LIFE IS COOL WITH A FIT BRAIN -
A BRAIN HEALTH PROMOTION CAMPAIGN FOR
TEENAGERS IN ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF
FINLAND

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Alzheimer Society of Finland

- Established in 1988 to provide help and assistance for people with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.
- A non-profit organization which is mainly funded by the Finnish Slot Machine Association.
- **Life Is Cool with a Fit Brain** project is funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.
The Society and the local associations

- A national office with 3 local branches and 44 local associations across the country
- 10 000 members altogether
- Five associations participated in the **Life is Cool With A Fit Brain** campaign
Prevention in the Alzheimer Society’s work

- preventing people from dementing diseases and minimizing the effects of the diseases for individuals and for the society

- Life Is Cool With A Fit Brain – campaign is part of the primary prevention health promotion work the Society does, the aim of which is to encourage people to maintain their brain health

Primary prevention – Finnish people

Secondary prevention – persons in high risk groups

Tertiary prevention - persons with dementia and their carers
The Program On The Health Promotion by The Government of Finland

- recognition of the social and economic importance of health promotion at various levels of decision-making, and distribution of information promoting health
- strengthening the structures of health promotion when legislation is revised and during the project to restructure municipalities and services
- collection, commercialization, distribution and rooting of the existing knowledge, best practices and the most rewarding projects
- reinforcing competence
Life Is Cool With A Fit Brain -campaign

- A national health promotion campaign aimed at teenagers to increase their knowledge of the factors affecting their brain health, learning capabilities and memory function
- One aim was to add a brain health promotion perspective to the health education programs of the schools
- The campaigns emphasized the importance of cooperation between people with different occupations, in the school world and NGOs
- 6 lower secondary schools in five different municipalities
- More than 600 hundred pupils participated
- Six different campaigns
The methods of the campaign

- Questionnaires held out before and after the campaign
- A lecture on brain health, memory and learning strategies
- Group works
- Website [www.timmitaivot.fi](http://www.timmitaivot.fi)
- Post cards and post it - notes
The lectures and the group works

- **THE LECTURES**
  - How does your brain work
  - How does your memory work
  - How do you learn and study more effectively
  - How does your lifestyle and the choices you make influence your brain health and well-being

- **THE GROUP WORKS**
  - Memory strategies
  - Nutrition
  - Alcohol, cigarettes and drugs
  - Depression and stress
  - Sleep
  - Physical exercise
  - Social relationships
The differences between the campaigns

- Presence of the school professionals
- Time and resources the Society and the associations got to the campaign from the schools
- The amount of pupils participating at the same time (from 20 pupils small groups to 70 pupils groups)
- A Brain Health Labyrinth
Evaluation

- A method called a realistic evaluation
  - to evaluate the possibilities to add information to the youngsters’ knowledge
  - to evaluate the cooperation and networking between the schools and the Society with its associations
- The project was evaluated by the employees of the local Alzheimer associations, the health education teachers of the schools in question and The Alzheimer Society of Finland.
- The questionnaires and their results were treated as a part of the evaluation
Results – structured questions

• 50 DIFFERENT THESIS
• Answers before and after the campaign (correct, incorrect or I can’t say)

• The stress may decline the attentiveness
• The professionals usually have better memory than other people
• Drinking alcohol improves the quality of sleep
• It’s bad for your brain health if you’re eating fish regularly.

• 209 pupils
• 77% 13-year-old
• 20% 14-year-old
• 97 girls and 103 boys
Results

- The campaigns did increase the youngsters’ knowledge a bit
- The amount of the correct answers increased (3.07%)
- The amount of the incorrect answers diminished (2.81%)
- The amount of the I can’t say –answers diminished (2.45%)
In average: in the questionnaires after the campaign the answers were more often correct than incorrect in 30 thesis
Results – open questions and the interview

• some new information about memory and learning strategies
• sleep more, do more exercise and eat healthier and more versatile food
• **Number one thing - group works**

• The teenagers are interested in the well-being of their brain but do not pay much attention to the question
• The use of psychoactive drugs and excess drinking and their harmful impacts on the brain are interesting matters
• The teenagers don’t feel these matters are current in adolescence
• **Very important to pay attention to the message itself and to the way the message is delivered**
Conclusions

• Giving information to youngsters is effective
• The benefits of a rigid cooperation between different systems, the school world and the NGO - help to accomplish the aims of the project and to promote (brain)health in a wider perspective
• The media assistance and networking can expand the message of health promotion to a wider target group
• The cooperation with the local associations develops the regional non-governmental organizational work
• Investing in the brain health promotion in the health education of the schools is worthwhile
• New innovations and practical implementations to promote the brain health prevention
• Medical research as a back up
Conclusions

In the strategy for the coming four years the Alzheimer Society of Finland will be emphasizing the importance of the brain health promotion and the lifelong opportunity of taking care of one’s brain, beginning already in the teenage. It is also important to encourage the teenagers to take part in the activities arranged by the Alzheimer Society.

Thank You for Your Attention!
Discussion with your neighbour:

1. What kind of (brain)health promotion activities you know in your country?

2. Which instance is promoting brain health (to youngsters) in your country?

3. What could you and your employer do to develop the brain health promotion work in your country?