

Boost your brain: Nutrition tips to build a happier brain

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Reference: *You Happier, Dr Daniel Amen, 2022.*

1) **Choose foods that make you happier now and later.**

Before taking that bite, pause and think about how you will be feeling later today and tomorrow morning. For example, eating toast with butter might taste delicious in the moment. It can also spike your blood sugar, make you tired, give you puffy eyes and be a gateway down the highway of overeating.



What foods have a detrimental impact later in the day for you?

2) **Make your calories count towards happiness rather than depression.** The calories you consume either fuel good moods or dampen your outlook. And a 2021 brain imaging study showed that as your weight goes up, blood flow to your brain goes down which can greatly impact your happiness.

How can you be conscious about your calorie consumption?

3) **Eat clean to keep your body healthy.** Your body can't function properly with pesticides, artificial dyes and sweeteners. These can lead to depression, anxiety and fatigue. Aim to eat organic food and take the time to check the labels.

How can I reduce the toxic load of what I am eating and drinking?

4) **Hydrate to be happier.** Your brain is composed of 80% water. Feeling mildly dehydrated can mess with your mood and make you depressed, anxious, angry and increase pain. Try aiming for 8 – 10 glasses of water a day. Other happy brain drink ideas include flavoring your water with slices of fruit or berries, herbal teas and sparking water.

How can you improve your focus and health through staying hydrated?

5) **Power up feel good neurochemicals with high quality protein.** If you want to be happier and healthier, include protein in your diet as it greatly influences moods, helps stabilise blood sugar, prevents food cravings and provides happiness building blocks. The key is small and good quality. This includes being free of pesticides if plant based and free range, free of hormones and antibiotics if animal based.

How can you boost happiness by adding high quality protein to each meal?

6) **Keep your brain happy with healthy with happy fats.** 80% of your brain is water and 60% of the weight of your brain is fat. Happy fats include avocado, nuts (walnuts are associated with less depression), seeds and healthy oils.

How can you boost happiness by adding high quality protein to each meal?

7) Eat mood boosting carbs that last. This includes taking out the bread, chips and biscuits and replacing them with fruit and veggies, high fiber food, and foods that release glucose slowly.

How can you boost happiness by proactively keeping your blood glucose levels stable?

7) Find happiness in your spice cabinet. Want to get happier....then cook with aromatic, flavorful herbs and spices. Saffron, turmeric (triggers the release of serotonin), cinnamon (full of antioxidants), rosemary, cardamon, and bergamot (cholesterol-lowering properties) are all great examples.

Spicy tea: Tea using ginger, cloves, saffron, star anise and cayenne pepper.

Protein balls with spices: As well as a good quality protein powder, you can add avocado, microgreens, chia seeds, cinnamon, cardamom and nutmeg.

What spices and herbs are you open to using more in meals and drinks?



8) Disrupt the want for more through fasting. As well as boosting your mood, fasting can help recalibrate your brain.

How could you incorporate fasting to help recalibrate your brain and feel better?

9) Use habit stacking to create sustainable change. From the list above, choose one change you could start in the next 24 hours. Small steps add up to big change over time.

What is one habit change you could start with?

If you get the health of your brain right, everything else will fall into place.



Dr Daniel Amen