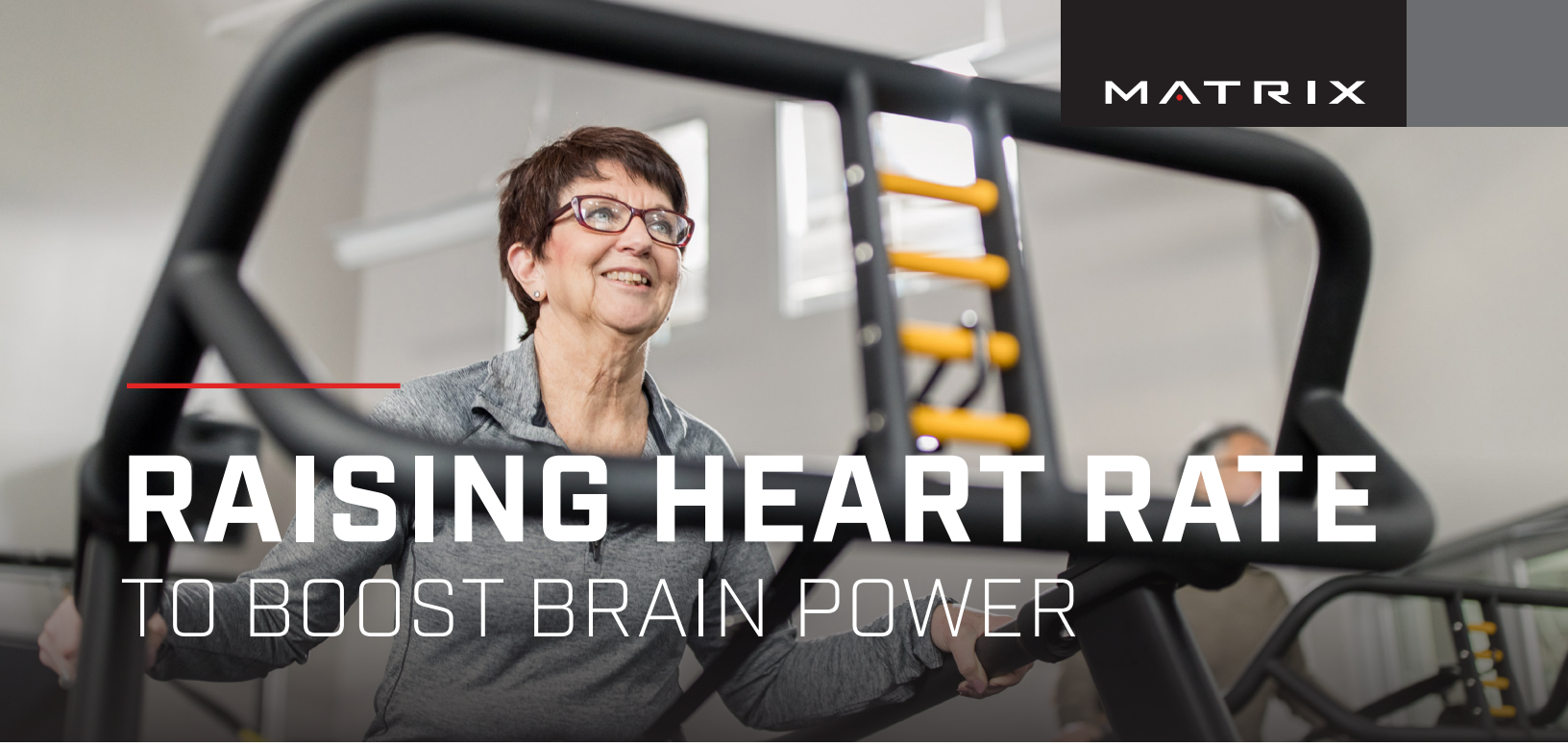


RAISING HEART RATE TO BOOST BRAIN POWER

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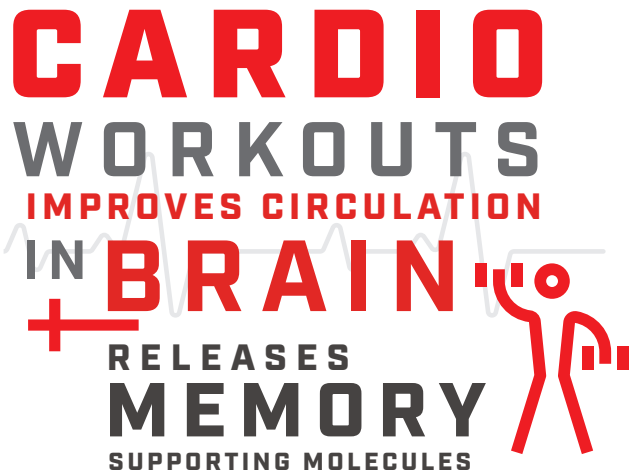
Surveys of health club members over the age of 60 suggest that most recognize the general mental benefits of exercise, yet many still put off joining a health club and making exercise part of their routine. As a fitness professional, you can help them bridge the gap between intention and action by identifying the specific mental advantages of regular exercise. This can help you acquire new members from this underserved demographic and keep them engaged in the exercise experience.

Exercise Maintains Memory

Empower your members and help them make the decision to keep returning by highlighting the benefits of regular exercise. Start by letting them know that exercise matters when it comes to clear thinking. In fact, a commitment to exercise is among the top lifestyle factors that preserves memory. Although small reductions in memory performance begin around age 60 in most individuals, those who exercise can avoid the cognitive decline and preserve memory.

Reducing Risk of Cognitive Decline

Approximately one in four individuals over age 80 have dementia, but exercise reduces this risk significantly. Dementia is a progressive brain disease affecting more than 55 million individuals worldwide, with nearly 40% of 50- to 64-year-olds having a family member with dementia. Simply staving off dementia and the enormous impact it has on the individual and their loved ones can be a powerful motivator for older adults in your fitness facility.



Keep the Cardio

Strength training continues to trend in popularity and is essential for older individuals to maintain their bone and muscle health. Yet research indicates that exclusively strength-based workouts are limited in their ability to improve memory compared to cardio. By elevating the heart rate, cardio workouts both improve circulation in the brain and release memory-supporting molecules. This combination provides the same-day benefit of improving alertness and focus in a way that makes it easier to stay on-task and learn new information. Strength workouts tend to reach lower overall intensities than cardio, providing less challenge to the heart and blood vessels, with little to no release of memory-supporting molecules. The combination of strength and cardio is ideal for fostering both mental and physical health, so we should encourage members to make cardio a part of their routine.

