

How Nutrition Impacts Your Mental Health



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Disclaimer

This e-book contains educational material only and is not intended to replace the individual advice from your own GP or other healthcare professional, or to be a means of diagnosing or treating any illness. Always check with your doctor first before introducing changes to your diet, lifestyle or medication regime.



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Welcome

How to get the most out of this e-book

Hello dear reader,

I've written this e-book to offer some of the insights I share with my 1:1 clients, so that you can benefit from my expertise even before you decide to work with me. Some of you will find that by following the suggestions and tips included here, you won't need to book an appointment at all.

This e-book draws on my training in Functional Medicine from the Kresser Institute (Adapt Level 1 2015) and my decade-long passion for healthy living and 'bio-hacking' this 'virtual reality suit' we are wearing here on Earth called - The Body ;)

Over the next 36 pages, I share simple, actionable tips that I have refined through self-application and then witnessed their transformative effects on hundreds of clients. My profound hope is that these practices will positively impact your mental, emotional, and physical health too.

Adapt the prescribed practices that resonate with you; however, don't just read it. Practice the exercises and apply these tips and suggestions in your daily life.

If you'd like to learn more about how to optimise your mind and body and to boost your psychological health with nutrition and lifestyle changes, [please book a complimentary connection call](#) to address your specific needs moving forward.

In joy!

Kama :)



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Introduction to Eating for Mental Health

Physical and mental health are often viewed as separate, yet they are intimately linked. Each impacts the other, and both positive or negative cycles can arise between the two. Our thoughts and the emotions we cultivate have a direct impact on our wellbeing and this extends beyond the beliefs we hold about ourselves. This is the subject of a separate e-book.

We already know physical exercise can be hugely beneficial for our mental health. Exercise provides focus, releases endorphins, improves sleep and helps regulate our circadian rhythms. It even fosters the growth of new neuronal connections in the brain!

A lesser-discussed aspect is the importance of diet in balancing our mental health, and potentially preventing the development of mental health disorders.

By incorporating some simple principles and exercises, this guide offers an introductory glimpse into how you can enhance your mental health through nutrition and lifestyle changes.

In this e-book we will primarily focus on three areas:

