugged in and feeling connected is an important part of how we stay healthy.
- 5) **Have fun! Art is what you make it!**

“We have evidence suggesting that arts may be a way to strengthen abilities to focus attention that could benefit learning in general. We also have strengthened many correlations between arts training and specific cognitive skills that may be transferable. Until we have cause-and-effect evidence we cannot predict with certainty whether arts training will produce cognitive improvements, but these strengthened correlations provide an important step forward in learning how better to learn. We have instituted educational strategies based on far less.

And one must always remember, one can't lose with training in the arts. It brings so much to life in terms of enjoyment, metaphor and preparation for the uncertainties of our existence.”

Dr. Michael Gazzaniga as quoted in the article **Learning, Arts, and the Brain : A Conversation with Michael S. Gazzaniga** By Carolyn Asbury in May 22, 2008.

Dr. Gazzaniga is director of the University of California, Santa Barbara's SAGE Center for the Study of the Mind and its Summer Institute in Cognitive Neuroscience. He serves on the President's Council on Bioethics and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Dr. Gazzaniga led the three-year, seven-university consortium that issued the report “[Learning, Arts, and the Brain.](http://www.dana.org/news/features/detail.aspx?id=12466)” Full article can be found at : <http://www.dana.org/news/features/detail.aspx?id=12466>