

Neurobics

Personal growth and brain growth happen outside our comfort zone. Great thinkers and doers are well-rounded and well-read and take part in a variety of activities. They constantly strive to experience new sources of enlightenment by pushing boundaries, making new connections, and seeing themselves and the world in new ways. Neurobic exercises help motivate us to take risks and step into areas where we have been afraid in order to expand our minds and grow intellectually and emotionally.

Neurobics (neuron + aerobics) are stretching exercises to increase oxygen and give our brain's neurons more life by experiencing or participating in some new activity, situation, or event. When we stretch our mind, it never returns to its previous shape. Research indicates that taxing the brain (making it 'sweat') with unfamiliar exercises can improve our ability to learn, remember, and solve problems.

For this class, your neurobics exercise must be something you don't ordinarily do and appropriate for brain expansion. It could be attending a live performing arts event, beginning an exercise program or playing a new sport, changing your diet or breaking a bad habit, visiting a new place, etc. Focus on your weakest areas: if language skills are weak - learn a new word every day; if it's math - put away the calculator. Enter into your neurobic event with an open, clear mind. Allow events to change you. Be willing to grow. Be open to new experiences and be willing to be changed by them. Learn something new, see new things, respect other people, open yourself, and enrich your life. Get into the world, participate, and enjoy.

Neurobics can:

- Feed great inspiring new information to your brain.
- Help you to enjoy and appreciate diversity.
- Broaden, stretch, and expand your creative thinking.
- Change your life: break out of ruts and grow.
- Spice up your life and add some fun.
- Encourage you to be an active, alive participant in the world.
- Help you to pay attention and not let life just drift by.
- Help you to understand someone or something who/that was a mystery.

Sample neurobic activities

- Walk backwards for a day
- Watch no TV for a full week
- Move more: jogging, walking, hiking
- Change eating habits
- Quit smoking
- Use your non-dominant hand for a day
- Drive into the country and watch the sunrise
- Learn how to play chess
- Solve a crossword puzzle and/or Sudoku each morning
- Practice yoga or meditation
- Start a conversation with one new person everyday for a week
- Sample bizarre (to you) foods
- Begin and continue to write in a journal
- Volunteer at a food bank
- Volunteer at a school

- Cover all your mirrors for a week
- Drive a different route to work/school for a week
- Do not access Facebook or any social network for a day
- Eat alone in a restaurant during the lunch or dinner hour
- Do not talk for a day or two
- Take a road trip with no agenda
- Go to a church where you've never been for a week-end service

Examples of activities/events to attend

- Live theater or music performance
- National Cowboy Museum
- Regional museum, science museum, zoo
- Museums and events at other universities
- Cultural festivals
- Arbuckle Wilderness
- Walk the labyrinth on campus

Inspiration from others

- Andre Gide
 - People cannot discover new lands until they have the courage to lose sight of the shore.
- April Greiman
 - I like to step into areas where I am afraid. Fear is a sign that I am going in the right direction.
- Eleanor Roosevelt
 - Do one thing every day that scares you.
- Frank Scully
 - Why not go out on a limb? Isn't that where the fruit is?
- Grace Hopper
 - A ship is safe in a harbor. But a harbor is not what a ship is for.
- Jim Watson
 - It's all a game. To play is to win. To not play is to lose.
 - The simple act of trying raises your chances for success immediately. Not trying guarantees failure.
 - Strive to control your mental attitude, your attitude controls your behavior, and your behavior controls your environment.
- Mark Twain
 - Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do.
- Mate Steinforth
 - Keep open to new influences, go out and actively look and explore the world and let yourself be inspired by it. There's so much amazing stuff around that it shouldn't be too hard.
- Notre Dame
 - Those who are afraid of being different will never make a difference.
- Oprah Winfrey
 - You are the single biggest influence in your life.

- Plato
 - The life which is unexamined is not worth living.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson
 - Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.
- Richard Devos
 - This is an exciting world. Great moments wait around every corner.
- Wayne Gretzky
 - You miss 100% of the shots you never take.

The word *neurobics* was created by James Robert Watson, PhD, Copyright: 1988

<http://www.jamesrobertwatson.com/neurobics.html>

Neurobic activities project

Procedure

Enjoy the activity or experience (don't worry about taking notes); complete the Neurobics Report as soon as possible afterwards. Submit a Report to the Dropbox by 3:30 pm on the due date; see class schedule and D2L. Each will be worth 20 points for a total of 80 points.

Specs

- Use only the form provided.
- Give clear explanations – one page only.
- Proofread for correct spelling and grammar.
- Meet each deadline.
- Each neurobic activity must:
 1. Have occurred during the week before turning in the form.
 2. Be self-initiated (can't be required for this class or another class).
 3. Be significant to you.

Evaluation

Follow the specs and you will earn 20 points per report (80 total). You will lose points for misspelled words or poor grammar, if it was not a truly new or significant experience for you, if you did not initiate the neurobic, and if you do not reflect meaningfully on the experience and how it affected you.

Neurobics Report

Print name

The neurobic event or activity

Place of event
or activity

Date(s) of event or activity

Why does the event or activity qualify a neurobic for you?

How did you grow or change through this experience? That is, see something you can't unsee; learn something you can't unknow; or make some longer-term change in behavior.