

# Enrichment Activities for Seniors

Provided by  
California Community College  
Emeritus Programs

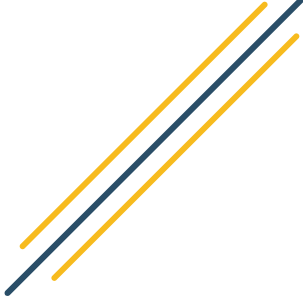
Presenter:  
Professor Pat Mosteller

SAN DIEGO  
CONTINUING  
EDUCATION



# CCC Continuing Education offers **FREE** classes for 55+

- **State funded through tax dollars**  
(> 1 cent of every dollar designated for education in CA)
- **Designed for students aged 55+**
- **Class Size Requirement (25 students)**
- **Community Partnerships**



**All SDCE Emeritus  
Classes Focus on  
Health and Wellbeing  
(regardless of subject)**

# Relevant and Meaningful Content


- Subject matter (wide range)
- Engaging  
(of interest and pertinent to seniors)
- Variety of courses
- Community input/requests

# Popular Courses:

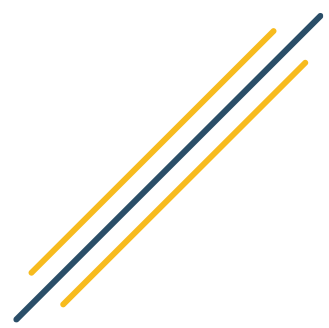
- Art / Art Appreciation / Ceramics
- Piano / Guitar / Ukulele
- Band / Orchestra / Chorus
- Music Appreciation / Joy of Opera
- Health (multiple versions and levels)
- Brain Fitness
- Technology / Social Media
- Nutrition
- Floral Arranging
- Retirement Living
- Rediscovering San Diego

# Teaching Strategies & Learning Styles



- Recognize past experience
  - Pace and learning styles
  - Peer interaction / support / sharing
  - Personal relevance
  - Brain-based teaching techniques promote positive aging
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# Positive Aging



- **Healthy lifestyle choices** promoted in every class.
- Teaching **strategies** address senior learning and support **brain health**.
- Stress **positive psychology, happiness, and wellbeing**.
- **Stress reduction**

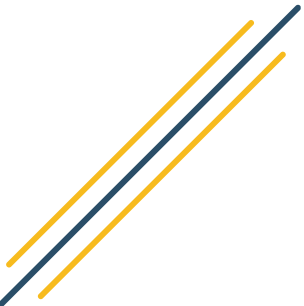




# Unique Classes

(that you should try)


Designed to incorporate “healthy learning”  
elements.






# Brain Fitness Classes



- Brain training exercises (Posit Science BrainHQ)
  - Latest research on brain health
  - Fascinating interactive lessons
    - also offered online (at home)
  - Everyday brain fitness activities
    - Volunteering
    - Generosity
    - Happiness
    - Focus and Attention
    - Novelty
    - Mindfulness / Stress reduction
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# Rediscovering San Diego



- Field trip class
  - A new venue every week
  - Professional docents
  - Online lessons with videos
  - Community resources / opportunities
  - Out-and-about with friends
  - Novel sights and experiences
  - Relevant to senior interests
  - Interesting topics
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# Online Classes

- Easy access
- At home instruction
- Beautiful interactive format
- Individual pace
- Share and discuss
- Live Zoom sessions
- Optional land classes
- Faculty and peer interaction

# The Vagus Nerve and Vagal Nerve Stimulation (VNS)

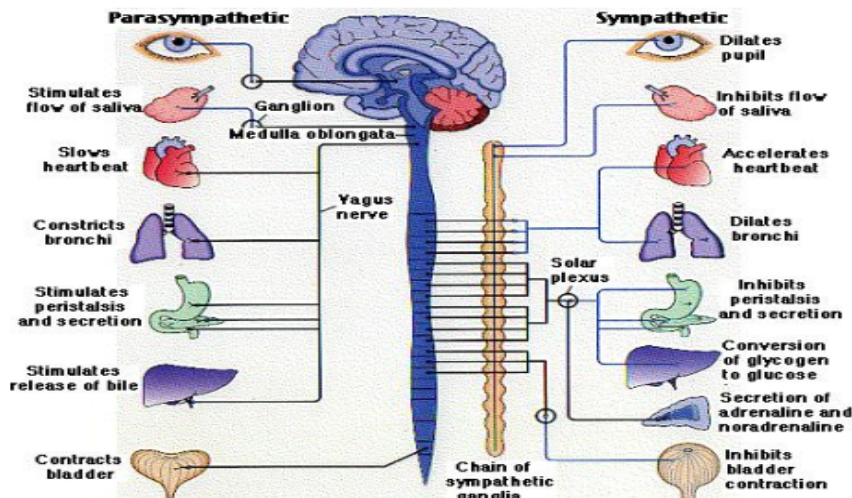
The vagus nerve is one of the major nerves in the body, and supplies all the major organs. It is also a key factor in health. This week, we will learn all about the vagus nerve, how it interacts with the brain, and how stimulating the vagus nerve is being used to treat many physical and mental conditions. You will also learn some practical ways to stimulate the vagus nerve on your own.

