

# FOOD AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

IMPROVE YOUR MOOD WITH FOOD!



BY

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EF TRAINING



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# A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

## Food and Emotions

We all have to eat to stay alive and over our lives we are given a lot of often conflicting advice about what types of food we should eat and when. But we have a very complicated relationship with food we use it to celebrate and console ourselves and we often find that we are eating 'emotionally' especially during times of stress and unhappiness.

What we eat doesn't just affect our physical health but also how we feel so it is during times of stress that we need to be more mindful of what we are eating as food can dramatically improve our emotional resilience or add to our feelings of anxiety and sadness.

In this little book we will give you ten ideas for food you can use during challenging times to help even out your mood and feel better.

At the bottom of each page is a score out of 10 for you to fill in when you have tried the food. The last page has our emails so you can let us know if there is anything else you have tried that works so we can share this with others.

*Jayne and Trudi*





# **WE ARE WHAT WE EAT!**

## **HISTORY**

Our relationship with food is an ancient one. For thousands of years, humans have eaten not just to refuel but also as a social pleasure. Yes, we have lots of information about food and what is good for us, but it often gets complicated and there is too much choice

So when looking at what we eat, think of it as 'what do I like to eat, and how can I eat similar foods, but having a healthier option. That way it doesn't add more stress into an already hectic life, it gives you an alternate way of looking at what you already eat.

## **HEALTH**

Our health is not just down to our dietary intake, but it is a huge starting point to allow our bodies to stay fit and strong, and to fight off disease, emotionally and physically.

Food is essential for life and good health. It encompasses every aspect of our lives from our moods, energy levels, cognitive skills and sleep to name a few. We all have up to 100 trillion cells in our bodies, each one demanding a constant supply of daily nutrients in order to function properly. Our daily intake affects all of these cells, and subsequently every aspect of our being: mood, energy levels, food cravings, thinking capacity, sleeping habits and general health.

Simply put if you fill your body with bad food, it will slow down all the essential functions for life and ultimately can make us unhealthy with an increased risk of disease and long term health problems.

## **WE ARE WHAT WE ABSORB!**

So maybe we could think of this in another way, we are what we absorb! And the quality and quantity of what eat should also be considered.

# MINDFUL EATING



If eating is becoming a chore ie your mealtimes are often squeezed in between tasks or eaten in front of the TV, you could be missing out on the full enjoyment of your food and end up eating more as a result. By learning to eat mindfully you can begin to really savour and appreciate the joy of eating, and also learn to eat less in the process, helping you to lose weight more easily and quickly!

We often eat more than we really need and eating because you feel you have to rather than because you want to can lead to becoming a 'serial take away' customer! Or eating anything that's convenient; often eating what's easiest and quickest to grab hold of because you're so hungry.

Mindful eating is about gaining control over what and when you eat. This can reduce overeating as well as eating the wrong foods. For a start to mindful eating, try eating on your own, without any distractions (switch off the TV and put your phone in a drawer!). Eat each mouthful slowly, enjoying the taste and smell of eating something you really enjoy. Focus on how the food begins to fill you up, satisfying the hunger but not rushing to get it into your body as fast as you can.

At each meal, use a diary or notepad to write down how you feel before and after you eat. For example, do you feel stressed before you eat or are you excited? Do you feel satisfied or perhaps bloated, guilty or full after eating? At the end of each week, review your diary. You'll be surprised at the results! It can help to change your relationship with food and not see it as a means to an end or be tempted to snack between meals.

**“When you eat mindfully, you are in touch with your food because your mind is not distracted. It is not thinking about other things. It is attending to eating.” – Jon Kabat-Zinn.**

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# BLOOD SUGAR BALANCING



## The Rise and Fall!

If we asked you to confess what you ate when you are feeling sad or stressed the chances are that you would say that you go for carbohydrates and something sweet or salty or the deadly combination of both (salted caramel) and there is a very good reason for this.

