

For Effective Brain Fitness, Do More Than Play Simple Games

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The New York Times:

WHEN a “brain fitness” course was introduced at her retirement community, Connie Cole was eager to sign up. After joining, she learned how to use an Apple iPad and work more complex tasks verbally and on paper.

“My father had dementia, so I’ll do anything I can,” said Ms. Cole, 86, a former elementary schoolteacher who also plays Sudoku puzzles every morning. “If I can give my kids anything, it’s to stay away from having it.”

Truth is, there is no known cure for dementia, or any evidence that exercising the brain in different ways can delay the onset of Alzheimer’s. But such classes still offer useful skills to older people and are seen as helpful by many experts in improving the overall health and quality of life for participants.

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When playing brain games, you get better at playing games, said Laura Carstensen, founding director of the center. But there is no evidence that you will get smarter and fitter.

Still, new learning is helpful, she added, especially interacting rather than passively listening. One good exercise is learning to be a photographer, she said, which translates into better performance on spatial tests.

Read the whole story: [*The New York Times*](#)