## What is the vagus nerve?

(Fogoros, 2018) (Seladi-Schulman, 2018)

The vagus nerve is the longest nerve of the autonomic nervous system. It helps to regulate many systems including heart rate, blood pressure, sweating, digestion and even speaking.

The vagus nerve is one pair of the 12 cranial nerves in the body which link the brain to other areas of the body. The vagus nerve has both sensory and motor functions.



There are two vagus nerves, the left and the right, but doctors usually refer to them together as the vagus nerve. It helps control muscles of the throat and voicebox, plays a major role in the regulation of heart rate and keeps the gastrointestinal tract working. It also carries sensory information from the internal organs to the brain.

It is significant because it is the major parasympathetic nerve of the body. It is responsible for the gag reflex, the cough reflex when the ear canal is stimulated, slowing the heart rate, controlling sweating, regulating blood pressure, digestion and controlling vascular tone.

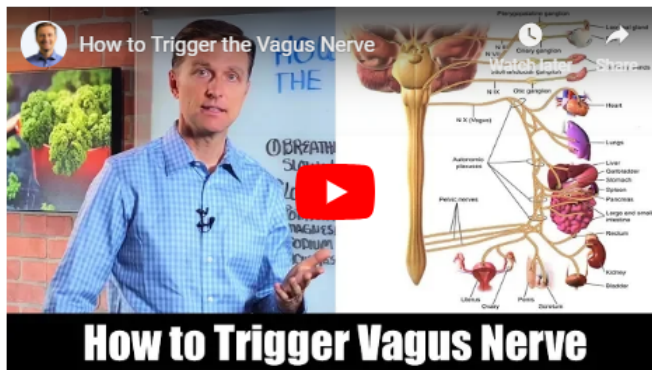
- Vagus nerve stimulation is now a burgeoning field of medical study known as bioelectronics. These implants which deliver electric impulses to various body parts are used to treat illness with fewer medications and fewer side effects.

## More ways to stimulate the vagus nerve naturally

(Fallis, 2017)

Here are some ways that you can stimulate the vagus nerve naturally:

- **Cold exposure:** Acute cold exposure has been shown to activate the vagus nerve and activate cholinergic neurons through vagus nerve pathways. Cold exposure over a regular basis can lower your sympathetic "fight or flight" response and increase parasympathetic activity. If you aren't up for a cold shower, you can try sticking your face in ice-cold water instead.
- **Deep and slow breathing:** Taking slower breaths (about 6 over a minute) activates the vagus nerve and has been shown to relieve stress. Breathing should be from the diaphragm.
- **Singing, humming, chanting and gargling:** These activities can activate the muscles in the back of your throat and the vocal cords, which are connected to the vagus nerve. They also have been shown to increase HRV (heart-rate variability and vagal tone).
- **Probiotics:** Animals given a probiotic found positive changes to the GABA receptors in the brain, a reduction in stress hormones and less depression and anxiety. Researchers concluded that these changes between the gut and brain were facilitated by the vagus nerve. When the vagus nerve was removed, the probiotic failed to reduce
- **Meditation:** Meditation increases vagal tone and positive emotions and promotes feelings of goodwill. It also reduces sympathetic "fight or flight" activity and increases vagal modulation.
- **Omega-3 Fatty acids:** Among the many benefits of omega-3 fatty acids are that they increase vagal tone and vagal activity. They reduce heart rate and increase heart rate variability, which means that they likely are stimulating the vagus nerve. Also, high fish consumption is associated with "enhanced vagal activity and parasympathetic predominance".
- **Exercise:** Exercise stimulates the vagus nerve, as well as increases your brain's growth hormone, supports brain mitochondria and helps reverse cognitive decline.
- **Massage:** Research shows that massage can stimulate the vagus nerve and increase vagal activity and tone. It can also be stimulated by massaging several specific areas of the body. Foot massages have been shown to increase vagal modulation and heart rate variability and decrease the "fight or flight" sympathetic response. Massaging the carotid artery (right side of throat) can also stimulate the vagus nerve to reduce seizures.
- **Socializing and laughing:** Reflecting on positive social connections improves vagal tone and increases positive emotions. Laughter increases heart-rate variability and improves mood. Vagal stimulation often leads to laughter as a side effect, suggesting that they are connected and influence one another.



Video:

Need some more information on how to naturally stimulate the vagus nerve? Here, Dr. Eric Berg explains the vagus nerve and connected physiology systems, and how to engage the vagus nerve. He also includes some of the products which may not be supported by research. He outlines 4 things that you can do. 5 minute video.

# *Thank You!*

## Q&A

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