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AARP Survey Suggests Engaging in Brain-Stimulating Activities May Help Improve Brain Health

Staying Sharp by AARP provides holistic approach and tools to help keep the brain active

WASHINGTON, DC—According to AARP's **recently released survey** of more than 1,100 Americans over age 40, those who participate in cognitively stimulating activities (CSAs) self-report improved cognitive functioning, health, and well-being than those who don't participate in CSAs.

CSAs examined in the survey include musical and creative activities, educational activities, physical exercise, socializing, and playing games and puzzles. Adults over age 40 engage in an average of eight CSAs per week. Those who rate their cognitive abilities as being "excellent" engage in a greater than average number of CSAs than those who rate their status as "poor."

"Put simply, this survey is telling us that, if you work your brain, your brain will work for you," said Gary Small, M.D., director of the UCLA Longevity Center at the Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior. "Working your brain is easy and involves simple activities like taking a walk, spending time with friends or reading a book. AARP's Staying Sharp and other great resources can help inform you on how to keep your brain active and sharp."

Key findings from AARP's 2017 Cognitive Activity and Brain Health Survey:

- **Most Popular Activities:** According to survey respondents, the most popular CSAs include: consuming news (81%), cooking/preparing meals (78%), reading (66%), exercising or engaging in physical activity (56%), and socializing with friends/family (50%).
- **Women More Engaged:** Women engage in CSAs more often than men, at a weekly average of 9.2 vs. 7.5. Women also have a greater intent than men to add more mentally-stimulating activities into their routine, at 50% vs. 39%.
- **Opportunity to Educate:** When asked about the barriers that keep them from participating in CSAs, the highest number of survey respondents noted that they were unsure which activities help promote brain health (35%). The second most frequently selected response was lack of social support (26%).

Staying Sharp is a subscription-based brain health platform from AARP featuring science-based activities, challenges, recipes and articles to help promote brain health. Some of the key takeaways from the survey can be addressed by the content and features of the platform, including:

- **Detailed, Practical Information on CSAs:** Categorized under NOURISH (diet), MOVE (exercise), RELAX (managing stress), DISCOVER (learning new things) and CONNECT (being social), there are a number of articles, videos and activities to help inspire activity to promote brain health.
- **Brain Health Assessment:** Developed by scientists, this is made up of a series of questions and tasks that help people understand how their brain functions in different areas, receiving personalized recommendations for promoting brain health.

These and more tips and information can be found at <http://stayingsharp.org>.

More information about the survey can be found [here](#).

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About Staying Sharp

Staying Sharp is a subscription-based platform from AARP. This product is part of AARP's commitment to provide reliable information on brain health. Staying Sharp uses a holistic approach to provide science-based, personalized tools and recommendations that allow subscribers to track and measure their brain health progress using five key focus areas or "pillars": NOURISH (eating right), MOVE (keeping fit), RELAX (managing stress), DISCOVER (learning new things), and CONNECT (being social). To learn more, go to www.stayingsharp.org.

About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the world's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

*AARP Survey was fielded online, May 3-18, 2017 among a nationally representative sample of 1,140 Americans age 40+.

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