Offering a Better Balance

Fitness facilities offer older adults a convenient way to strike a balance between cardio and strength-based workouts by providing a variety of equipment and group classes. In addition to supporting well-rounded workouts, this variety of options also lets members to focus on specific areas of their body they want to improve. They can even stay active as they recover from orthopedic injuries and find joint-friendly exercise options that are ideal for those with arthritis or over-use injuries. To help older adults make the most of all you offer, make sure your entire staff can direct them to low-impact cardio options and strength-training solutions that fit their unique needs.

The Importance of New Experiences

It's essential to note that new experiences are beneficial for brain health because novelty activates many of the same regions of the brain as cardio exercise. Yet many health club patrons establish fixed routines and fail to try new options that keep workouts fresh and challenging. By encouraging members to give new equipment a try, you can help them avoid burnout and stay engaged with exercise that challenges both the body and the brain in new ways.



Memorable Benefits

By encouraging a balanced workout that includes cardio, fitness professionals like you can help older adults maintain and even improve their physical fitness and their brain health. With regular exercise, they'll be able to keep doing the things they love and making memories well into advanced age.

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Dr. Karlie Intlekofer is a neuroscientist who focuses on the benefits of exercise for brain health and well-being. She has a background in research and teaching at the university level and focuses on exercise motivation and brain areas involved in stress, learning and memory. Her passion in this field is bolstered by experience working with a wide range of ages and abilities as a personal trainer and group exercise instructor. As the Global Wellness Researcher at Matrix Fitness, Karlie integrates evidence-based practices into exercise programming and develops initiatives that support an enduring habit of physical activity.