

# The Gray Matter



"The Gray Matter" is a monthly publication of WNC Brain Tumor Support.  
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## January 2006



### From the desk of George....

Dear friends,

Greetings!

I hope that everyone had a nice Christmas or whatever you celebrate! And how about this...It's a New Year! Is it 2005 or is it 2006? I have to check a calendar or a newspaper every once in a while to know the date! It seems like it was 2004 last year, and I finally got that out of my head and started writing checks dated 2005. Now that I have gotten used to writing 2005, here it is, 2006, just after I got used to 2005! Oh well...

Most of us enjoyed a good 2005. Most of our local members had a pretty good year, and the ones that had some problems seem to be doing fairly good right now. Some of us have many questions and concerns. 2005 is gone, and it is like a new start with the New Year. Don't try to read too much into the future. Love everyday, and don't worry about things that we cannot control. Where have I heard that before? :)

**George Plym**  
President, WNC BTS

### 4 Steps: Improve Your Memory in 14 Days

Is there anything more frustrating than forgetting where you put your car keys? As we age, some brain cells may deteriorate or function less efficiently, potentially affecting our speed of mental processing and ability to retrieve information rapidly--or find the car keys.

Now a new study from the University of California, Los Angeles offers a four-step plan to improve your memory with noticeable changes in just two weeks.

Follow these four steps to sharpen your memory:

#### 1. Memory Training

Throughout the day, stimulate your brain with fun brainteasers, crossword puzzles and memory exercises that

emphasize verbal skills.

#### 2. Healthy Diet

Eat five small meals every day, including a balanced diet rich in omega-3 fats, low-glycemic index carbohydrates (that is, whole grains) and antioxidants. Eating five small meals throughout the day prevents dips in blood glucose levels and glucose is the primary energy source for the brain.

#### 3. Physical Fitness

Take brisk walks with stretching every day to promote physical fitness, something that has been found to reduce the risk of Alzheimer's Disease.

#### 4. Stress Reduction

Use stretching and relaxation exercises to manage stress. Stress causes the body to release cortisol, which plays an important role in memory preservation. Cortisol can impair memory and has been found to shrink the memory centers in the brain.

Led by Dr. Gary Small, the UCLA study showed that when participants did these four things daily for just two weeks, there was a noticeable memory improvement as measured with a positron emission tomography (PET) scan. Physically, those who followed this program saw a 5 percent decrease in brain metabolism in the dorsal lateral prefrontal region of the brain, which is directly linked to working memory and other cognitive functions, suggesting they were using their brain more efficiently. In addition, they all reported improved memory and demonstrated better performance on a cognitive measure controlled by this same brain region.

"We've known for years that diet and exercise can help people maintain their physical health, which is a key component of healthy aging," said Small in a statement. "But maintaining mental health is just as important. Now we have evidence which suggests that people can preserve their memory by adding memory exercises and stress reduction to this routine.

Tip: Oh, about those car keys. If you keep them in the same place all the time, you'll always know where they are.

### **Brain Work**

I know that some of you like doing jigsaw puzzles, while others of us like computer games. I ran across these today. Online jig saw puzzles. I only worked 1 and it was not too difficult after you learn to listen for the clicks (sound made when a piece is put in the right place. I am sure there are more sites out there with puzzles.

Feel free to forward this to others that you think might enjoy this. Here is a link to some easy ones I found at Discovery channel's website. There are probably others out there, and maybe some that are harder but I like to start with something kind of easy so that I don't get frustrated!

Online jig saw puzzles from American chopper ...

<http://dsc.discovery.com/fansites/amchopper/puzzles/puzzles.html> and a very good one is JigZone.com.

Ray Wilson

(Editor Comment: Puzzles make you think and is a great to wake-up brain cells! If you don't have access to a computer, you can buy puzzles at the One Dollar Store)

Submitted by Ray Wilson, member. Thanks Ray!

## Fifth Annual Christmas Celebration

The fifth annual Christmas Celebration of the Western North Carolina Brain Tumor Support was held on Dec. 20 instead of Dec. 17th due to having to postpone our scheduled party because of icy conditions. Twenty people attended the always popular event. Matthew started the evening with prayer followed with food and great desserts. Then it was time for couple songs from George on the guitar, including "Happy Birthday" as we all sang Happy Birthday to Virginia and Bridgette. No ages were mentioned! :)

The group split up into two groups as Jan had some Christmas song trivia games to play. The winning team was rewarded with candy canes. The group facilitator, George, then spoke for a short while about how proud he was that we were all back again this year and how important it is to live like there will not be another Christmas. He stressed how precious everyday is to the brain tumor survivors and not to become complacent or take life for granted. We then watched a slide show of all of the things that the Western North Carolina Brain Tumor Support had done though the year including last year's Christmas Celebration, the Health Fair, the special speaker Dr. Shaw, spaghetti supper and our survivor's picnic.

It was after that, that we started playing our gift exchange, "Santa's Bag". Bridgette had a bowl with pieces of paper, numbered 1 to 20, and everybody drew a number. You could pick a gift on the table, or "steal" someone else's that they had already picked. In the end, I think everyone was satisfied with their gifts and we had a great time laughing, teasing and joking. After all of the gifts were passed out or traded, Virginia spoke about some of the very special gifts that she had made for all of us. They were called "Guardian Angel Bags", that included things like glitter to remind you to keep positive thoughts and look on the bright side. Thank you Virginia (and Gwen :) for thinking of us! The last part of the program was a drawing for doors prizes. Some of our regulars were sick or not able to attend due to prior commitments. We missed you!

The next thing that we realized, was that a 8:30! We all hugged and wished each other a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year as we parted. It was a great night.

Pictures from the event will soon be posted on our scrapbook page on the website.

## Events

**Mark your calendars!  
Visit our online  
calendar for more info  
on events.**



## Upcoming Events

### Jan 19, Thursday

- WNC BTS meeting at West Presbyterian Church Hall, 690 Haywood Rd., Asheville (west). Refreshments at 6:15, meeting 6:30-8:00.

### Feb 16, Thursday


- WNC BTS meeting at West Presbyterian Church Hall, 690 Haywood Rd., Asheville (west). Refreshments at 6:15, meeting 6:30-8:00.

### Mar 16, Thursday

- WNC BTS meeting at West Presbyterian Church Hall, 690 Haywood Rd., Asheville (west). Refreshments at 6:15, meeting 6:30-8:00.

### Parking at Normal Meeting Place

The best place to park is in the Suntrust bank drive-thru parking directly along the drive of the adjoining the church. Do not park next to the night deposit box! If you park in the back lot of the church, for security reasons, the back door will be locked at 6:30. So, park on the side of the bank!

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inclement weather policy</b></p> <p>The following procedure will be observed for inclement weather conditions for WNC Brain Tumor Support functions. We will go by A-B Tech. night class policy.</p> <p>Announcements concerning WNC BTS (A-B Tech) will be made by 3:30 pm on local radio and TV stations for night classes. A voice mail message will be recorded on the switchboard.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hmmm</b></p> <p>Do Lipton employees take coffee breaks?</p> <p>Why does Hawaii have interstate highways?</p> <p>What was the best thing before sliced bread?</p> <p>Why do they put Braille on the drive through bank machines?</p> <p>If you get cheated by the Better Business Bureau, who do you complain to?</p> <p>Where does Santa go to the bathroom?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HAPPY BIRTHDAY</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>January Birthdays</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">No birthdays on file</p>

