

As seen in



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Doctor says training, diet can 'save' brains

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Staff Writer

Ask Dr. Paul Bendheim, founder, chairman and CEO of BrainSavers, if there are any ties between his work and his Judaism and he'll immediately point out the connection.

"From a Jewish cultural perspective, there's a lot that ties in," he says. "The Jewish people have always been a people of the book, a learned people. And so, I think in that respect, there's a natural (connection) between a brain-healthy lifestyle and Judaism."

Launched in 2004 and based in Scottsdale, BrainSavers states its goal is to "assist others in maintaining healthy minds, as well as reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other memory disorders, by adopting healthier habits like regular mental and physical exercise and nutritional eating into their lives," at brainsavers.com.

In December 2009, Bendheim published his first book — which comes with a DVD — titled "The Brain Training Revolution: A Proven Workout For Healthy Brain Aging" (Sourcebooks, \$25 hardcover). He says he took on the task because a number of colleagues told him it would be a good way to get his brain-healthy message out, as well as to market his company.

"(The book) lays out the science (behind brain aging) in hopefully easy-to-understand terms, and then it gives people a step-by-step way to start building a brain-healthy lifestyle," says Bendheim.

"When I was a medical student, I was taught what was the dogma of the aging brain," says Bendheim, who graduated

from University of Arizona College of Medicine in 1976. "You were born with a hard-wired brain and there's nothing you can do about it. After the age of 40, like most organs, it would slowly deteriorate.

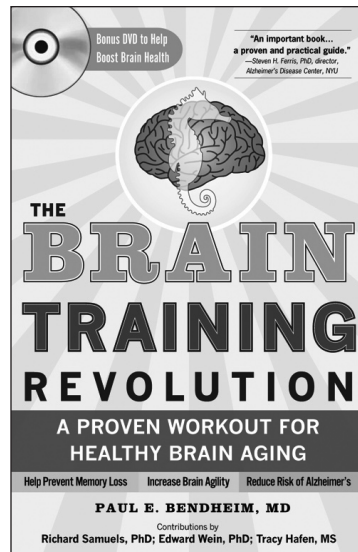
"These new discoveries have shown that the brain is plastic, which means it can change its shape. It's now been shown both at a microscopic level and a macroscopic level. If you exercise your brain like a muscle, challenge it with intellectually challenging

activities, you actually grow new connections and you form what we call 'brain reserve,' which is analogous to physical reserve."

Bendheim says he came up with the idea for his company while living in Israel. He took a visiting-professor position — the Max and Rosie Varon Visiting Professor of Neurobiology — at the Weizmann

Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, in 1991, and ended up staying until 2004. He moved back to the Valley because he thought he would have an easier time starting up his new company in the United States.

Currently, BrainSavers has two major projects. The first is its BrainSavers bars, which are kosher snacks and are sold in all Arizona Whole Foods and Arizona Sunflower Markets, among other retailers. Bendheim says he plans to



introduce more snacks and beverages down the line.

The second project is the brain-and-body total-fitness program. That program is marketed to health insurers, who then provide it as a benefit to their clients. Bendheim says that ideally the clients will attend the hour-long class — which consists of brain-healthy exercises, modest physical exercise, brain-healthy nutrition and takes place in a social setting — three times a week. BrainSavers

just signed its first contractual agreement with SCAN Health Plan Arizona, according to Bendheim.

"Medicare, for what it's worth, spends three times as much per year on a 70-year-old with Alzheimer's disease than it does on someone who's 70 who doesn't have Alzheimer's disease," says Bendheim, adding that delaying the onset of the disease saves \$55,000 per person per year. "You can't measure the emotional cost of this disease, ... but on the financial side, we can calculate exactly what it costs.

"Losing one's mind, memory loss and Alzheimer's disease is the number-one fear now in (Americans) over 50. A number of surveys have documented that. People still fear cancer in this country, or stroke or heart disease or death, but losing their mind is their number-one fear. This is a wonderful opportunity to help people with that, based on real science."



Dr. Paul Bendheim