

The importance of lifelong learning



The process of learning throughout your life is complex and remarkable. It began when you were born, and you've been learning ever since. And you can never be too old to learn.

School and courses are only one aspect of the learning journey. Think about your life and what you've done. Also, the way you once lived and how different life is now. You've been an amazing learning machine for decades!

Being curious and nurturing the motivation for discovery is good for your brain. There are also many ways you can motivate yourself to learn.

What is lifelong learning?

Lifelong learning is simply doing something that satisfies your need to explore, learn and grow. Let curiosity guide you. You'll improve your quality of life and sense of self-worth by paying attention to what inspires you.

Adult life is full of responsibility and commitments, so it's natural to shy away from trying new things. Later in life there can be more time to pursue interests. However, when you've been living within your comfort zone, it's easy to forget how much fun it can be to face a new challenge.

There's joy in learning new things because it can give you a sense of satisfaction and mastery. It's also a great way to keep active and make new friends.

Your brain needs new experiences

Starting something new can help stimulate your brain and promote neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change and adapt in response to new experiences.

Learning new things improves neuroplasticity. Your brain's ability to adapt to change means you're able to learn even more. Being absorbed in a new activity can also improve the way you experience life.

It doesn't matter what you explore, or how you choose to learn. You don't even have to be good at what interests you. Being curious and experiencing the process of learning is all your brain needs to maintain neuroplasticity.

Your checklist for lifelong learning

1. Be curious and let your curiosity guide you. You never know where your interests will lead you.
2. Motivate yourself to start. Figuring out what inspires you is a reminder you can do things in life that you want to do.
3. Lifelong learning is free. However, if you can afford it, invest in yourself when you are genuinely motivated to learn something that isn't free.
4. Aim to enjoy the challenge of the process. This is better for your brain than being good at what you're learning.
5. Try new things on a regular basis. For more information, get in touch with one of our helpful team on 1800 951 971.



Examples of lifelong learning

There's no end to what you can learn. There are also endless ways to acquire knowledge, develop skills, or simply challenge yourself more regularly. Some popular ways include:

- **Being open to experiences** and pursuing interests that connect you with others. 'It's probably better for brain health to have a conversation over lunch with a friend than to memorise numbers in reverse,' says Barry Gordon, a John Hopkins Professor of Neurology and Director of Cognitive Neurology/Neuropsychology.
- **Self-taught study.** For example, taking online courses, reading books and articles on a topic of interest, watching educational videos, learning a new language, or attending lectures.
- **Developing new skills.** For example, gardening, public speaking, reading music, photography, painting, pottery, or work-related skills needed for a different job or voluntary role.
- **Learning a new sport or activity.** For example, yoga, dance, martial arts, Tai Chi, table tennis, pickleball, water aerobics, or an exercise program taught by a personal trainer.
- **Learning to use new technology.** For example, smart devices and apps, new generation TVs and appliances, gaming consoles, or driving a new car.
- **Learning to teach others** the valuable skills you've mastered in your life.

How to be a lifelong learner

1. Recognise your own personal interests and goals.
2. Make a list of what you would like to learn or be able to do.
3. Think about how you would like to get involved and the resources available to you. For more information about this, you can take the LiveUp quiz or get in touch with one of our helpful team on 1800 951 971.
4. Make the commitment to yourself or a trusted friend and take the first steps to do it.
5. Your interests may change or expand. When it's time to move on and learn something else, repeat this process.

No age limit to learn

There are no age limits to learning. This has been backed up in hundreds of studies. Researchers are now paying more attention to neuroplasticity as we age. There's even a study proving that age isn't a barrier for learning new motor skills.

Older adults all over the world are demonstrating the benefits of lifelong learning every day. This is one of the best ways to stay engaged, keep active, and make new connections with like-minded people.

It's also never too late to find out more about something you've always wanted to learn. The most remarkable example of this is Mary Walker. She was born into slavery in mid-19th-century Alabama and learnt to read at the age of 116!

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How to use this information

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