

Module 3 Lesson 7

Transcript

Today's lesson is on food and mood. One of the topics in the realm of brain health that is bound to come up no matter what client you're working with. Yes, as most of us have already probably learned from experience what we eat can have a big effect on how we feel. In this lesson, we're going to talk about the connection between hunger, eating patterns and mood. Then I'm going to go a little bit into the brain and fueling it properly so we can work at its best. Finally, we'll talk about hot topics and food and mood research and of course what this means for you and your clients. So let's get started.

I love the word hangry. How has it not been around forever? Why did that word just come up in the past few years? Unless I've been living under a rock. You know what a hungry baby sounds like, hungry and furious about it? That's really what's going on inside of me every time I'm a little too long past chow time. I wanted to give you a story to start us off here. Jenny was a client who came to me for weight loss. She was 35 years old, 5'3" and 145 pounds. She told me that the weight had just started creeping up a couple of years earlier. Besides seasonal allergies Jenny was pretty healthy. She was dealing with anxiety and depression.

Weekdays, she woke up as late as humanly possible to walk her dog and then get to work on time. She had her first cup of coffee around 9:15 and usually skipped breakfast. Lunch was a salad that definitely had too much fat on it and she always said she said yes to the bread as well. Around 4:00 PM she'd have another cup of coffee and a few chocolates or sweets or something lying around her office. And dinner was late usually, or late-ish, usually around 8:00 PM with her husband and they usually ate out or ordered in. When they cooked, it was something simple like pasta or an omelet.

After dinner, Jenny would usually watch TV and snack on something like chips or popcorn. Weekends consisted of brunch and dinner and a bit of social drinking. Not too much, but a bit of drinking there. So not the worst diet, right? But obviously there was some work to be done here. I really attribute almost all of Jenny's weight loss success to the very first step I had her take. We started with Jenny eating a small snack within an hour of waking up. Super simple, right? This simple tweak to her diet, jacked up her metabolism and kicked her into an active metabolic mode. When you go to bed at night, your metabolism switches into low gear called RMR, resting metabolic rate, and it doesn't switch over to higher intensity until you have your first meal or snack of the day.

Having her start with a dozen almonds and a few dried apricots, something really simple most of us would usually have for more of a snack, but for her, it was easy for her to eat that as she walked her dog, this was revolutionary for her. Jenny texted me on her third day of trying this small step to tell me she was having her snack at 7:30 AM and she was starving at 10. She was worried about the fact that she was starving, but I told her that was great. That meant that her metabolism was fired up. So she stuck with it. I had Jenny eat a quick breakfast at 10:00 and then we fueled her every three and a half to five hours afterwards, which steadied her blood sugar and the weight melted off of her.

Jenny was a great client. She really listened and she stuck with her changes and was really consistent. So I did expect her to lose weight. But here's the good part. The side effect that we weren't even focusing on here is that her depression and anxiety also really responded so strongly to this small change on her food behaviors. Jenny had been managing her depression and anxiety with therapy, journaling and meditation. Like I said, she was really a good student and she was able to see a strong correlation between eating more consistently and her depressive episodes.

So let's really get into food and mood. We know food and mood are connected. You don't need research or science to tell you that when you're happy and feeling good, you look forward to your grilled vegetables, avocados and Pico. And on the other hand, your boss yells at you, you have an argument with your friend or you missed a deadline at work because your computer crashed and what do you do? Your reach right for the chips, cookies or ice cream. When's the last time you got stuck in a downpour and thought, "Gee, I could really go for some alfalfa sprouts right now."

We talked about this already in TNS Level One, but I just want to mention a few more things here. We're already hardwired to prefer fatty, sugary, and salty foods biologically. It's human nature to love brownies that are fresh out of the oven. You're programmed to prefer foods that are linked to survival and guess what? Fat, sugar, and salt are rarely flavor profiles linked to starvation, from nature standpoint at least. Bitter foods like Brussels sprouts and asparagus, they may take more practice to like because they have a bitter profile and bitter is linked to poison in nature. So we have to experience them several times before we grow to prefer them.

Sometimes it's just helpful to explain this to clients. It's motivating on its own knowing the why behind they do what they do. That alone really can be at least a little inspiring to some clients. At least your clients that want a little bit more of the science or might need a new form of motivation. When you're in a frazzled or highly emotional state, you're naturally inclined to go for the chips, cookies and ice cream. Stress and anxiety may even cause you to prefer crunchy

indulgences like chips and cookies. Sad feelings may steer you towards ice cream. Your mood and emotions release hormones that trigger cravings on a cellular level.

On top of that, your brain is a wonderful organ, but it doesn't do well without the proper fuel. You can't put regular gas in a diesel engine and expect good things. Your brain needs carbs broken down into sugar to work at its best. Skipping all carbs, fueling only with protein and veggies maybe, and fats is really going to affect how well your brain can work. If there isn't enough sugar, otherwise known as glucose, in the brain, the neurons in the brain breakdown and neuro-transmitters aren't produced, which means brain fog. Brain fog is also sensitive to your hormones, which we'll talk about in the thyroid module and how cortisol is released in a negative loop.

I'm saying that yes, life events affect your mood, but your nutrition plays a key role here. And fueling your brain properly helps set you up for better emotional health. Really, unless someone is on a medically prescribed ketogenic diet, most of us get enough carbohydrates even on low carb diets to meet our brain's needs. Also, most people who think they're in ketosis are not. Most are ketosis-like eaters, but it's extremely challenging to live a normal life on a ketosis diet.

Like my Jenny example, depression and diet are super entwined. We know that, but that's about all we really know right now. There is good research going on. Most of it is from data taken from the nurses health studies, but scientists have not put their finger on that one nutrient that links diet and depression. They have found that depression and overweight and obesity are linked. There is a suggestion that lowering meat consumption is a good idea if you eat a lot of meat and are depressed. There also seems to be a little correlation with increased vitamin D and lower depression reported. But for now the strongest evidence is suggesting following a Mediterranean diet. Until we have conclusions and answers, it's recommended that we encourage, of course, not surprisingly, vegetables, fruits, high quality olive oil, reducing those packaged process foods and eating more high quality, leaner protein. Since the exercise and depression link is really strong. I also really like to focus a lot of attention on the benefits of exercise to fend off the blues.

I'm going to recap now everything we just talked about, but I also want to mention there's a handout attached to this lesson that gives you more specific information on the specific nutrients connected to brain and mood. Okay, so now to recap. Your mood and emotions release hormones that trigger cravings on a cellular level, nutrition plays a key role in our emotional health. Our brains require carbohydrates to function best, which in turn can keep our moods and emotions level. Overall, the Mediterranean diet has been linked to lower depression. You want to help clients get in plenty of vegetables, fruits, high quality olive oil, and lean protein, while limiting packaged processed

foods. Exercise also has been shown to fight depression. So really work with your clients to come up with a realistic plan for getting exercise in. If it's not an realistic plan, they're not going to do it. Focus on that a lot. I'll see you in the next lesson.