



# TOTAL BRAIN HEALTH FAIR STATION



## CARTOONING

### TBH Focus:

**MIND** | *Stretch Your Mind*

### The TBH Science:

The brain gains made by cartooning are more than luck of the draw: Studies show that one of the most effective strategies for maintaining mental fitness and warding off dementia involves engaging in activities that are new and challenging—because doing so stretches the mind in ways that promote the growth of neurons (brain cells) and synapses (the pathways between those cells). Creating a “cognitive reserve” of neurons and synapses in this way may be helpful in warding off memory issues in later life. Drawing characters helps to build cognitive reserve by using several areas of the brain at once: prodding memory cells for images to recreate, honing fine-motor skills, and bringing disparate figures together to form a recognizable picture. Other types of drawing have also been found to be brain-sharpening: In one study, subjects who doodled during a phone call were better able to remember what they heard during the call and did better than non-doodlers on a surprise memory test.

### You Will Need:

- **An artist or other expert who can teach basic cartooning techniques**
- **A white board or large pad on an easel for the instructor to use to demonstrate the activity**
- **Paper for each participant**
- **Pencils, crayons, markers, or other drawing implements**
- **Drawing surface: a table with enough chairs for all participants, separate desks, or chairs and clipboards**

### How It Works:

The expert will help participants create a cartoon character step-by-step.

### Variations:

Have the expert gauge the abilities of the group in order to make the activity easier or up the ante to make it more challenging.



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