During times of stress, our body craves carbohydrates and we have to be very strong-willed indeed not to give in. Although our brain accounts for just 2 per cent of our body weight, it uses half of our daily carbohydrate requirements—and glucose is its most important fuel. Under acute stress the brain requires some 12 per cent more energy, leading us to reach for sugary snacks.

But the problem with this is that the rapid rise in blood sugar will leave you feeling on a sugar 'high' and this adds to you feelings of anxiety and then as you will probably have consumed rapid-acting carbohydrates also an emotional reaction to the rapid fall which can once again trigger the need to eat. That's without adding in the guilt for eating things you probably consider 'bad'!

### So what's the answer?

**Blood sugar balancing** - that is being very mindful of what you eat especially when you are stressed and going for alternatives. Its easier to change 'a thing' than 'a habit' so if you don't want to eat cake or crisps either don't buy them or move the alternatives right under your nose!

### Here are some ideas to help

- Instead of crisps - try nuts and seeds
- Have porridge or a 'fry up' for breakfast to stop you from craving snacks
- Make up our 'good mood food' to snack on - prepare this in advance
- Choose whole grains instead of highly processed versions - so brown not white bread and it takes longer to be absorbed so doesn't quickly raise your blood sugar
- Get your 'sweet fix' from fruit, fresh or dried - eat sweet things after a meal
- Plan ahead so you are not tempted to just 'pop out' to the shops when you are stressed and hungry!

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# GOOD MOOD FOOD

Instead of reaching for sugary or salty snacks try combining the ingredients below to make a trail mix that contains foods that will lift your mood and stabilise your blood sugar

## GOOD MOOD FOOD!

### **Nuts:**

Balance your blood sugar and fill you up

High in monosaturated fats, omega 3 and 6; deficiency in these can lead to low mood

### **Sunflower seeds:**

High in magnesium. Often called 'nature's tranquiliser' so can help reduce anxiety

### **Bananas (fresh and dried)**

Contain an enzyme called tryptophan which converts to serotonin that transmits mood elevating substances in the brain. And the magnesium content helps relax the body's muscles plus the vitamin b6 regulates healthy sleeping patterns.

### **Dark chocolate**

The darker the better! 70% cocoa or higher

Regulates and lifts your mood as well as reducing inflammation due to high levels of antioxidants

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# TRYPTOPHAN

## WHAT IS IT

Tryptophan is an amino acid found in most protein foods it helps the body create niacin, which in turn is essential in creating the neurotransmitter serotonin which not only helps your mood but also helps you have restful sleep.

## WHERE TO FIND IT?

Tryptophan is present in different quantities in protein and is particularly high in turkey which is why you suddenly became sleepy after eating a turkey dinner?!

Other sources include:

- Yoghurt
- Milk
- Oats
- Bananas
- Dates
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Peanuts

## A FEW IDEAS

A turkey sandwich in the evening as the carbohydrates help the absorption of the tryptophan will help you sleep

A glass of warm milk or porridge at bedtime

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# MAGNESIUM



There are lots of minerals vital for our bodily functions, but one of the most important is Magnesium. It is particularly helpful in our diets when our lives are so busy and often stressful. When you have sufficient levels of Magnesium in your body, it helps induce a state of calm. It has been suggested that the reason for this is that Magnesium has anti-inflammatory properties.

This vital mineral can also help the body's dopamine levels rise, which can improve your mood. Dopamine is a naturally occurring chemical that sends signals from the body to the brain. It helps with our body's motor or movement function, as well as we react emotionally. Therefore the right balance of dopamine is vital for both physical and mental wellbeing.

Magnesium can also help improve blood pressure as it helps to increase blood flow; modern living is stress which can result in high blood pressure. Stress often leaves us running on empty which can affect our mood and overall well being.

Magnesium has another 'ace in the pack' (here's the science bit!), it binds to Adenosine Triphosphate (ATP) which fuels every single cell in our body. So if you feel you're running on empty, a Magnesium deficiency could be responsible.

