

Mindful Eating, Mindful Living

**The Connection Between
Nutrition & Mental Resilience**

By Erica Haag, Nutrition Therapist

Topics for Nutrition and Mental Health

- How food impacts brain structure, function, and mood
- How blood sugar impacts emotional health, energy levels, and sleep
- The Gut-Brain Connection
- How diet can impact hyperactivity and attention-related disorders
- Consequences of eating low-quality foods



Diet to Brain Function Cascade

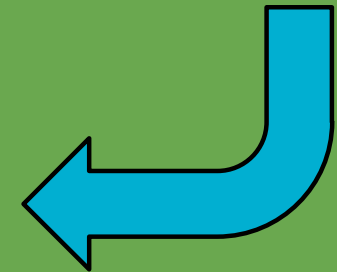
POOR DIET



**DIGESTIVE
ISSUES**



INFLAMMATION



MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



Inflammation is a Key Factor

Causes of Inflammation in the Body:

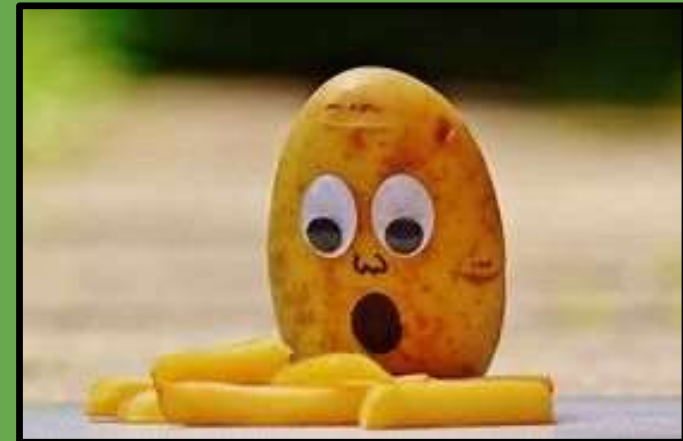
- Poor-quality foods
- Stress
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Lack of sleep
- Toxic exposures
- Vitamin D deficiency



Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

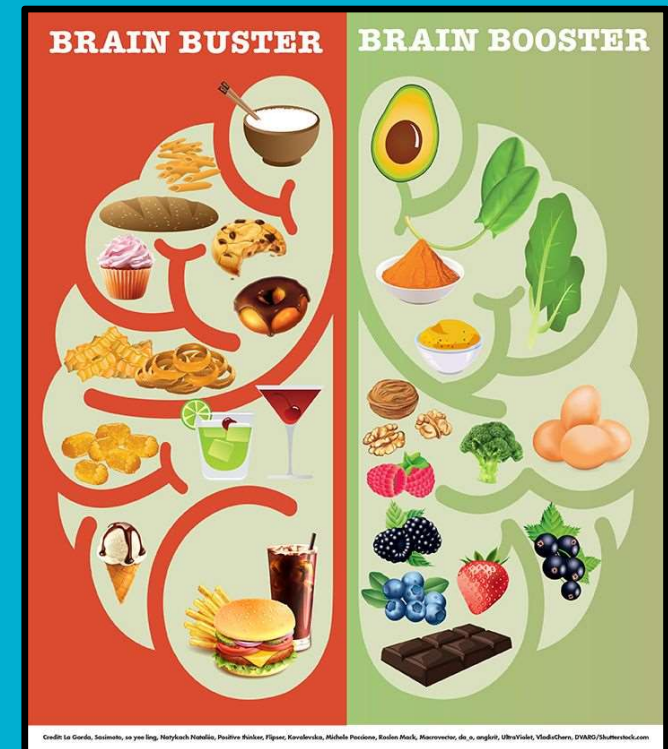
Poor Diet Deprives the Brain

- Standard American Diet is low in nutrients and high in inflammation-producing non-nutrients:
 - Refined sugar
 - Refined carbohydrates
 - Saturated fats
 - Trans fats from fried foods
 - High fructose corn syrup
- Eating these foods deprives the brain and body of essential nutrients for proper functioning:
 - Zinc, Copper, Magnesium, Lutein, DHA Omega 3s, B Vitamins, Vitamin D, Choline, Vitamin E, etc.

