

Movement and Mental Sharpness

Does staying physically active improve cognitive function? Or is it the opposite. Does high cognitive function enable all of us that are aging to stay active and live more healthfully in general?

The answer to both questions it turns out is a resounding, yes! A recent study that examined approximately 4,500 individuals, ages 40 and older, analyzed their relationship between physical activity and work related “executive function” (the ability to solve problems, set and meet goals, and exert self-control). These specific mental functions directly influence how individuals are able to perform every day at their jobs; whether they are office jobs or outside manual labor positions – being an occupational athlete.

The results indicated that over a six-year period the individuals who were physically active tended to retain high executive function later into life. The researchers controlled for variables such as age, gender, education, and health. Interestingly, people with higher executive function were more likely to stay physically active. The two seem to be tied together in a highly complementary way.

In addition to benefiting from engagement in healthy behaviors such as daily physical activity and eating a healthy diet, executive function is also likely to be necessary for the initiation and maintenance of such behaviors, according to the study.

The moral of the story is that the more you move, the more active you are, the better you will be not only at your work – focusing and using your brain, but in your overall life.