

A friendly chat can boost brain: study

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[CBC News](#)

Amicable chats between people may help them solve problems so long as the tone doesn't turn competitive, a new study finds.



Simply talking to other people can offer some mental benefits, a new psychological study

suggests. (Forbes.com)

The study looked at 192 undergraduate students to see how engaging in brief conversations affected so-called executive mental functions such as concentration, decision-making and day-to-day problem-solving that requires people to tune out distractions.

"This study shows that simply talking to other people, the way you do when you're making friends, can provide mental benefits," the study's lead author, Oscar Ybarra, a psychologist and researcher at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, said in a release.

The researchers studied how the volunteers performed on cognitive tasks as they engaged in 10-minute conversations. Participants were simply told to get to know one another.

The tests showed improvements in the brain's executive function — but not processing speed or general knowledge — when people had friendly conversations.

But there was no improvement when the conversations had a competitive edge.

"The findings show that competitive interactions, if structured to allow for interpersonal engagement, can boost executive functions," the study's authors concluded.

People can apply the findings by having a friendly chat with a colleague before a presentation or test, the researchers suggested.

The findings were published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

Read more: <http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2010/11/04/conversation-brain-executive-function.html#ixzz1B1hMnTtP>