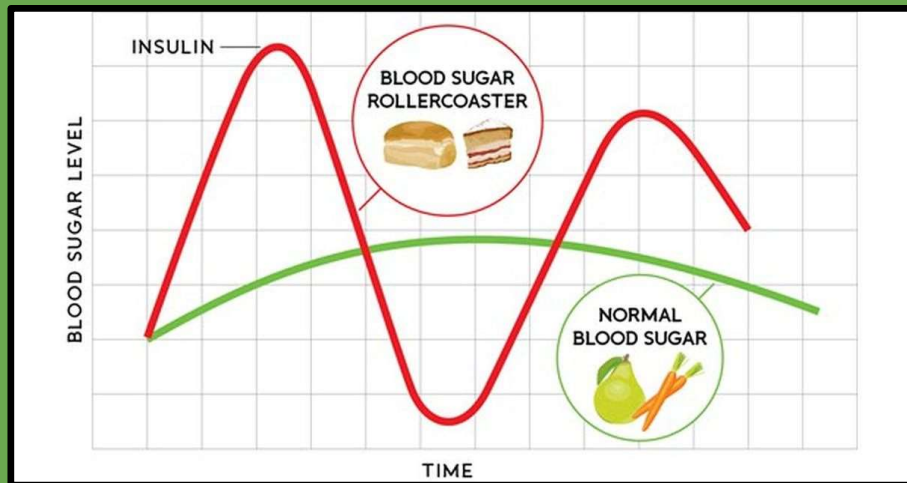


Effects of Poor Diet on Brain Function

- Inflammation and Neuronal Damage
- Reduced Neurotransmitter Production/Utilization
- Increased Oxidative Stress
- Permeable Blood Brain Barrier (BBB)
- Reduced Energy Metabolism
- Reduced Synaptic Plasticity
- Poor Memory Function
- Reduced Emotional Control

