

## Counselor's Corner, March 2015

### "Brain Games – Help or Hype?" by Robin McMilin



Baby Boomers may think that online “brain games” might be a mental fountain of youth, but top scientists say, “not so.” An international group of scientists has publicly panned the growing brain-game industry, saying current research just does not support the suggestion that structured computer games lead to better brain health or performance. Many of us have seen the advertising for these games, which plays on the fear of an aging population. We all agree that it is important to keep studying how the brain learns and what people can do to boost mental agility or hold off the effects of aging, but the science doesn’t support the claims of many brain-game providers.

Scientists are particularly concerned about the claims or implications that brain games will prevent, slow or reverse Alzheimer’s disease. They said such statements are “devoid of any scientifically credible evidence.” They also note that the brain game industry brings in \$1.3 billion a year in revenue.

Those who want to stay mentally sharp are better off following a prescription that has been shown to have the best outcomes: a healthy diet, regular exercise and a good dose of social activity.

- A balanced diet high in fresh fruits, vegetables, and proteins, and lower in carbohydrates and saturated fats is recommended.
- Most experts agree that half an hour of moderate physical activity several days a week, or 150 minutes a week is a good goal. If that seems daunting, start with a few minutes a day, and increase the amount you exercise by 5 or 10 minutes every week until you reach your goal.
- Finally, connecting with others is an important component. Make time to spend with family and friends—perhaps go for a walk or share a meal and cover two areas at once!

*If you would like to learn more about tactics that will help brain health, please contact CJFS at 879-3438 to get in touch with someone who can provide you more information. If you or a loved one has a memory disorder, please contact Pam Leonard, CJFS CARES program director, for more information about that program.*