## Sources of Magnesium

- Dark chocolate
- Avocados
- Nuts and seeds
- Legumes
- Tofu
- Whole grains
- Fatty Fish
- Bananas
- Leafy Greens

One other way of getting using Magnesium to help with relaxation is by putting Epsom Salts into a bath as this helps soothe tired and aching muscles.

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you



# VITAMINS

The majority of our vitamin intake is absorbed by having a good, balanced diet. However in some cases, as we mention in 'Supplements'. it is necessary to 'top-up' what we can't get from our diet, and this could be for a number of reasons. Having the right amount of vitamins in our diet is vital for our physical and mental health.

**Vitamin A** - used to help our immune system work effectively and promotes good eyesight and can be found in cheese, eggs, oily fish and liver.

**Vitamin B complex** - a vital collection, helps with cell health. Growth of red blood cells. energy levels. good eyesight. healthy brain function. good digestion a healthy appetite and proper nerve function. It can be found in foods including, red meat, spinach, kale, eggs, milk, wholegrain bread, fortified cereals, chicken, tomatoes, potatoes.

**Vitamin C** - we need this to protect our cell protection and repair cells such as wound healing. It can be found in citrus fruit, such as oranges and orange juice, peppers, strawberries, blackcurrants, broccoli, brussels sprouts and potatoes.

**Vitamin D** - helps regulate the amount of calcium and phosphate in the body. oily fish – such as salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel, red meat, live yolks, fortified foods – such as some fat spreads and breakfast cereals. The body creates vitamin D from direct sunlight on the skin when outdoors. But in the winter we do not get enough vitamin D from sunlight so a supplement can help here.

**Vitamin E** - helps maintain healthy skin and eyes, and strengthens the body's natural defence against illness and infection (the immune system). It can be found in plant oils – such as rapeseed (vegetable oil), sunflower, soya, corn and olive oil nuts and seeds and wheat germ – found in cereals and cereal products.

**Vitamin K** - is in a group of vitamins that the body needs for blood clotting, helping wounds to heal. green leafy vegetables – such as broccoli and spinach, vegetable oils and cereal grains.

**Calcium** - helps to build strong teeth and bones. It can be found in milk, cheese and other dairy foods, green leafy vegetables and anything made with fortified flour and fish where you eat the bones – such as sardines and pilchards. Lack of Calcium can lead to Osteoporosis in later life.

**Iron** - is important in making red blood cells, which carry oxygen around the body. It can be found in red meat and beans.

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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A close-up photograph of two hands, one from the left and one from the right, with fingers interlaced to form a heart shape. The hands are positioned in front of a person wearing a light blue t-shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

# GUT HEALTH

## HAPPY GUT = HAPPY MIND

If you've ever "gone with your gut" to make a decision or felt "butterflies in your stomach" when nervous, you're likely getting signals from an unexpected source: your second brain. Hidden in the walls of the digestive system, this "brain in your gut" is revolutionising medicine's understanding of the links between digestion, mood, health and even the way you think.

The enteric nervous system (ENS) or 'little brain' doesn't seem capable of thought as we know it, but it communicates back and forth with our 'big brain'—with profound results. It interacts with a vast ecosystem of bacteria, fungi and yeasts in our gut – the microbiome – to send messages back to the brain.

The startling realisation is that these new findings may explain why a higher-than-normal percentage of people with IBS and functional bowel problems develop depression and anxiety. Some doctors are now working together with the use of behavioural therapies to help reduce gastrointestinal disorders in their patients. More than 2,000 years ago, **Hippocrates said that 'all disease begins in the gut'**

Conversely, because our two brains talk to each other, this can work in the opposite direction so its important to ensure a good diet and also, on some occasions, the use of a good probiotic. 90% of serotonin and 50% of dopamine, both chemicals that are believed to regulate mood, are produced in the gut!

Studies are showing certain gut bacteria can reduce levels of the stress hormone cortisol, improve memory and may even affect social behaviour, learning and how we react when we're fearful, ie Fight or Flight!

