

## Hints & Tips from the Gut-Mind Axis talk to...

*Diversify the population of beneficial flora in your ecosystem, encourage the growth of good bacteria, soothe an irritable inflamed gut and body, eliminate yeast, crowd out parasites, boost your energy, banish bloat, glow from the inside out and, of course, encourage a thriving gut-mind axis! Some hints and tips....*

- **Probiotics:** A healthy gut means a diverse microbiome. Fermented foods contain mouthful after mouthful of a diverse range of beneficial flora that we don't even have names for yet. Include a range of probiotic-rich drinks, condiments and veggies in your diet on a daily basis. These fermented foods help you digest your meals and increase the diversity of your gut flora. In doing so, you help to crowd out unhelpful organisms thereby protecting against overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria or parasites. Also, it's tasty! Try enjoying a small amount of red beet kvass in a wine glass as you cook your evening meal to prepare your body for optimal digestion.
- **Prebiotics:** prebiotic foods contain indigestible fibres which feed your friendly flora. Without them, it's difficult for the beneficial bacteria in your gut to thrive and multiply. Many healthy foods are great sources of prebiotic fibre like bananas, garlic, onions and starches such as pumpkin and butternut squash.
- Deeply pigmented fruit and veg heal nutrient deficiencies, boost mood and help skin glow. Aim to include leafy greens every single day e.g. 3 leaves of kale, spinach, chard, broccoli, boy choi, lettuce (well cooked for those on the GAPS intro diet).
- Fats help synthesise Vitamin A from carotenoids in plant foods such as carrots and strawberries, so enjoy a handful of nuts or cultured cream with your fruit. Make your own salad dressing using cold pressed oils, unpasteurised vinegar and drizzle this liberally over your veggies.
- The brain is a very hungry organ and it needs plenty of natural fats and high quality protein to function effectively. Natural fats that are unprocessed include cold pressed olive, coconut sesame and flax seed oils, butter, fish oil and other animal fats. Boost your Omega 3 levels with leafy green veg, walnuts, salmon, flax seed and eggs.
- Meat stocks and bone broths contain all the building blocks for a healthy gut lining: you can either stock your freezer with various broths frozen in meal-sized portions or get into the routine of making some each day with a smaller amount of ingredients (this is a better option if you are very sensitive to histamine).
- Steer clear of foods and products that can damage your microbiome. Avoid SAGAS: **S**ugar, **A**rtificial ingredients like sweeteners/emulsifiers/preservatives, **I**nflammatory **G**rains (like gluten), **A**ntibiotic and pesticide laden produce/meats, and **S**oy. Soy was beyond the scope of this talk but if you're interested in why this is included you may want to start with this research: ([westonaprice.org/health-topics/soy-alert/soy-and-the-brain](http://westonaprice.org/health-topics/soy-alert/soy-and-the-brain))
- **Hygiene hypothesis:** Spend time outdoors in nature, sit on the sand on the beach, garden and interact with animals. Hygiene is important but not at the expense of depriving your immune system with an education of how to help you live in your surrounding environment.
- **Manage stress:** Stress has been shown to directly damage the composition of bacteria in the gut, depleting the beneficial bacteria you need to stay well. It also shrinks your Prefrontal Cortex and Hippocampus which are needed for memory, mental 'horsepower' and emotional processing ability. Integrate relaxing and pleasurable activities into your life that help you access that state of 'flow'; like yoga, or swimming in the ocean ... whatever works for you! Increasing the % of time you're in a pleasant **mindset** is a crucial part of your toolkit to maintaining good health. Notice that I'm not saying "stress reduction", or "stress elimination" because stress in itself is actually stimulating and builds psychological core strength (this is called Eustress).

