

## Emotional Wellness in Times of Transition



### Tieraona Low Dog, MD

Chair: US Pharmacopeia Dietary  
Supplement Admissions, Evaluation and  
Labeling Expert Committee

Clinical Assoc. Professor of Medicine  
University of Arizona (retired)

Guiding Teacher: NY Zen Center Fellowship in  
Contemplative Medicine

National Geographic's  
*Life Is Your Best Medicine*  
*Healthy At Home*  
*Fortify Your Life*  
*Guide to Medicinal Herbs*

[www.DrLowDog.com](http://www.DrLowDog.com)

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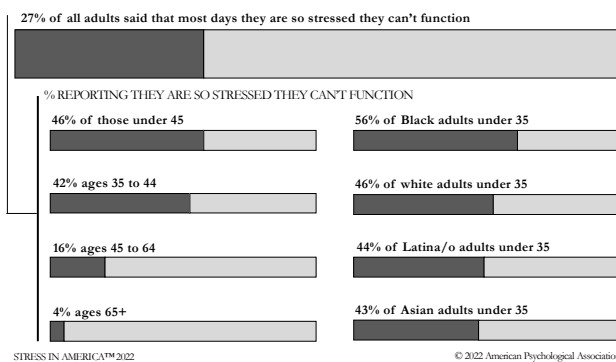
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<https://www.ama-assn.org/news/press/releases/stress/2022/infographics/infographic-ability-function>, Accessed October 23, 2022

### STRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON ABILITY TO FUNCTION

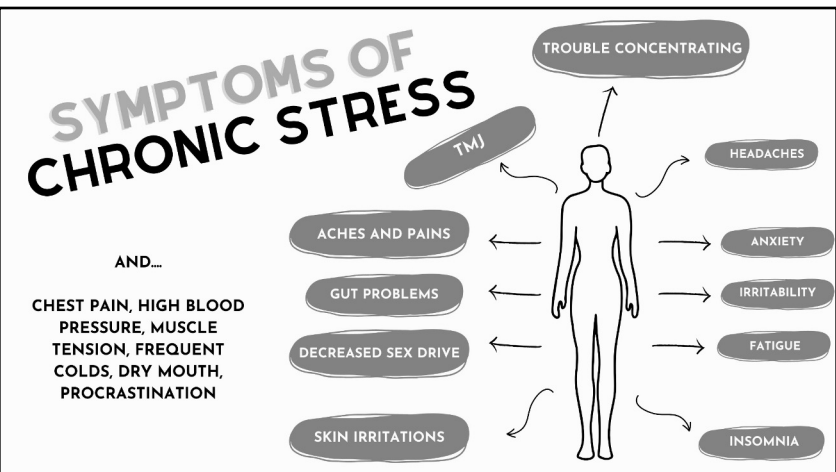


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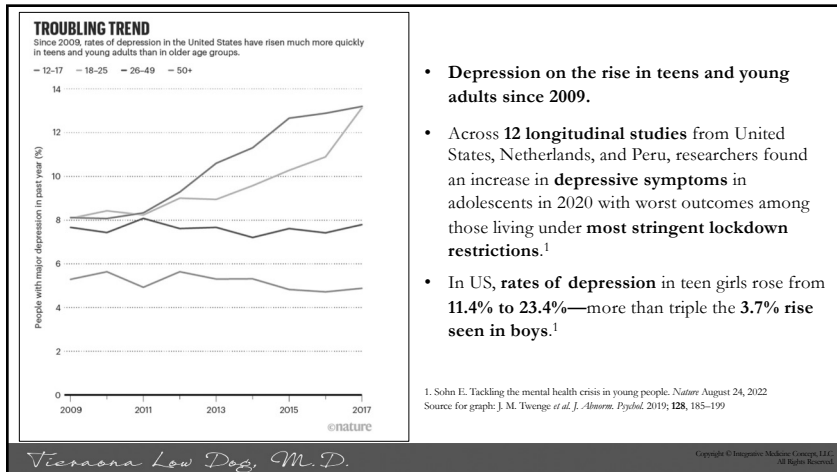
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## Mental Health

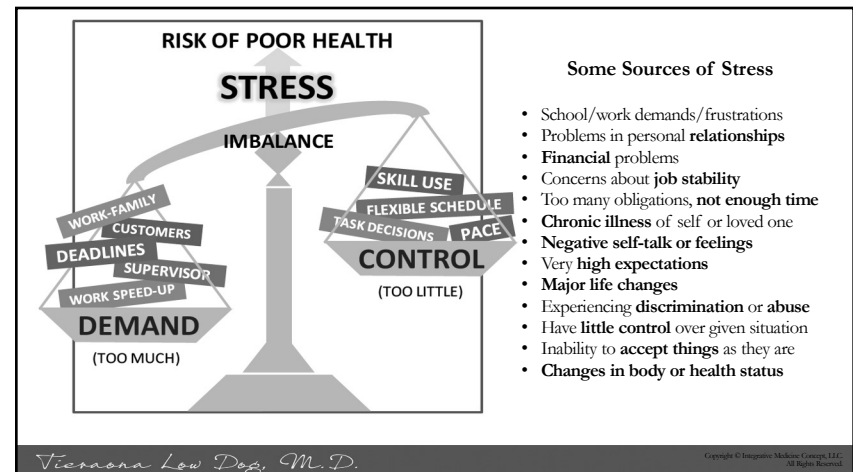
- Our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Affects how we think, feel, and act. Helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.
- When demands placed on us exceed our resources and coping abilities, our mental health can be impacted. If someone is working long hours, caring for a relative, or experiencing economic hardship, they may experience poor mental health.
- Poor mental health and mental illness are NOT the same. A person can experience poor mental health and not be diagnosed with a mental illness AND someone with a mental illness can have periods of mental, physical, social wellbeing.

