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the soul.2. Do Aerobic Activity Another way to improve your cognitive thinking is to get some aerobic exercise. Moving your body and increasing your heart and breathing rates have been shown to stop the natural deterioration in the frontal, parietal, and temporal cortices, which decreases cognitive thinking. Deterioration of these regions is a natural part of aging, but getting aerobic exercise can help slow the decline.Brisk Walking You may not think walking is vigorous enough to count as aerobic activity, but it absolutely is. Just pick up the pace and walk as fast as you're able. Twenty minutes of brisk walking each day will go a long way toward boosting your cognitive thinking.Swimming Swimming is a great choice for aerobic activity. It's easy on the joints, and you won't even know you're sweating as you do laps in the pool.Yoga Certain types of yoga, such as Ashtanga, can give you an aerobic boost in addition to helping you with meditation and flexibility.3. Get Plenty of Sleep Research also points to sleep as an important part of optimal cognitive functioning. One study indicates that sleep may be an integral part of memory.Sleep is when the brain ditches certain synaptic connections in order to strengthen others. Basically, your brain needs sleep to sift through everything that happens to you each day, remembering what's important and forgetting the rest.It's recommended that adults get at least seven hours of sleep each night. Keep in mind that sleep isn't something that you can catch up on. Consistency is crucial.Consistent Bedtime Routine In order to ensure you're falling asleep at around the same time each night, a consistent bedtime routine is important. Come up with your bedtime routine and stick with it. Switching up your routine can mess up your sleep schedule.Limit Your Screen Time As part of your consistent bedtime routine, make sure to limit screen time at least an hour before bed. Screens release dopamine in your brain and get your adrenaline pumping, so they also get some people too amped up to easily fall asleep each night.Also, make sure to set your phone to Do Not Disturb, so it doesn't interrupt your sleep with beeps and buzzes. In fact, researchers now say that keeping it in a different room altogether may be even better for a good night's rest.Melatonin Melatonin can also help you fall and stay asleep. Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone in the body that spikes during nighttime sleep cycles, so supplementing with a Melatonin pill can help the body with its circadian rhythms, getting you the sleep your body needs for optimal cognitive thinking during the day.4. Cognitive Simulations Reducing stress, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep lay the foundation for improving cognitive thinking, but to really boost your brain, there are three more strategies you can implement during the day.Cognitive simulations are really just brain teasers where the individual must use their existing knowledge to come up with solutions to novel problems — think crossword puzzles and Sudoku.Cognitive simulations boost the brain's cognitive processing abilities because the brain is plastic, meaning it's malleable. If you don't use the brain's ability to take new information and solve problems, you lose it.Therefore, it's crucial to keep your brain challenged and active. Cognitive simulations are one way to do exactly that.5. Thinking Aloud The next strategy to improve your cognitive thinking is a technique called thinking aloud. It's as simple as it sounds. Instead of thinking silently in your head, verbalize your thought processes.Thinking aloud is a great training tool. It helps the teacher hear where the student's comprehension needs improvement. It has also been shown to improve clinical outcomes in nurses. Thinking aloud forces you to verbalize all parts of a problem, which helps you avoid oversights.6. Concept Mapping Finally, concept mapping can also improve your cognitive thinking. Concept mapping is a visual representation of someone's thoughts — think word webs. Concept maps are basically just drawings that demonstrate all the connections and relationships between ideas.In one study, concept maps improved the critical thinking of grad-level nurses. Similar to thinking aloud, concept mapping showed deficiencies in student thinking, but also strengthened the students' critical thinking skills.It's like that saying, if you want to really learn something, teach it. By mapping what we know, we force ourselves to ruminate on all we do and don't know about a certain topic. This strengthens our understanding and makes clear where we need to fill in the gaps in our knowledge.Final Thoughts Cognitive thinking isn't the same as critical thinking. Cognitive thinking also includes remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. Reducing stress, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep are crucial for making sure our brains are healthy, getting plenty of oxygen, and sorting through memories each night.During the day, we can exercise our brains with cognitive simulations, thinking aloud, and concept mapping to improve our higher-order cognitive thinking.You may have started dying since the day you were born, but a better way to look at it is that your brain can continue to grow and develop until the day you die. Just make sure you're actively improving your cognitive thinking with these six tips.More on Improving ThinkingFeatured photo credit: Clever Visuals via unsplash.com