

# Your Lean Team

The **S-ane** approach to  
**Personal Vitality**

Winter  
2009



## How Nutrition Affects Your Mood

by Leslie Hayden-Malloy, PhD, CCN (Clinical Nutritionist)

Have you ever been in a bad mood and wondered whether your diet may be the culprit? Well, it actually may play a large role in how you feel, emotionally. Mood disorders such as anxiety and depression can be influenced by nutritional deficiencies and other eating habits.

The most obvious example of an eating pattern that affects mood is when a person experiences “reactive hypoglycemia.” This occurs when consuming a high carbohydrate snack followed by a low blood sugar crash a short time later. The mood becomes very anxious as stress hormones kick in, helping to counter the imbalance. Because glucose or blood sugar is the fuel for the brain, a drop in the level brings on feelings of nervousness and confusion. The brain is actually begging for more sugar. In addition, when people skip meals or exercise for long periods of time without eating, the same symptoms can occur. Nutritionists know that keeping blood sugar stable is key to achieving mood stability. Eating regularly and having protein at each meal can counteract hypoglycemia and its effects.

Other nutrients that affect mood are the seven water soluble B vitamins present in whole grains, dark green vegetables, and lean meats. Every B vitamin plays a role in stabilizing the mood. If any one of the B vitamins is deficient in the body, symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and mental lethargy can occur. It is especially important for those who drink more than two alcoholic beverages a day to take a vitamin B complex. Alcohol blocks the absorption of B vitamins in the small intestine. Since B vitamins are essential for energy production in the body and for proper brain function, heavy drinking leads to mood disorders.

Another excellent nutrient that acts as a mild antidepressant is the long chain omega 3 fat called EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid). Studies have shown that supplementation with this nutrient (present in fish) helps reduce mental depression. The reason is that long chain omega

3 fats make up a large amount of the cell membrane present in brain neurons. Since most Americans do not eat a diet rich in seafood, our brains tend to lack this essential oil. When omega 6 fats incorporated into brain neurons are replaced with omega 3 fats, mood improves. Studies **Continued on back**

## Depression Can Keep You Stuck

by Mary Disharoon, MA, LMFT

Depression is a condition that keeps you feeling sad, discouraged, hopeless, worthless, and unmotivated. In addition, you might find yourself under-eating or over-eating, having trouble sleeping, or sleeping too much, and unable to concentrate or make a decision. All of these symptoms can affect your psychological and physical health.

When you are trying to make changes in your life, and you're not making much progress, it is helpful to consider whether or not you are depressed. Once you understand what is standing in the way of your ability to change, you will be much more able to find a way through these roadblocks and attain the results you are yearning for.

A very effective way to fight off depression is to

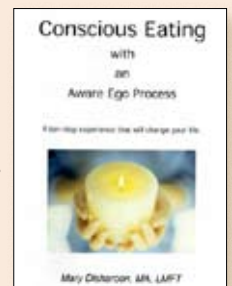
use the cognitive-behavioral approach to therapy.

The word “cognitive” refers to one’s thinking, and includes several different aspects of thought. First, you can work with your **automatic thinking style** and question whether it really is how you want to think. Second, you can examine the **assumptions** you make and challenge their validity. Third, you can discover the **core beliefs** you hold about yourself, including when they were formed and whether they are still relevant today.

The word “behavioral” refers to one’s activity, and includes the wide variety of ways you interact with life. You might look at **how much you move** throughout your day, what you do for **exercise**, and how well you **start, follow-through, and complete** the chores and pleasures of life.

### Just published!

We are excited to announce the release of Mary Disharoon’s new book, *Conscious Eating with an Aware Ego Process*. Mary unveils her 10-step process using Voice Dialogue, or Dialogue Journaling, to help transcend the up-and-down cycle of dieting and overeating. Price \$17.95 plus tax and postage. To purchase, send an e-mail to: **MaryDish@comcast.net**.



