

April 2018 Newsletter



Ready to leave the winter blues behind? Outdoor exercise is a potent weapon in the fight against depression and anxiety any time of year, but spring is a fine time to get started! Snowball fights and sledding are great exercise, as the Hassell family discovered on Mt. Hood last month. (Yep, that's a snowball in Dr. Hassell's hand.)

Non-drug solutions for depression and anxiety prevention and reversal

Spring is the perfect time to put the final touches on depression recovery. For those taking antidepressants, the arrival of more sunshine and warmer temperatures can renew enthusiasm for vigorously using food and activity choices to reverse depression. Happily, the only side-effects from lifestyle medicine like whole foods and daily exercise are better mood, improved overall health, and more energy!

Start with a careful medical evaluation

There are many facets to managing and reversing depression and anxiety. Teasing out those elements should typically start with a thorough physical exam and appropriate tests; is there an undiagnosed condition *appearing* as depression or anxiety? Anemia, thyroid disease, nutritional deficiencies, electrolyte abnormalities, and other serious underlying illnesses may be the problem. Sleep disruption, exhaustion, and side effects of medications (almost any medication!) should also be examined. The next step is usually some form of treatment – and not necessarily a prescribed medicine. Medications are not particularly effective for treating depression and anxiety and often come with potentially worrisome side effects.¹ While I do prescribe antidepressants, the vigorous application of non-drug approaches may make them unnecessary.

¹ Jakobsen, J.C. et al. BMC Psych 2017;17:58

Next, eat a whole food Mediterranean diet

The evidence for benefit associated with traditional whole food diets is growing significantly. We agree with Drew Ramsey MD, a psychiatrist and assistant professor at Columbia University, when he suggests that the FDA should approve the Mediterranean diet for the treatment of clinical depression. “If we are clinicians whose practices are evidence-based and now we see a significant data signal that the Mediterranean or healthy traditional diets can prevent and also treat depression, are we doing a good enough job teaching the next generation of psychiatrists how to assess diet? And are we changing our clinical practices to reflect the evidence?” <https://wb.md/2q3khl3>

Felice Jacka, a professor of psychiatry at Deakin University in Australia, and her colleagues showed that a Mediterranean diet with 3-4 servings of red meat weekly and reduced sugars and processed foods had “a significant and positive effect for individuals with moderate to severe depression,” and in only 12 weeks!² This was a randomized controlled study, with the control group enrolled in a very active support group. Many other studies³ have found similar levels of benefit from a Mediterranean diet. And not only does the Mediterranean diet have strong evidence for reducing the risk of almost every major illness, it's worth noting that more restrictive diets, such as vegetarian diets, seem to be associated with more depression.⁴ My suggestion is to increase protein to include both oil-rich fish and red meat on a regular basis. A reasonable red meat maximum is about 1 ½ pounds (weighed when raw) per week, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Add a dose of exercise, especially outdoors

Daily exercise, even just one minute twice a day, if that's all you can manage, is another very potent tool for preventing⁵ and treating depression. Like good food, exercise has benefits that extend far beyond mental health – especially if you combine it with fresh air and natural light. There are also added benefits from group activities (like hiking with friends, dance classes, tennis, snowball fights...) and other types of exercise that work both upper and lower body.

² Jacka, F.N. et al. BMC Med 2017;15:23 (SMILES)

³ Psaltopoulou, T. et al. Ann Neurol 2013;74:580-91

⁴ Hibbein, J.R. et al. J Affect Disord 2018;225:13

⁵ Harvey, S.B. et al. Am J Psych 2018;175:28-36 (HUNT cohort study)

Other non-pharmaceutical antidepressants

- Weight loss (if appropriate): In my practice we have seen profound improvements in mood with healthy weight loss. It is likely that the weight loss by itself contributes to an anti-depressant effect in view of known benefits in hormonal health, inflammation, energy, and pain management. For a 14-step weight loss plan, see pages 69–92 of *Good Food, Great Medicine* (3rd edition).
- Eat more probiotic foods
- Include caffeine and moderate alcohol
- Reduce screen-based entertainment
- Nutritional supplements can have a role
- Light therapy is helpful for many people
- Volunteer work is therapeutic
- Appropriate counseling
- Adequate sleep

If you are on antidepressants and find these steps are working for you, don't just stop them! Your doctor can help with a plan to taper the medication – they can cause unpleasant side effects when stopped abruptly.

Almond Torte

Desserts can also have a powerful antidepressant effect, especially when they have a nutritional resume like this one – no flour, no refined sugar, no fuss, no regret.

(8–10 servings)

5 eggs

½ cup pure maple syrup

2 teaspoons pure almond extract

1 teaspoon salt

Optional: zest from 1–2 oranges

3 cups almond meal, not packed

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mist 8–9" springform or cake pan with non-stick spray. If you are not using a springform pan, line the bottom with parchment.

1. Whisk or beat eggs in a medium bowl. Add maple syrup, almond extract, salt, and orange zest and blend thoroughly.
2. Add almond meal and stir until smooth and well blended. Scrape mixture into pan and bake for 25–30 minutes, or until a toothpick poked into the center comes out clean. Don't overbake!
3. Cool in pan, then slide knife around sides and transfer to serving plate. Serve with plenty of whipped cream (the real stuff, naturally) and berries. Raspberries marinated overnight in liqueur (like Amaretto or Grand Marnier) provide a refreshing contrast.

Good Food, Great Medicine 2-part classes

This two-part class series targets weight loss, diabetes reversal, and inflammation reduction.

The classes are based on *Good Food, Great Medicine*, which each participant will receive at the first class.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 1):

- Review inter-relationship of excess waistline and weight, insulin resistance (common to most cases of type 2 diabetes), and common chronic diseases.
- Discuss the role of the “key four” – a whole food Mediterranean diet; minimal sweeteners, refined grains and starches; daily activity; and enough sleep.
- Work through the 14 simple steps that target your risk factors and produce effective, lasting changes to your waistline, blood sugar, and other health risks.

Good Food, Great Medicine class (part 2):

- Explore practical application of whole food choices and menu planning. See demos of foundational recipes from *Good Food, Great Medicine*. Review progress, find solutions to challenges, and fine-tune personal plans.

Time: 6 – 8 pm Wednesday
Dates: 7/11/2018 (Part 1) and 7/18/2018 (Part 2)
Location: Providence St. Vincent Medical Center
Cost: \$100 (2-class series)
Registration: Call 503.291.1777 to reserve a place

Dr. Hassell's speaking events

4/5/2018 – 4/26/2018 – Providence Heart Institute BASECAMP Cardiac Prevention + Wellness 4-part Series: *Good Food, Great Medicine:* Portland, OR. Call the Providence Resource Line at 503.574.6595 to register or find *Good Food, Great Medicine* in the class catalog at providence.org/classes

4/28/2018 – North Plains Public Library: *Good Food is Great Medicine* – Jessie Mays Community Center – 30975 NW Hillcrest St, North Plains OR 97133, 9:30-10:30am. Admission is FREE but a reservation is required, please call 503.647.5051 to reserve a spot. northplains.org/library

7/11/2018 and 7/18/2018 – Good Food, Great Medicine TYPE 2 DIABETES REVERSAL and SUSTAINABLE WEIGHT LOSS 2-PART LIFESTYLE CHANGE CLASS SERIES: Portland, OR. Call our office at 503.291.1777 to register.

Sign up for this free monthly medical + lifestyle newsletter at Goodfoodgreatmedicine.com

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”
1 Thessalonians 5:21 (KJV)