

WHAT SHOULD I EAT FOR MENTAL HEALTH?!

Discover how food can affect your mood and cognitive capacity.

FIRST, WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

When you're mentally and emotionally healthy, you have the ability to...



Learn, remember, and think clearly



Cope with change, setbacks, and uncertainty



Form and maintain supportive relationships



Solve problems and make decisions



Regulate emotions and express them in a healthy manner



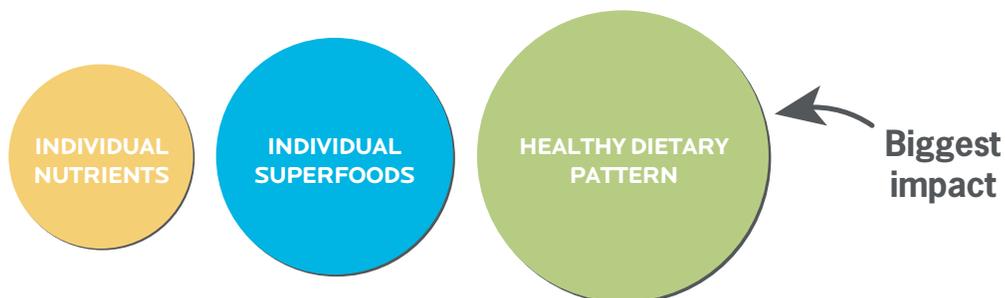
Tap into creativity and awareness—and grow from these insights

USE THESE STEPS TO IMPROVE HOW YOU THINK AND FEEL

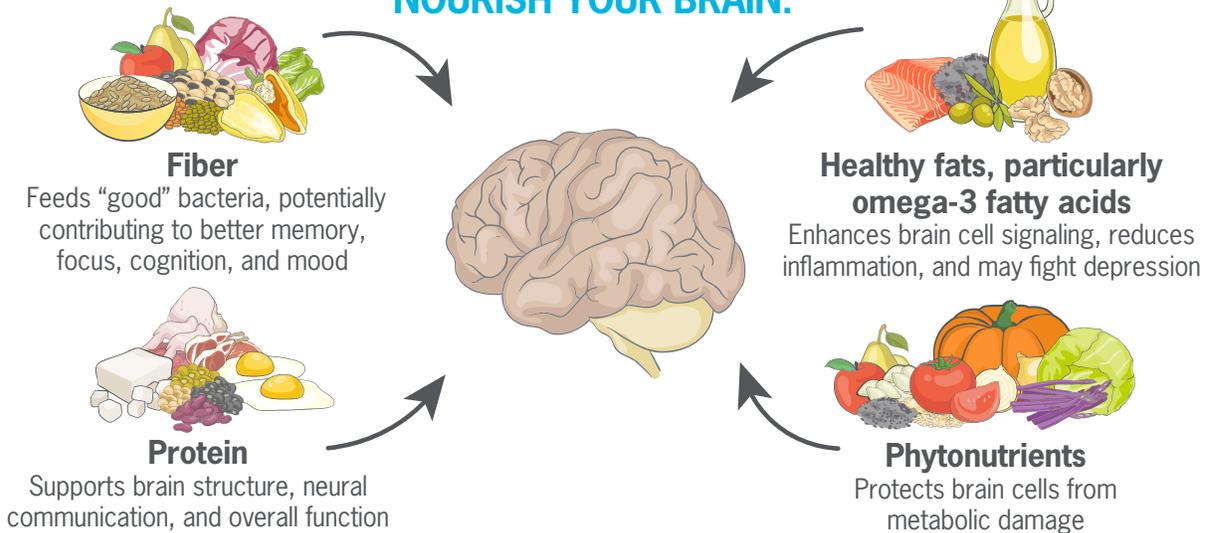


1 FOCUS ON YOUR OVERALL DIETARY PATTERN.

Consistently eating a wide variety of minimally-processed foods influences mental and emotional health much more than consuming any specific nutrient or superfood.



MINIMALLY-PROCESSED FOODS NOURISH YOUR BRAIN.



TO EAT FOR MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH, USE A CONTINUUM APPROACH.