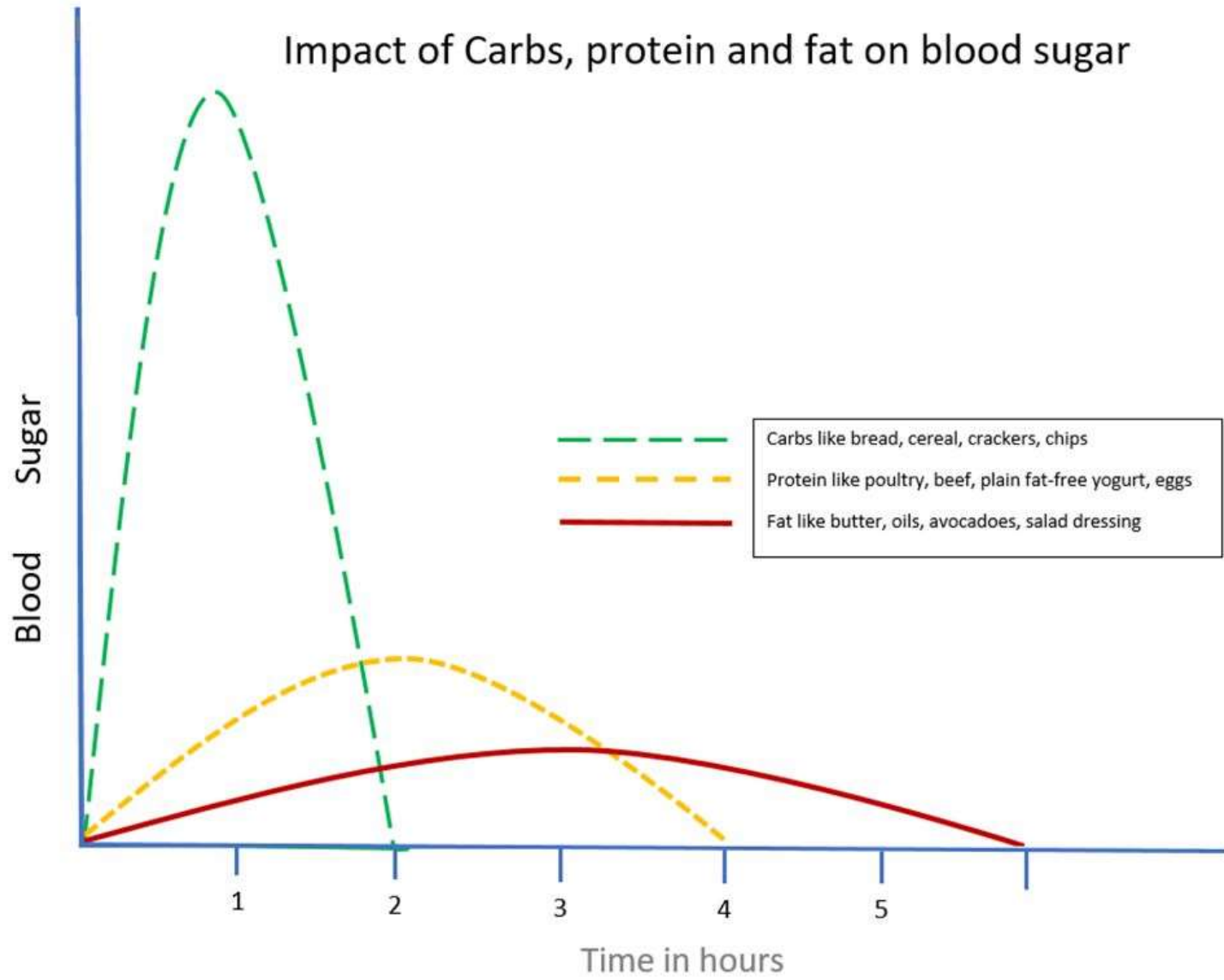


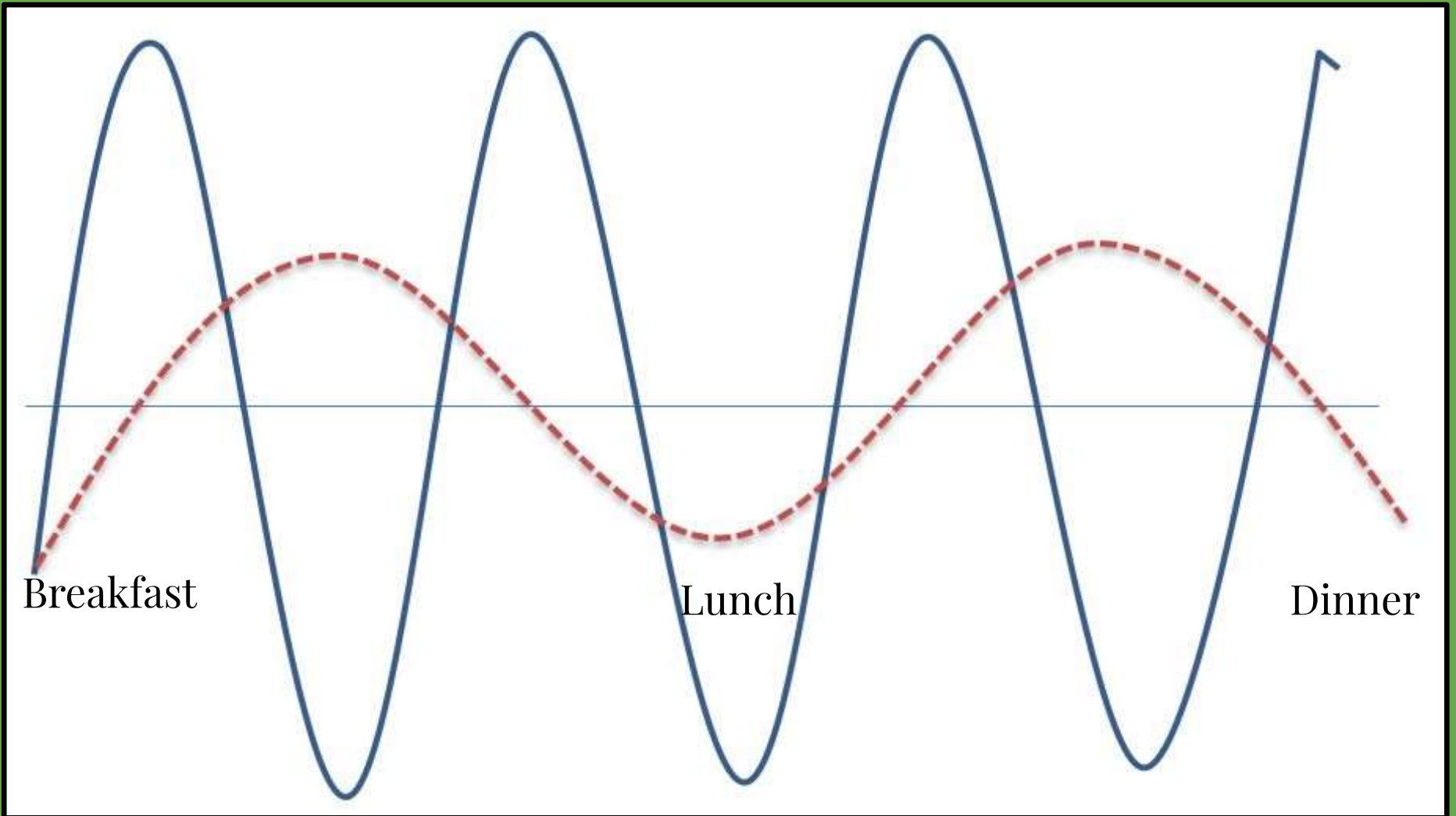
Blood Sugar Stability and Mood



- Blood sugar regulation affects energy levels, food cravings, sleep patterns, and more
- Blood sugar levels are heavily influenced by the types of food eaten, particularly the macronutrients