- **Hydration:**

To support and maintain optimal brain health & cognitive function

- **Eating a Colourful Diet:**

To boost mental health and energy levels

- **Balancing Blood Sugars:**

To manage anxiety symptoms and improve sleep



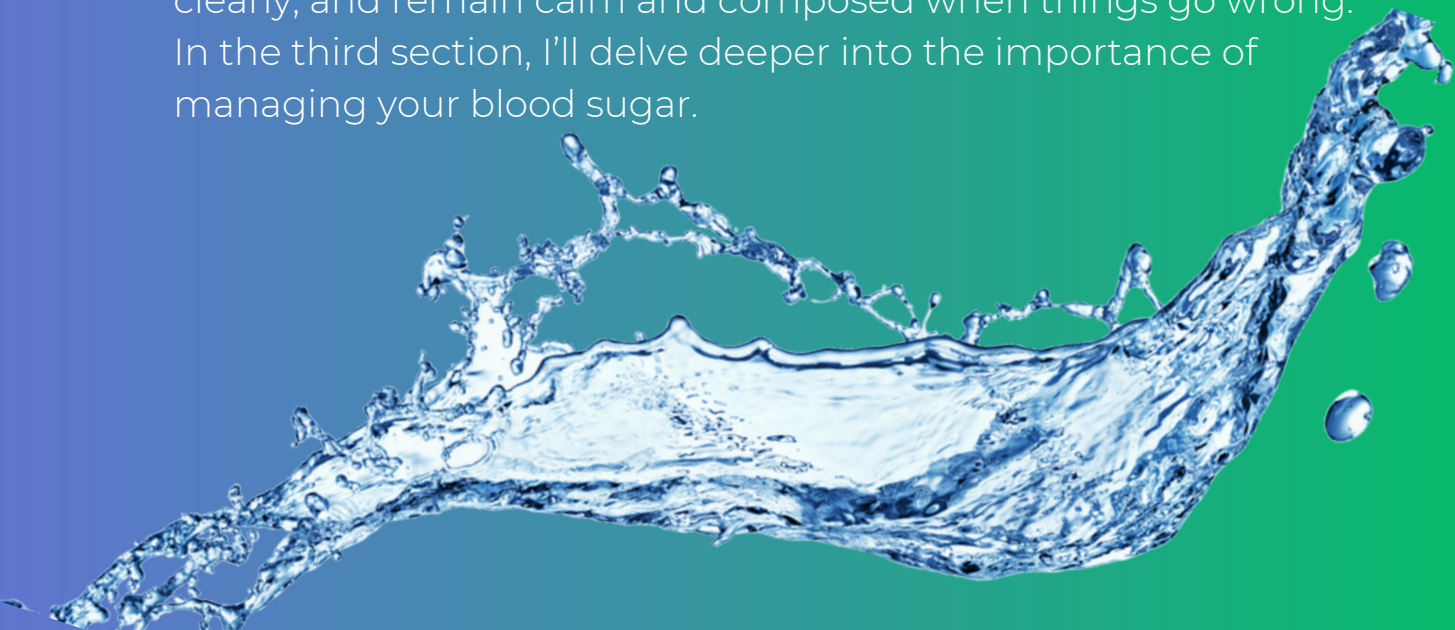


Section 1:

Staying Hydrated

Staying hydrated and eating regularly are the two of the most fundamental things we can do to give our brains the best chance of functioning to their full potential. Consistent nourishment keeps our bodies calm.

However, when food isn't consumed at expected intervals, our bodies have to release cortisol, a stress hormone! This reaction is the only way the body has to keep our blood sugar levels balanced, and we simply cannot function well if our blood sugar is too high or too low. By skipping regular meals, you are inadvertently adding to your external stress levels, making it more difficult to cope with daily life, concentrate on tasks, think clearly, and remain calm and composed when things go wrong. In the third section, I'll delve deeper into the importance of managing your blood sugar.



Water, comprising nearly 70% of our body weight, is the most vital essential nutrient that we require for survival. Even mild dehydration (drinking around 4 cups or less per day) is associated with reduced cognitive function characterized by increased fatigue, sleepiness, worse mood, and decreased attention span. On the other hand, increasing your daily water intake has been shown to improve your overall mood.

Have you ever experienced a headache when you were dehydrated or struggled with “brain-fog”- that fuzzy feeling when it’s hard to concentrate or even remember the right words? All this can be linked to dehydration.

Studies show that a mere 1% dehydration can lead to a 5% decrease in cognitive function, impairing the efficiency of your brain. Astonishingly, a 2% drop in brain hydration can result in short term memory loss and hamper math computations (can you imagine?!). Ultimately, prolonged dehydration causes brain cells to shrink in size and mass! (“How Dehydration Affects Your Brain - The Brain & Spine Institute)

Water is also integral for the production of hormones and neurotransmitters in the brain. Since the brain cannot store water and you are constantly losing water through perspiration and other body functions, it’s essential that you continuously hydrate. When your brain is adequately hydrated, you think faster, focus better and experience greater clarity.

Making sure you stay regularly hydrated (around 2L per day for adults) will ensure that your mood, energy, and attention are improved.



Five Tips to Stay Hydrated



1

Start your day with a glass or two of warm water with lemon. This not only helps you hydrate from the start but can also aid digestion and bowel movements and reduces your reliance on coffee - which is dehydrating!



2

Drink a glass of water before each meal and ideally add a spoonful of apple cider vinegar (read more in the blood sugar section)



3

Hydrate consistently throughout the day even if you are indoors and especially before exercising or any strenuous activity, likely to make you sweat (e.g., dancing, hoovering, sex)



4

Swap soft drinks, fruit juices and coffee for water.



5

Eat water-filled fruits and vegetables (for example, watermelon, cucumbers, cherries, oranges).

Practical Suggestion



To effectively monitor your water intake, get yourself a big 1.5L bottle and keep it within arm's length all day. Then you can see how much water you actually drink on any particular day. Before you invest in a fancy one simply grab a set of six large mineral waters from a supermarket, label them Monday through Saturday and only drink from that bottle on the corresponding day :). By the end of the week, you'll have a clear picture of your hydration habits.

