

# Better Austin Living

*News You Can Use from Your Friend in the Real Estate Business*

## Boost Your Brainpower

It's easy to believe that your intelligence is set, meaning there's no way to "boost" your brainpower. However, many scientific studies have proven the exact opposite. A combination of lifestyle adjustments and mental exercises has been shown to not only increase intelligence, but also to improve general brain health and help prevent disorders associated with aging, such as Alzheimer's disease.

According to most neurologists, the key is to stay mentally active, despite your age. The brain is a complex organ, able to create new connections between nerve cells when it is properly stimulated. These connections lend themselves to optimal brain function and increased intelligence.

Whether you're a Generation Xer, a baby boomer, or an octogenarian, the following tips can help boost your mental activity and increase your intelligence:

**Keep Memorizing.** There is no shortage of contemporary studies that show a powerful correlation between a strong working memory and overall intelligence. A good memory has also been shown to slow down mental aging. Start small by memorizing your shopping list or your daily schedule. Step it up a notch and memorize a poem or two. Take it to another level by learning a musical instrument or a new language. Doing any of these exercises can potentially lead to quick and substantial improvement in your mental sharpness.

**Get a Hobby.** Gardening, bird watching, collecting, flying model airplanes, etc.; taking on any new hobby is good for mental stimulation as well as your overall mood. Finding activities you really enjoy allows you to learn and have fun, simultaneously. It provides both an escape and a passion. All of these traits are components to living a happy and rewarding life, and remaining mentally sharp.

**Challenge Yourself.** One enemy of intelligence and mental sharpness is our propensity to fall into overly rigid, daily patterns. It is one thing to keep a schedule or to plan out the events of your day. What we're talking about is having the exact same routine, nearly every day. Falling into rigid patterns promotes mental passivity, or the opposite of stimulation. So try mixing things up a bit. Challenge yourself by participating in new activities. Join a softball league, a reading club, or even a theater group. At the very least, play around with your daily schedule. The point is that too much regimen can dull the senses.

### A Quick Note From Ryan:



I want to say thank you for taking the time to read and comment on this newsletter. I receive a number of positive comments from people about the newsletter content and how much they enjoy reading it. I'm glad that I can continue to provide something of value that is also fun and not too serious in nature. I'm also proud to say that the majority of the people I'm fortunate to help on a yearly basis are newsletter 'subscribers' and their direct referrals. I'm truly appreciative! If you know of someone who might be considering a move in the coming months, this is a great way to introduce us. I'd be happy to reach out to them or include them on the newsletter list so that they can get a feel for how I like to work. Thanks in advance!

Join My  
Networks



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## 5 Simple Ways to Introduce Me to Friends & Family



Give me a Call or send me a Text message **512.773.3493**



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Who's the one person you know who could most use my help? ***I sincerely thank you for your referrals!***

## Score One For Good Communication!

During his early years as a coach at the University of Kentucky, Rick Pitino, now a motivational speaker, traveled to the home of a high school basketball star that the university wanted on its team. Pitino spent more than an hour impressing the boy and his family with the greatness of the Wildcats. He talked about the six national championships, the half-million-dollar weight room, the private plane the team used to get to games, and the thrill of playing before the worshipful fans.

He thought he had him. But as Pitino drove away, he suddenly realized he'd blown it. 'I broke every rule of communication back there,' Pitino said. 'All we did for 45 minutes was speak about our virtues--things he already knows. I never took the time to build the trust and friendship in that room to get him to want to play for me.'

He knew then he'd lost the star player. But when he turned to future prospects, he put his lesson to work. The next star player had already heard from top schools and Pitino had an uphill battle. But he didn't give up.

When he visited the next player, Pitino didn't trumpet Kentucky's virtues. Instead, he spent his time asking questions: What did the player want from a coach, what did the family want for their son in college. Then he listened to the answers. The next day, the player called Pitino and decided on Kentucky.

## Is It 'Cloudy' Today?

More and more companies are relying on "the cloud" for their IT operations, according to a survey by Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), which is aiming to become a supplier of processors and chipsets to cloud-computing providers.

Cloud computing enables users to access software, store data, and use computer applications through a network instead of a single local computer.