- Enjoy your meals. Rats fed a nutritious diet devoid of flavour (and hence enjoyment) die of malnutrition! Use a variety of mineral salts, spices, fresh and dried herbs to stimulate appetite and maximise enjoyment of each meal.
- Timing your meals: Give your tummy a bedtime. Gastric emptying slows dramatically after sunset so it's best to avoid eating beyond an hour after sunset. Also, have your lightest meal in the evening when your digestive tract is at its weakest. 'Light' does not necessarily mean a salad with raw veggies, it actually means easy-to-digest soothing foods like cooked stews and soups.
- Diluted veggie juice can help complement your diet without overly taxing the digestive system.
- Spread fibre out in small increments throughout the day to avoid clogging or overly taxing your digestive tract. There are plenty of foods that contain naturally occurring digestive enzymes which help too. Papaya contains papain, pineapple contains bromelain, apple contains pectin. Enjoy 2 pieces a day.
- Practice forgiveness.
- Increase the number of days you can say you've enjoyed natural sunshine, quality sleep and gentle exercise.
- Minimise unnecessary exposure to harmful chemicals in cleaning products, toiletries and foods that can deplete the beneficial bacteria on your skin, in your mouth and within your digestive tract. Use filtered water for drinking and cooking. And cook with cast iron, glass, good quality enamel or stainless steel.
- Food is thy medicine and herbs are key! Sprinkle fresh herbs over your meals liberally. Growing them on your kitchen windowsill has a whole host of benefits for the psyche as well as your physical health.
- In general, plant foods have a 'cleansing' effect on the body and animal foods 'feed' and help the body replenish damaged tissue and maintain itself. Find the right balance for your lifestyle, stage of life and needs on any given day. A palm sized amount of animal protein, not more than once a day is generally a good balance.
- The 80/20 'rule': It's better to eat the wrong food with the right attitude than the right food with the wrong attitude. This means that 80% of the time you eat a low inflammation diet with plenty of alive and probiotic foods with prebiotic foods to encourage the good gut bacteria to thrive. And then the other 10-20% of the time you eat whatever you want. This might be meals shared with friends and family or foods you associate with happy times from childhood. Becoming stressed about food choice to the point of being rigid can cause much more harm than good. Also, a mindset of deprivation is a stressed mindset and we discussed how harmful this can be. And true health involves connecting to others by going to your local cafe, sharing food and enjoying the pleasure trying new things. (The 80/20 approach doesn't apply to food allergies!)
- Nourish your mind. It thrives on stimulation in the form of gentle challenge, learning and new experiences, building coordination. Like muscles, it wants to be challenged. You know you're in this state of 'eustress' (positive stress) when you have a sense of thriving on a just enough level of stimulation with a strong sense of resilience, continued growth, satisfaction and confidence in your ability to cope. This build psychological core strength which means a resilient mindset, problem solving ability and ability to contextualise emotional situations.
- Cultivate intuition. It's easy to fall into the trap of relying on your mind to make food choices. In doing so, you risk undervaluing your intuition of what your body needs. One day you'll read that raw cabbage is good for you and another day someone will tell you that it's a terrible choice and you can't absorb vitamin C from within the walls of this fibrous plant. No two people thrive on the same balance of foods. While most people thrive on a colourful range of fresh plants, healthy fats and high-quality proteins, everyone has different needs that vary each day and are drastically influenced by lifestyle, stage of life and physical constitution.

## Recipes from the Gut-Mind axis talk

### *After dinner gut soothing tea:*

Gut soothing botanicals like slippery elm, aloe and chamomile go well together. Slippery elm is sold as a ground up tree bark and when mixed with water, it forms a gel that helps soothe the mouth, throat, stomach and intestines. You can include this in your diet by making a warm mug of chamomile tea after dinner, adding a spoonful of aloe, 2 heaped spoons of slippery elm with a splash of apple juice, pinch of cinnamon and honey to taste. The pectin in the apple helps you dissolve undigested food. The aloe works like a soap in the gut, the slippery elm soothes the gut and helps regulate stool while the cinnamon is excellent for blood sugar regulation. The sweetness of local honey pacifies the mind and provides lots of information for the immune system on how to cope with your local environment.

### *Digestive tract relaxing tea:*

Fennel tea relaxes the digestive tract and helps with digestion. Use whole fennel seeds. Add hot water to a teaspoon of whole fennel seeds, whole cumin seeds and whole coriander seeds with some local honey to taste.

### *Every day breakfast smoothie:*

Blend 1 ripe banana, a few chunks of pineapple or papaya, 2 cups of berries, 1 cup of raw green leafy veg (stem removed), 1/2 an avocado, 1 tbsp flax seed, 1 cup water, 1 cup fresh almond milk. For a delicious variation (if you're not avoiding aflatoxins) add a spoonful of cocoa powder and use frozen bananas).