

silver--lining Podcast Scripts

8. Food

Bon appetit! Oh, I mean, bonjour! Today, at silver—lining, we are discussing the connection between food and mental well-being, and how you can make the most use of it.

[intro music]

“You are what you eat” is a saying which is subjectively hackneyed but objectively true. Before I get into why, a little disclaimer, as always: I am neither a nutritionist nor a doctor (yet), so please reach out to professionals for further guidance; this content, as always, is never meant to replace professional help.

As you may already know, food is a central part of our lives. According to recent statistics by [dreams.co.uk](https://www.dreams.co.uk), the average human spends approximately 4 years and 6 months eating in their lifetime. Apart from often being one of life’s greatest pleasures, food is what keeps our heart pumping and our body functioning. Unfortunately, it is frequently forgotten that this also applies, and especially applies, to the functioning of our brain.

Above all, there are five food components that directly affect our mental health: antioxidants, omega-3, vitamin D, B vitamins, and fibre. According to the Canadian Digestive Health Foundation (CDHF), B vitamins – including vitamins B6 and B12, thiamin, niacin, and folate – help maintain the fatty myelin sheath covering our neurons and produce further neurotransmitters that propel information processing between brain cells. They are found in poultry, meat, whole grain, eggs, leafy greens, and more. On the other hand, Vitamin D, which is usually found in fatty fish, fortified milks, eggs, and more is correlated with enzymes producing reward neurotransmitters such as dopamine, which is why it is affectionately named the “sunshine vitamin.” Evidence supports that low levels of these neurotransmitters increases the likelihood for new mental health disorders of great variety in frequency and intensity to arise. Next, antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E as well as beta-carotene, are believed to prevent genetic damage encouraging the development of depression and anxiety. These are often found in different fruits and vegetables, which may also be good for your mental health on a psychological level simply because of their bright, varied color. Further, the CDHF notes that omega-3 is essential for healthy cell membranes and, consequently, productive neuron communication in the brain. For instance, it is found in chia seeds and, once more, fatty fish, such as salmon and tuna. Lastly, fibre has many different health benefits, but one of them is maintaining a healthy bacterial balance in the human microbiome. This is especially important to note because there is heavy and bi-directional communication between the central nervous system and the digestive tract, which is why our gut is often

called the “second brain”. This so-called “brain-gut access” impacts the immune system and hormonal behavior. Appropriately high intakes of fiber have also been shown to reduce symptoms for mood disorders. Many dietitians and neurologists recommend abstaining from excessive amounts of ultra-processed foods, which are often linked to oxidative stress and inflammation, in favor of more organic, fresh alternatives.

In summary, food is not only paramount to our physical well-being, but also to our perception of reality. Indeed, the aforementioned links to mental health are among the most important, but also just the beginning of this connection (I could talk for hours about this). And while I encourage you to regularly try out many different healthy alternatives to food, it is important not to obsess over every single meal, but rather keep a motivated mindset and a willingness to explore new tastes and sources of energy. Once again, professional help will be most useful if you would like to inform yourself about this further.

I hope you found this overview helpful! I truly enjoyed it, but now I’m off to dinner. Until next time, mind your silver--lining!