The AMD study found that 42 percent of survey participants are now using cloud computing in at least part of their operations, and 60 percent of those are already experiencing business value from their use of the cloud. Of companies not already in the cloud, 32 percent say they're actively investigating it. Only 3 percent of organizations in the survey said they had rejected cloud computing after looking into it.



## Before iPod, There Was Theatrophone

The mp3 player may have revolutionized how we listen to and buy (or don't buy) music, but it's just the latest in a long line of technological innovations designed to bring music to everyone.

One of the first was the Theatrophone. Originally reported in Scientific American in 1892, the Theatrophone was popular in Paris as a way to allow music lovers to place a phone call to a theater and listen to live music. The devices were set up in hotels, cafes, and restaurants, and they could also be installed in one's home.

The Theatrophone Co. placed microphones in Parisian theatres that transmitted music back to a central office, where it was sent out to music lovers willing to pay 50 centimes for five minutes of music. A "wicket" on the front of the device displayed the name of the theater whose music was being broadcast.

Even in the 19th century, it seems, people didn't like being too far away from their music.

## Hold The Phone . . .



A young entrepreneur had just started his own company. He opened a beautiful office and furnished it with antiques. On the first day, he saw a man enter the outer office. Wanting to give the impression of being a hotshot businessman, the young man picked up the phone and pretended to be working out a big deal. He threw around huge figures and made grand pronouncements. He finally hung up and asked

the waiting man, "May I help you?" The man simply smiled and replied, "I'm here to hook up your phone."

## Austin By the Numbers

1,978 single-family homes were sold in August 2011, about 33% more than August 2010. The median price was \$200,000 which is the same as the year before.

On average it is taking 79 days to sell a house in the Austin metropolitan area.

There are 8,705 homes actively for sale on Austin MLS which is 22% less than August 2010.

There are 1,789 pending sales for single family homes which is 19 percent more than August 2010

## Didya Know?

The average kitchen refrigerator in the United States contains six items that are more than two years old.

The average roll of toilet paper in the developed world is consumed within two months of manufacture.

Eighty percent of people born in the northern hemisphere never visit the southern hemisphere.

Thirty-four percent of Americans attending the showing of a movie in a theater enter with candy purchased off the premises.

Fourteen percent of people who identified themselves as members of the "TEA Party" could not say what "TEA" stood for.



**When selling your house, how do you know what you are expected to leave and what you can take when you move?**

Paragraph 2 in the actual sales contract stipulates what stays and what goes. Anything that is considered a "fixture" should convey with the property. However, the seller is given the opportunity to specify in both the seller's disclosure and the contract if there are any specific exclusions. One of the first things I ask on a listing appointment is for the seller to point out anything that they plan on taking with them that the buyer might perceive as part of the sale. On the flip side, when you are purchasing a house, it's smart to detail in the contract specific items that you expect to convey at sale to cover all of your bases. This includes things like the refrigerator, mounted televisions, stereo equipment, outbuildings etc . . . .

## Get On The Right Sleep Schedule

Are you a night owl? Most of us can pull the occasional all-nighter, but for some people getting to sleep before 2 or 3 a.m. is a real struggle, and getting up at 7 or 8 in the morning is next to impossible. It's not laziness, or simple insomnia, but a condition doctors call Delayed Sleep Phase (DSP) Disorder.

DSP interferes with a person's internal clock, or circadian rhythm. Approximately three in 2,000 adults, and 7-16 percent of teenagers, have trouble falling asleep within two hours of what's considered a "normal" bedtime. The causes of DSP are unknown, and by itself it's not a threat to health as long as one gets sufficient sleep. But people with DSP may have trouble accommodating a standard work or school schedule because of sleep deprivation. Some sufferers may resort to

alcohol or sedatives to help them fall asleep, which can lead to other problems.

What's to be done? Some of the most common treatments include:

**Light/darkness therapy.** Avoid bright lights for up to two hours before going to bed. When you wake up, turn on the lights, or get outside as quickly as possible to trigger more wakefulness in your body.

**Chronotherapy.** Try resetting your body's schedule by gradually adjusting your bedtime. Go to bed 15-30 minutes earlier every night, and get up earlier by the same amount of time. (You may need to wait until you have some vacation time to attempt this.) Another strategy: Stay up all night, then go to bed an hour or so earlier than normal on the next night, and maintain that bedtime for a week. Repeat once a week until you're on a regular schedule.