When you can work with your depressive thinking and inaction, you have a better chance of freeing yourself to enjoy life, creating for yourself what you desire, both

► **Nutrition Affects Your Mood**, continued from front

done on premature infants show that those fed breast milk, which contains long chain omega 3 fats, have improved cognitive function later in life than those fed formula without omega 3 fats. If you choose to take an omega 3 fish oil supplement, purchase a molecularly distilled brand, which removes mercury and other toxins.

Lastly, there has been some research on certain amino acids that are building blocks for proteins such as serotonin, which affects mood in a positive way. Amino acids are precursors to neurotransmitters in the brain and the precursor to serotonin is the amino acid tryptophan. This amino acid is high in foods such as turkey, milk, bananas, walnuts, almonds, and sesame seeds. A tryptophan-rich food must be eaten with a carbohydrate rich food or the brain will not be able to turn the tryptophan into serotonin. Some people take 5-hydroxy tryptophan supplements, but these can be dangerous if mixed with antidepressants such as Prozac, and herbs such as St. John's Wort. It is a good idea to speak with a health care provider who is aware of nutrient drug interactions before supplementing with 5-hydroxy tryptophan.

Generally speaking, a habit of eating five-to-six small meals a day of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean protein sources should provide these nutrients in adequate amounts to keep most individuals feeling well. *Bon appetit!*

► **Depression Can Keep You Stuck**, continued from front

short and long term. Don't stay stuck! It's a waste of your time, especially when help is available with **Your Lean Team's** support.

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● **Exercise and Depression: Five Points to Ponder** ●

- 1. Depression is more than a mental state, it affects the body too.  
*Aerobic exercise increases endorphins, counteracting the feeling of "heaviness."*
- 2. Depression causes fatigue.  
*Exercise promotes physical alertness and energy.*
- 3. Depression creates feelings of low self-worth.  
*Exercise improves posture and appearance, increasing self-esteem.*
- 4. Feelings of helplessness and powerlessness contribute to depression.  
*Even moderate activity helps gain a sense of control and self-determination.*
- 5. Depression causes cravings for fatty and sugary comfort food.  
*Exercise creates a diversion, lessening the cravings.*

— Sandra Machado, CFT

**Research Corner**

by Leslie Hayden-Malloy, PhD, CCN (Clinical Nutritionist)

*Keeping readers updated on current nutritional health research, reflecting our S-ane approach:*

Eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA found in fish oil) was studied for the treatment of psychological distress and depressive symptoms in middle-aged women.

The objective of this study was to compare EPA supplementation with a placebo for the treatment of depressive symptoms in middle-aged women. One hundred and twenty women with mild-to-severe depressive symptoms were assigned to receive either 1.05g of EPA or a placebo for eight weeks. The Hopkins Symptom Checklist Depression Scale, the Psychological General Well Being Schedule, and the Hamilton Depression Rating Score were used to assess depressive symptoms. At baseline, all women were mildly-to-moderately depressed. After eight weeks, the outcome improved in all EPA treated groups over placebo. This study showed that in an eight-week time period, EPA supplementation improved the depressive symptoms in mild and moderately depressed women.

*Am J Clin Nutr. 2009 Feb;89(2):642-651. Epub 2008 Dec. 30*

**Your Lean Team**

Our **S-ane** approach to creating health and vitality supports the development of your **self-awareness**, good **nutrition**, and effective **exercise**.



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**Support:** Mary Disharoon, MA, LMFT 707.525.4789 [MaryDish@comcast.net](mailto:MaryDish@comcast.net) • [www.MaryDisharoon.com](http://www.MaryDisharoon.com) A licensed psychotherapist, Mary specializes in Conscious Eating Selves Work—helping to change one's thinking in order to achieve weight and fitness goals.

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● **This issue:**  
● **Depression help through changes in nutrition, exercise, and thinking** ●

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