

# EAP Newsletter NOV 22

Diet plays a vital role in our mental health and overall mood, as anyone who's ever been 'hangry' can confirm. Understanding how food can improve our quality of life and overall wellbeing can help us to make better choices about food.

## Food Facts

**What we eat can significantly impact our mood and mental health.**

- Serotonin is a chemical that plays a key role in stabilizing our mood.
- The gut is often known as the second brain.
- The brain and gut are directly connected by the vagus nerve, which serves as a hotline between the two.
- Vagal nerves are the main nerve group of the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the nervous system that relaxes our body after periods of stress or danger.
- Activating the vagus nerve can help switch off the fight or flight (autonomic nervous system) response and turn on the calming, parasympathetic response.
- When we are stressed for ongoing periods of time, we can experience digestion issues or changes in appetite.

*If something goes wrong, don't beat yourself up about it. Take a deep breath, reflect on what could have gone better and move on.*



## Food Moods



### NEGATIVE



#### Irritable anxious

Caffeinated drinks coffee/tea (if taken in excess)



#### Mood swings

Refined sugar like lollies, biscuits, soft drinks (if taken in excess)



#### Feeling low

Fatty & high calorie foods like junk food, fast food (if taken in excess)

### POSITIVE



#### Feeling generally happy

Nuts, seeds, tofu, lentils, beans, eggs, chicken, fish



#### Emotionally balanced, less moody

Fish like salmon, food rich in polyunsaturated fatty acids like walnuts/ almonds



#### Feeling more alert and active

Lean meat, lamb, eggs, soya beans, chickpeas, dhal

# The Mood in Food



## Irritable anxious

Caffeine can boost our physical and mental performance. However when we ingest caffeine, it promotes the release of cortisol (stress hormone) which revs up the autonomic nervous system (Fight/Flight/Freeze), making us ready for a fight. When we encounter a stressful situation caffeine can make us have a more pronounced reaction to the stress.



## Mood swings

Sugar can spike our blood sugar which causes our mood to fluctuate. When we have low blood sugar it can result in a stress response, a bit like a fire alarm. This can often create a sense of urgency to seek out more food. This response can sometimes feel like anxiety.



## Feeling low

There is a correlation between highly processed, fried, fatty foods and depression. Foods that are high in trans fats can upset the omega-3 balance in body. Omega 3s are consistently linked to mood regulation in nutritional research.



## Feeling generally happy

The proteins in nuts, seeds, tofu, lentils, beans, eggs, chicken and fish contain amino acids, the essential building blocks for neurotransmitters like serotonin/GABA.



## Emotionally balanced, less moody

Healthy fats like those found in nuts and salmon can help to stabilise blood sugar and prevent shakiness or irritability of stress and anxiety. They are also satiating and harder to overconsume.



## Feeling more alert and active

Whole, non-processed foods like lean meat, eggs, soya beans can help us to feel more alert and active.

## EAP NOW APP

**The power of your wellbeing in your hands.** EAP NOW is our free-to-register mobile app which provides a highly accessible and flexible way of accessing your EAP support. As well as securing all your EAP appointments, the app provides a range of services and information, including:

**My bookings** - Request support and track in real-time your upcoming and past appointments.

**My check-up** - Quick check-ups for you, to track your wellbeing – currently GRIT, financial wellness, impostor syndrome, loneliness, intimate relationships, mindfulness, resilience, self compassion, social connections and anxiety and distress checks are available. These are robust, validated, measurable tools.

**My EAP** - View our video, explaining your EAP programme and how it works.

**My resources** - Magazine-style tips and guides – e.g. talking with children about violence, coping with grief after community violence.

**Connect me** - Connects to both EAP Services and community resources.

**Newletters** - Our latest e-newsletter with many articles for you to read.

**F.A.Q** - Answers to common questions about your EAP programme and addresses myths on counselling and mental health.



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