**Medications.** Melatonin is a common, naturally occurring compound that can help people feel drowsy if taken an hour or so before bedtime. Prescription medications are also available; check with your doctor (and remember that you don't need a "sleeping pill," as you're not suffering from insomnia).



## Don't Forget!

Daylight Savings Time ends at 2AM on Sunday November 6th. We 'Fall Back.' Don't forget to turn your clocks back and enjoy an extra hour of sleep. That is unless you have a 9 month old daughter who doesn't know the difference.

## Inspired By Kindness

Sam Walter Foss tells this story on how he came to write the poem *The House by the Side of the Road*: 'I was tramping in New England one hot and weary day. Had sent my valise ahead 25 miles and had walked 24 of them. I was tired out and longed for a man with a wagon to come along and take me up. I sat down under a tree.

'Pretty soon I noticed a sign in the tree: 'There is a spring of good water inside the fence. Drink if you are thirsty.' I went in and drank, and then I saw another sign on a bench: 'Sit down and rest if you are tired.' While I was resting there, I saw another sign on a basket of apples: 'If you like apples, help yourself.'

'After a little while, I looked around and saw an old man, and asked him what those signs meant. 'Well,' he said, 'we had the water going to waste and we thought it would be a good thing if we could get some thirsty travelers to drink a little of it. Then, this is a pleasant spot to rest in, and Mother reminded me of this old bench that was doing nobody any good in our attic. So I brought it down here. We have more apples than we can eat at this time of the year, and we thought that it would be a satisfaction to us if they could be used somehow. So we put up the signs, and they seem to be doing some good.'

'I thanked the old man and pursued my journey, refreshed in body and in mind, for I had learned a great lesson and gained an inspiration. There was no weariness in that last mile, and when it was finished I sat down and wrote those lines, 'Let me live in a house by the side of the road, and be a friend to man.'"

## Donkey Kong, Anyone?

Chimpanzees may not be able to play *Angry Birds* and win yet, but they can apparently recognize characters under their control on a video screen, indicating an important degree of self-awareness that could help us understand the development of consciousness in humans.

In a series of experiments, three adult female chimps were first trained to move a white cursor on a video screen using a trackball, and they were rewarded when they hit green rectangular targets.

In the next phase, the chimps were confronted with two white cursors, only one of which they could control. They were quickly able to determine which cursor they could move in order to hit the green triangle and receive a treat of raisins or pieces of apple.

The experiment was based on a test used to diagnose schizophrenia; patients suffering this mental illness tend to feel at times as if they're not in control of their actions and thus lack what scientists call "self-agency."

### What's My House Worth?

Do you have the itch to sell but not quite sure what you could realistically expect to sell your house for in today's market? That is a question I get quite a bit. I'd be happy to provide a Comparable Market Analysis for you. No obligation. Just give me a call or send me an email. You also should check out the great resources at:

**[BetterAustinLiving.com/HomeSeller](http://BetterAustinLiving.com/HomeSeller)**

## A Doctor-Recommended Exercise!

Here is a miracle exercise recommended by an actual doctor. You can do this standing or sitting down. Do it in front of a mirror, or better still, with someone else. Here's how:

1. Raise the corners of your mouth an inch, take a deep breath and hold it for 10 seconds. You are now smiling. If other people are watching you, don't be alarmed if they start smiling too.

2. Now push out your breath using your amazing abs in short exhalations. You're now laughing. Unless those around you are curmudgeons, they may laugh along with you.



This simple muscular action of inhaling, raising the corners of the mouth, and then exhaling in rhythmic, short bursts causes the diaphragm to bounce up and down, pats the liver on the back, and pleasantly vibrates the stomach. The heart, which rests above the diaphragm, begins to pump at a slightly faster rate, sending oxygenated blood coursing throughout your body.

The effect is a general feeling of well-being. Smiling also boosts your immune system, lowers your blood pressure, raises your serotonin levels and makes you more attractive. More important than this, however, is the effect on others who observe you going through this exercise. They feel better, too. This triggers happy emotions within you, and the stage is set for any number of pleasant things to occur.