- Macronutrients = protein, fats, carbohydrates

Impact of Carbs, protein and fat on blood sugar





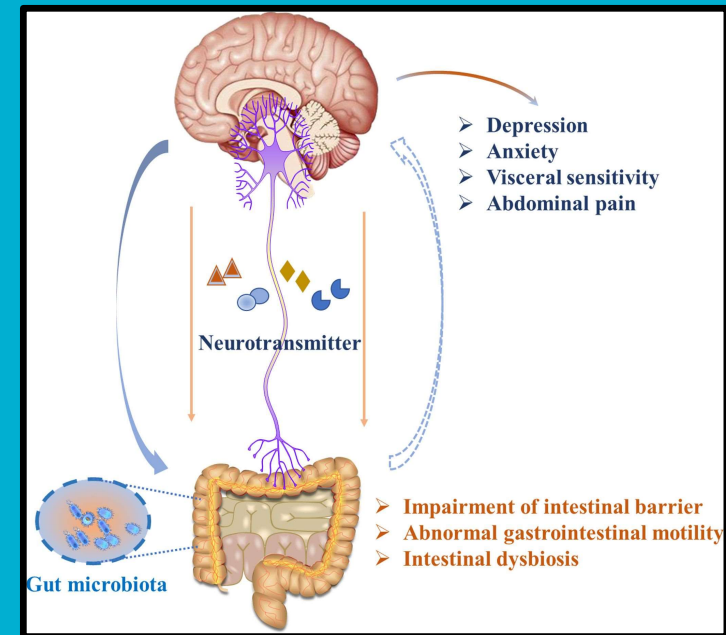
Breakfast

Lunch

Dinner

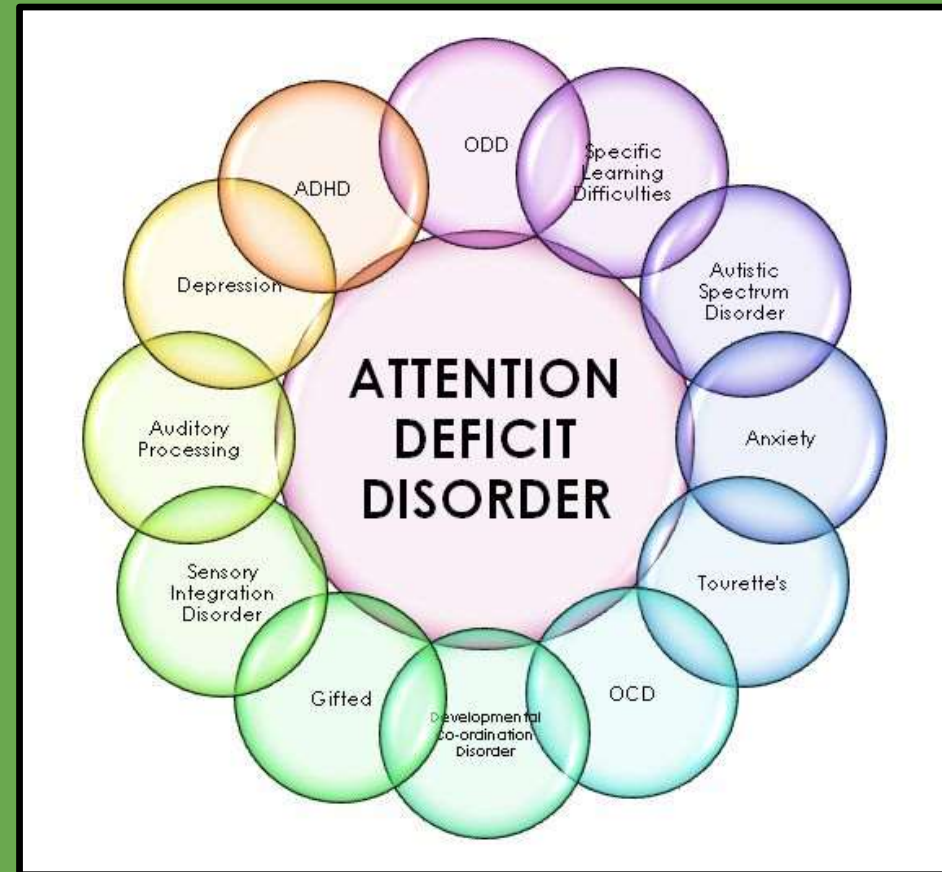
Gut-Brain Axis: The Enteric Nervous System