EAT MORE

- Colorful fruits and veggies
- Fatty fish and eggs
- Whole grains
- Legumes
- Potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Tofu and tempeh
- Lean meat and poultry, insects
- Greek yogurt and cottage cheese (plain, cultured)
- Nuts, seeds, and olives
- EVOO, avocado, or walnut oils
- Water, plain (still, sparkling)
- Coffee, plain
- Tea, plain (especially green, white, and black)



EAT SOME

- Uncultured cottage cheese
- Medium-lean meats
- Meat jerky
- Refined lean meat (e.g. sausage)
- Protein powder
- Refined grains (e.g. white rice, white bread, instant oats)
- Flavored yogurt
- Dark chocolate
- Cheese, fresh
- Milk
- Vegetable juices
- Unsweetened plant milks



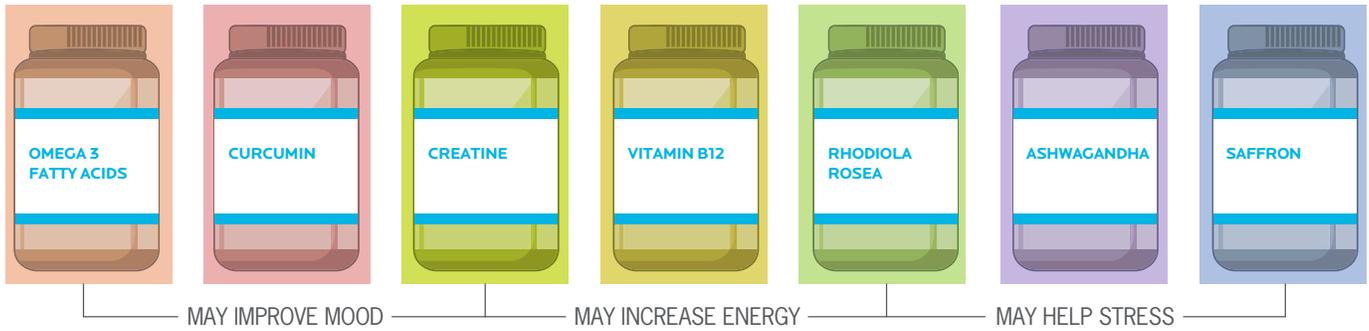
EAT LESS

- Sweets
- Chips
- Fried foods
- Processed deli meats
- High-fat meats
- Plant-based meats
- Sugar
- Margarine and butter
- Processed cheese
- Hydrogenated oils and trans fats
- Fat rich foods with 10+ g sugar
- Soda
- Sweetened plant milks
- Heavily sweetened /creamed coffee / tea



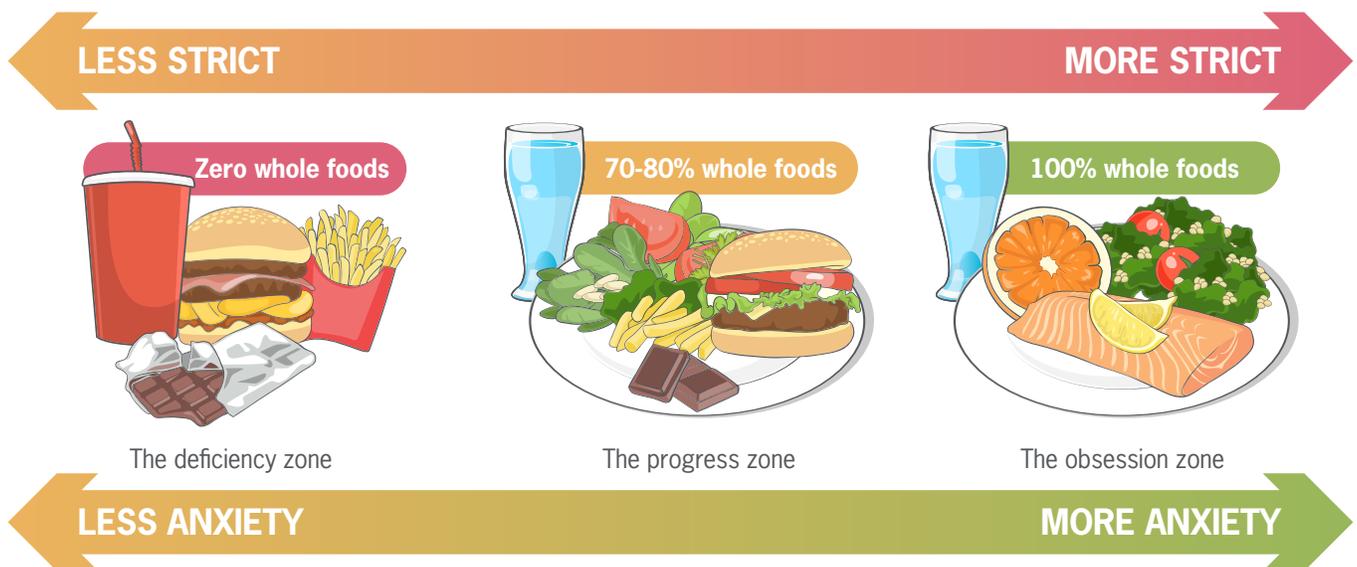
WHAT ABOUT SUPPLEMENTS?