Coming up next in this guide is our food choices - what we include in our diet and how we choose to eat it.





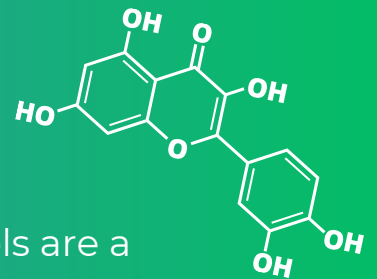
Section 2:

The Importance of Eating a Rainbow

- **Protein** plays an essential role in mood regulation because it contains amino acids.
- **Whole grains, fruits, and vegetables** provide the vitamins and minerals our bodies and brains need.
- **Fermented foods (probiotics)**, beans and different types of fiber (prebiotics) keep our gut healthy, which is often reflected in our physical and emotional well-being.
- **Healthy fats**, as opposed to trans fats or hydrogenated fats found in processed food, cakes, biscuits, hard margarines, takeaways, pastries, pies and fried foods, keep our brains running smoothly. Try using only extra virgin types of oils.
- So, what about the rainbow...?
Let's talk about **polyphenols**.

Polyphenols

Without delving too deep into the science, polyphenols are a group of compounds naturally present in plant foods (fruits, vegetables, herbs, spices, nuts, seeds and extra virgin vegetable oils). These powerful antioxidants protect our body's cells from damage caused by harmful molecules called "free radicals". Free radicals can accelerate aging and lead to diseases because they increase levels of inflammation in the body. Inflammation in the brain can also cause depression. Polyphenols help reduce inflammation throughout your body and protect against life-changing conditions such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Polyphenols have also been shown to improve cognitive function while mitigating stress, depression, and anxiety.



In a nutshell, they're nutritional superheroes :)



Self-Check: How is Your Own Diet?

Before we take a closer look at adapting your diet for better mental health, let's try an exercise.

Use the next page to jot down all the different food types you can remember eating in the last seven days.

This simple Self-Check has radically changed my own diet years ago

What have you eaten last week ?

So... How Do You Compare?

According to Dhru Purohit in his podcast episode “A Deep Dive Into The Healing Power Of Polyphenols”, the average American gets two-thirds of their calories from just wheat, corn, and soy, and an incredible 90% of their whole diet from only 15 different types of crops. To put that into perspective, globally, each person consumes an average of 68 kilos of wheat annually. Can you believe that? How much wheat do you think you eat? Personally, I haven't eaten any wheat for the past 12 years because I have autoimmune disorder that requires me to follow a gluten-free diet.

Have a look at the list of foods you have eaten over the last 7 days. How does your list compare? How many items come from wheat, corn, or soy? Did you manage to include a wide variety, or did you find the same foods were repeated over and over? Take a moment to count how many different plant foods you included.





A Little Bit of A Lot

Previously, you may have been generally advised to include as many colours as possible in your diet. This sort of advice is backed up by real science. It's a simple idea, but it offers a lot of nutritional value.

The principle is: "Eat a little bit of as many different plant foods as you can!" The next few pages will help you understand why, and start making changes in your own diet :)

So far, over 8,000 different polyphenols have been identified, each with a unique effect on our biology. To reap the maximum benefit, we need to consume as varied a diet as possible. As polyphenols are often responsible for the vibrant colours of berries, fruit, and vegetables, eating a colourful diet for better health is a great rule of thumb, supported by complex science.



A colourful diet benefits not just your mental health, but your overall wellbeing, because both are linked. Also, the more fruit, vegetables, and legumes you eat, the higher your fiber intake, which means you are feeding the good bacteria in your gut and contributing to production of short-chain fatty acids, which have further applied the positive effects on your health.

Short-chain fatty acids boast neuro-protective, anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, anti-diabetes, anti-obesity attributes, and they also boost your immunity, protect your heart, and can positively alter levels of neurotransmitters in your brain. In other words, you can only benefit from having more of them in your body. Regularly eating fiber-rich foods increases your levels of these great compounds. Polyphenols also help control blood sugar and manage weight management, which we'll explore later.

Of course, the colours are just your guide, the key is in the variety of different foods you eat.