We should aim for a varied diet with some fermented foods such as live yoghurt, kefir and sauerkraut, which are rich in gut-healthy microbes such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# PROTEIN



Proteins are compounds made up of amino acid molecules. They are one of the three main food groups, and are needed by the body for cell growth and repair. Protein-rich foods include fish, meat, eggs, milk and cheese. Beans and peas are also high in protein. Soya beans, for example, are the main ingredient of tofu and a range of meat substitutes.

All cells are made mainly from protein. This means that your body needs protein to make new cells when you grow, and to replace old or damaged cells.

You need to eat protein-rich foods every day. The World Health Organisation recommends that between 10% and 15% of your daily energy intake should be protein.

Serious protein deficiency can cause swelling, fatty liver, skin degeneration, increase the severity of infections and stunt growth in children. While true deficiency is rare in developed countries, low intake may cause muscle wasting and increase the risk of bone fractures.

Foods can be either 'complete' or 'incomplete' source of protein. The difference between the two is that 'complete' protein sources contain all the essential amino acids we need, while 'incomplete' proteins have some but not all essential amino acids our bodies require. As long as we eat a variety of protein foods in our diets, whether an individual food is 'complete' or not is not something to worry about.

Choosing a variety of foods helps to provide our bodies with the right quantity and quality of proteins. These can include plant-based protein sources such as pulses and peas or animal-based protein sources such as fish and lean meats.

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# CARBOHYDRATES

There is a rumour going around that Carbs are bad for us! But not all Carbs are the same.

There is strong evidence that fibre, found in wholegrain versions of starchy carbs, for example, is good for our health. Carbs come in three varieties: Sugars, Starches and Fibre. Half of your daily calorie intake should come from starchy foods, fruit and vegetables.

The trick is to balance. Carbs in the right combination with protein and fats, help us to combat disease, for example, Fibre is an important part of a healthy, balanced diet. It can promote good bowel health, reduce the risk of constipation, and some forms of fibre have been shown to reduce cholesterol levels.

Carbs also give us energy. Carbs are broken down into glucose (sugar) before being absorbed into your blood. The glucose then enters your body's cells with the help of insulin. Glucose is used by your body for energy, fuelling your activities, whether that's going for a run or simply breathing. However, red alert! If more glucose is consumed than can be stored as glycogen, it's converted to fat for long-term storage of energy.

Carbs are found to contain fewer calories gram for gram than fat; 4 calories (4kcal) per gram for carbs and 9 calories (9kcal) per gram for fat. Also, starchy foods can be a good source of fibre, which means they can be a useful part of maintaining a healthy weight. By replacing fatty, sugary foods and drinks with higher fibre starchy foods, it's more likely you'll reduce the number of calories in your diet. Also, high-fibre foods add bulk to your meal, helping you feel full.

A healthy balance of Carbs such as higher fibre starchy foods, vegetables, fruit and legumes, are also an important source of nutrients, such as calcium, iron and B vitamins. Significantly reducing carbohydrates from your diet in the long term could mean you do not get enough nutrients, potentially leading to health problems.

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# SUPPLEMENTS

The evidence to date generally does not support the use of single or multi-nutrient vitamin and mineral supplements.

Eating a healthy, balanced diet can provide most of us with all of the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that we need for good health. Therefore, the adage that you are what you eat really is true! Although not everyone has a macro biotic chef living with them, but we hope in this booklet we have given you 'food for thought' as to how you can introduce vitamin and mineral packed foods into your daily intake. Remember also that portion control is as vital as what actual foods you eat.

The one vitamin which the health experts recommend is Vitamin D which contributes to the development and maintenance of healthy bones and teeth. During the spring and summer months in the UK, the majority of the population should be able to get the vitamin D they need through sunlight exposure on the skin and by eating a healthy, balanced diet. During autumn and winter, it is recommended that adults and children aged 5 years and over consider taking a supplement containing 10 micrograms of Vitamin D.

Rate this activity out of 10 on how useful you found it. Reflect on whether this works for you

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# YOUR OWN IDEAS

If you have any ideas for more tips or strategies that you have found helpful please share them with us and we will pass them on to others

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