A wide range of substances may boost the effects of a healthy dietary pattern, especially if you are deficient. Make sure to talk to your doctor about the pros and cons.



2 DON'T TRY TO BE PERFECT.

As dietary restriction goes up, so can emotional-health related problems like food obsession, anxiety, and disordered eating.



HERE'S HOW TO FIND YOUR NUTRITIONAL SWEET SPOT.

If you're currently here → Try aiming here →



3

PAY ATTENTION TO HOW AND WHERE YOU EAT.

Your environment, eating companions, and thoughts can affect your mental wellbeing as powerfully as what's on your plate.



Reduce anxiety with a leisurely eating pace.

- ✓ Breathe deeply before digging in
- ✓ Slow down and savor what you're eating
- ✓ Eat in a calm, uplifting environment
- ✓ Reduce distractions that trigger anger, anxiety, sadness, and tension



Explore positive social connections.

- ✓ Dine with people who help you laugh, relax, and feel loved
- ✓ Consider sharing meals with others, for example, by cooking for a friend
- ✓ Connect with your culture by trying your family's recipes and heritage cuisine



Talk to yourself as you would talk to a dear friend.

- ✓ Be kind and compassionate with yourself
- ✓ Consider what helps you truly enjoy this experience
- ✓ Express gratitude or appreciation in a way that suits you, for example by saying grace or noticing abundance

4

CONDUCT EXPERIMENTS TO DISCOVER WHAT WORKS BEST FOR YOU.

No one piece of guidance benefits all people in all situations all the time.

FOR SOME PEOPLE...



Family dinner generates more stress than happiness.



Highly-refined foods (in moderation) lift mood and help them cope.



Focusing too much on whole foods triggers anxiety.

To create an approach that works for YOU, experiment with a range of options.

STEP 1. PICK ONE EXPERIMENT FROM THE CHART BELOW.

✓ Eat one extra veggie serving a day.

✓ Eat slowly, seeing how long you can make the meal last.

✓ Create a serene dining experience.

✓ Eat with people who make you laugh.

✓ Ditch screens and other distractions.

✓ Take a new supplement.

✓ Eat or enjoy a drink outside.

✓ Eat like you're doing a wine tasting: sniff and savor.

✓ Before digging in, ask yourself, "What do I really, really want right now?"

✓ Set the table and sit to eat. Use those nice dishes.

✓ Eat one extra serving of protein per day.

✓ Take a deep breath and consciously relax your whole body between bites.

✓ Put on your favorite music.

✓ Try a new recipe and congratulate yourself no matter how it turns out.

✓ Teach someone else (like your kid) a cooking skill. Have fun while you do it.

✓ Enjoy a small amount of something high quality and/or special.

✓ Consider your culture's food traditions, and try a dish that honors your family's background.

✓ Pick up a hobby during the times you'd normally eat emotionally or from stress.

✓ Try eating only when you're physically hungry.

✓ Try the opposite of what you normally do.

! **Don't see an experiment for you?**
Design your own challenge based on your food preferences, lifestyle, and values.

STEP 2: AFTER TRYING SOMETHING NEW FOR SEVERAL DAYS, CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS.

Do you feel better than before?

Or worse?

If you feel better, consider keeping that practice in place. If worse, it may not be for you.

STEP 3: KEEP TRACK OF YOUR RESULTS.

Keep experimenting—adding some strategies, ditching others—until you create a personalized nutritional approach.

Use the table below to keep notes.

Experiments
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Results
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____