All this from one simple little exercise!

## Men, Women And Goals

The ability to set goals is an important prerequisite for success. But the way you set your goals, and pursue them, can be determined by many factors. One of them, according to a recent study by Leadership IQ, may be your gender. The survey, in which 2,506 women and 2,184 men participated, led to these conclusions:

Women tend to be more emotionally connected to their goals than men. The study suggests this skill makes people more likely to hang on when the going gets tough. Women were seen as being more likely to procrastinate. The findings assert that when people feel less urgency about accomplishing their goals, their efforts were undermined.

Men tended to visualize their goals more often than women. This skill provides greater direction and focus. Women tended to set harder goals. Men were less likely to challenge themselves and step out of their comfort zones.

Each individual is unique when it comes to setting and achieving goals, of course, but we can all stand to check our blind spots from time to time.

## Would You Let Your Music Go Unplayed?

Many years ago, violinist Itzhak Perlman gave a performance in New York. During the concert one of the strings on his violin suddenly broke. The crowd gasped at the sound, which could be heard throughout the entire auditorium, and the music abruptly came to a stop.

The crowd waited patiently for Mr. Perlman to replace the string. However, much to everyone's surprise, Perlman didn't rush to find a new string. He took a moment to gather himself before he motioned for the conductor to begin playing again where the orchestra had left off! For the remainder of the concert, Perlman played the music that should have been played on four strings on only three.



As Itzhak finished playing, for a moment, time slowed and silence filled the air then the audience rose to its feet to offer a standing ovation for this incredible feat. Perlman smiled and humbly raised his bow. "You know," he told them, "sometimes it is the artist's task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left."

*In life, when something breaks, does the loss stop us or do we continue making music with what we have?*

## Take better pictures with your phone

Wouldn't it be nice to have an expensive digital camera with multiple lenses always available? Sure, but you're more likely to have a smartphone when you need to snap a picture. Here are a few tips to get the most out of your phone's camera.

**Don't move.** The sensors on camera phones don't do well with motion. Stand as still as possible.

**Clean the lens.** Your phone's been bouncing around in your pocket or purse, exposing the lens to dust, dirt, and fingerprints. Wipe it with a soft cloth.

**Avoid the zoom.** Turn off any zoom feature your phone may have. Unlike a traditional camera lens, your phone uses a digital zoom that crops the image and enlarges it, degrading the image. Move yourself closer if you want a closer shot.

**Make it big.** If you can adjust the resolution on your phone's camera, choose the highest possible setting. The smaller setting saves space, but you'll also miss details and limit where you can use the picture. For example, low-resolution photos work on the Web but they'll look terrible in print.

**Let there be a lot of light.** While good lighting is important for all types of photography, it's essential for pictures taken with your phone. Use your phone's flash, if it has one, but also turn on lights in the house and don't shoot into the sun.

## Ryan France

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### Recycle this Newsletter



When you are done reading your newsletter this month, do me a favor. Instead of throwing it away or putting it in a pile on your desk, please pass it along to a friend, neighbor or co-worker so that they can enjoy reading it too. That's a simple and pressure-free way to introduce me to other people.

*Thanks for Not keeping  
me a Secret!*

## Thinking about Making a Change in the New Year?

Here's a quick note to let you know how I can help you or anyone you feel comfortable introducing me to.

Is part of your goal for the first part of 2012 to buy a home or sell your home? When people want to make a change and move early in the year, they tend to start working on getting their current home ready for sale now.

Experience shows that what people do inside and outside of their home in the months leading up to putting their house on the market will either profit them or cost them thousands of dollars when selling.

The next time you're in a conversation with a friend, family member or neighbor and they mention that they'd love to move into a new home for the Holidays or just after the New Year, let's make sure they get the best advice. Give me a call @ 512-773-3493 or send me an email at: [ryan@betteraustineliving.com](mailto:ryan@betteraustineliving.com). Ask for my free booklet "How to Sell Your Home for Top Dollar Fast."

**Ryan France, Your Friend in the Real Estate Business  
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P.S. What homeowners do *right now* can make a huge difference in getting their home sold quickly. Who's the next seller you know who could benefit from this free information? Be sure to get in touch with me so I can send this report to you to pass along.