- The gut communicates with the brain via a complex network of over 100 million nerves
- Chemicals and hormones send messages to the central nervous system
- Food particles are transformed into chemical messengers, called neurotransmitters, that affect mood, cognition, and emotional health
- 95% of the body's serotonin is created in the gut, which is responsible for regulating mood
- Stress, anxiety, and depression can cause or result from gut problems



Nutrition and Attention-Related Disorders

- Balance blood sugar levels
- Research is not consistent, but some studies show:
 - Triggers can vary by the individual
 - Common nutrients deficiencies:
 - Magnesium
 - Zinc
 - Iron
 - Vitamin D
 - Omega 3 Fatty Acids
- Consistent sleep
- Listen to your own body, everyone is different



Diet Essentials: Principle One

Mood Follows Food

- Do not allow yourself to become hungry
- When your blood sugar drops, so does your mood
- Balance macronutrient intake over all meals and snacks to regulate blood sugar levels



Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Diet Essentials: Principle Two

Nourish the First Brain and the “Second Brain”

- The “second brain” is the digestive system, and it needs plenty of fiber and healthy foods to generate healthy bacteria and neurotransmitters to support efficient brain chemistry
- Our brains are made up of 60% fat, so it needs good quality fats, lean proteins, and unrefined carbohydrates to function
- Good quality fats improve mood, focus, attention and memory
- Good fats = eggs, avocado, butter, nuts, seeds, olive oil
- Bad fats = fried foods, fatty meats, processed meats, margarine, baked goods

Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Diet Essentials: Principle Three

Eat Only When Relaxed

- Sympathetic State (Fight or Flight) VS Parasympathetic State (Rest and Digest)
- Return to a parasympathetic state before eating through deep breathing techniques
- Eating under stress is like putting a pot of food on the stove to cook, not lighting the fire, and letting it sit there for two days: it bubbles, ferments, and becomes gaseous



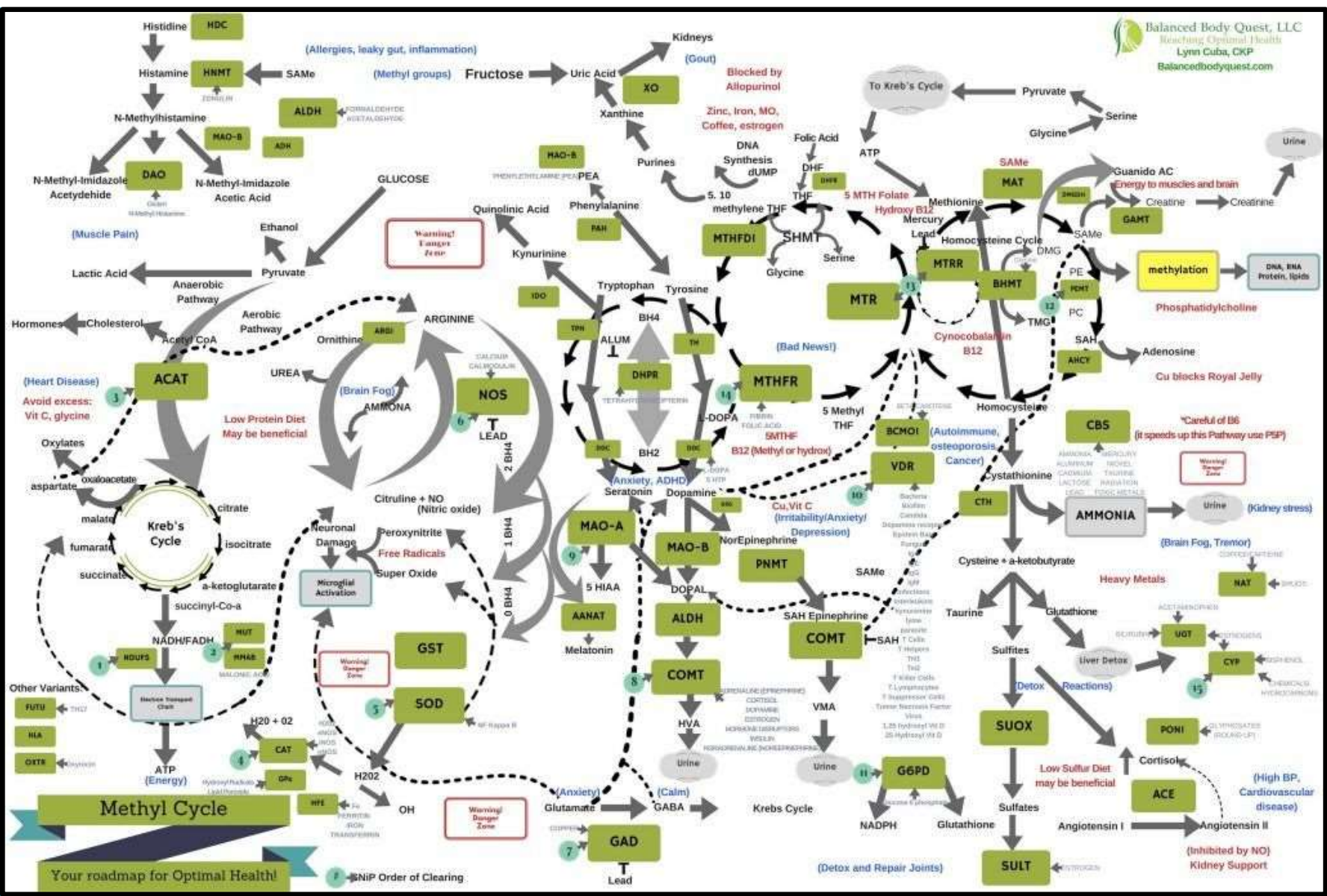
Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Diet Essentials: Principle Four

When there are Mental Health Challenges, there is always a history of digestive problems.

- Use nutrition to balance the five essential factors that underlie mental health issues:
 - Circadian rhythms
 - Blood sugar and functional hypoglycemia
 - Food allergies and sensitivities
 - Inflammation
 - Oxidative stress and mitochondrial function
 - Inadequate methylation

Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.



Your roadmap for Optimal Health!
 SNIP Order of Clearing

Diet Essentials: Principle Five

Eliminate exposure to additives, preservatives, hormones, toxic pesticides, and fertilizers on food.

- Mental health is negatively affected by dietary exposure to food toxins and allergens
- It is best to consume organic food
- If that is not possible all of the time, focus on eating organic as often as possible



Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Diet Essentials: Principle Six

No single diet is right for everyone.

- Each person has a different cultural-genetic heritage and therefore a different metabolism
- Each person has different unique health needs and energy requirements
- Each person's response to food is highly individualized
- It is important to listen to your body and alter your food intake to optimize your mental and physical wellbeing

Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Diet Essentials: Principle Seven

Eat all the colors of the “rainbow”.

- Different colored foods contain different nutrients
- Eat whole, nutrient-dense foods from the whole color spectrum to obtain the most nutrients



Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Diet Essentials: Principle Eight

Diet is essential, but not sufficient.

- A healthy diet is essential for mental health; however, it is generally not sufficient to treat mental illness
- Choose a health diet along with regular use of vitamins and minerals
- Use food and nutrients, not alcohol and drugs, to alter consciousness for health

Source: Korn, Leslie (2016). *Nutrition Essentials for Mental Health*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Diet Essentials: Principle Nine

Integrate behavioral change strategies with the principle of nutritional substitutions.

- Personal change takes place by integrating positive activities (habits) first and then eliminating negative habits (activities)
- Identify one positive change behavior and its corresponding negative habit at a time
- Substitute healthier foods that will satisfy the same needs

Questions?



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