<https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm>

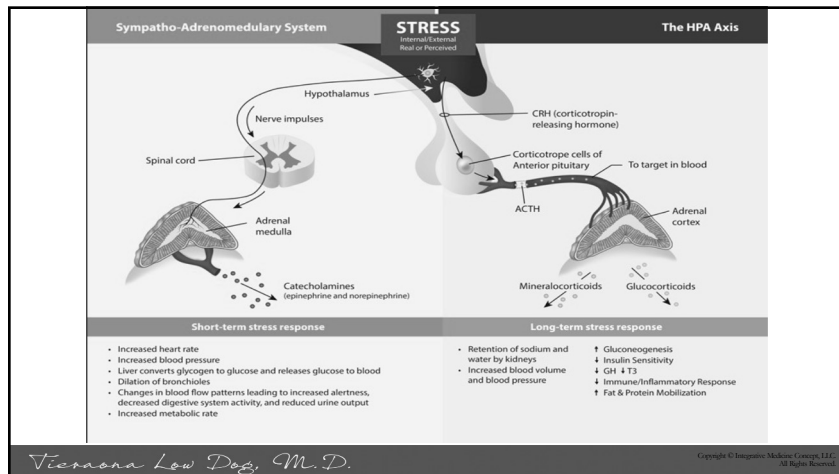
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### *Persistent Stress Takes a Toll*



- Millions of people suffer from these clusters of symptoms.
- **Any holistic plan should include stress management, dietary counseling, appropriate use of dietary supplements, regular exercise, lifestyle changes, and sometimes medication.**

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### *The Mind Gut Connection*

"I feel butterflies in my stomach..."

"I feel bloated..."

"I feel my gut on this..."

"I feel sick to my stomach..."



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## Human Microbiome Project

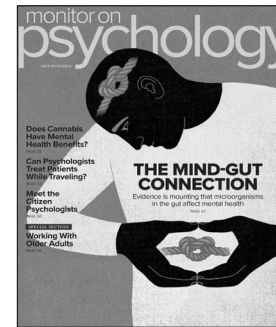
- **Massive NIH research initiative** cataloging microorganisms living in and on our body starting in 2007.
- Led to *rapidly growing appreciation* for **incredible and diverse impact** these organisms have **on our health and well-being**.
- Gut bacteria produce **vitamins**, break down food; their presence or absence linked to **obesity, inflammatory bowel disease, IBS, anxiety, depression, food allergies, neuroinflammation, GI infections, HTN, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and more**.
- **Our resiliency**, our ability to recover quickly from stressors, may be a function of *which bacteria inhabit or don't inhabit our gut*.

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## Enteric Nervous System: *The Second Brain*

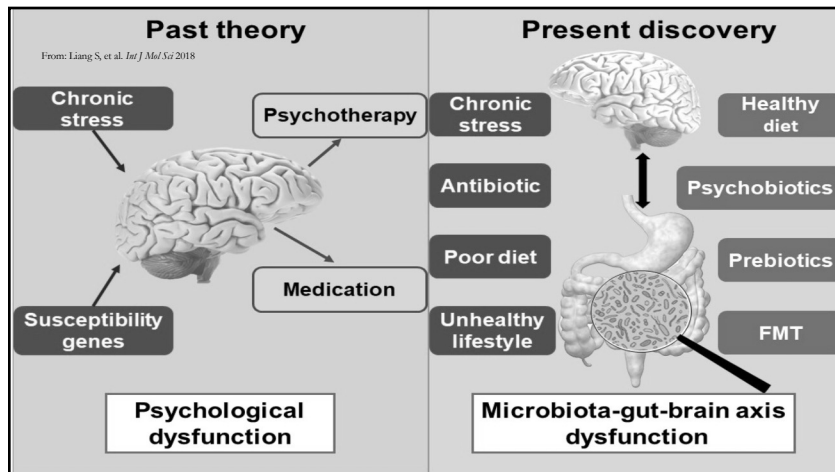


- **100 million nerve cells** from esophagus to rectum: **controls digestion** and propulsion through GI tract.
- Gut bacteria produce neurotransmitters: **dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, GABA, acetylcholine, melatonin**; critical for mood, sleep, anxiety, concentration, reward, and motivation.
- Serotonin is associated with **depression and happiness**—**90% is made in GI tract**, not the brain.
- Gut microbiota cause **changes in how brains react to events/stressors**; **dysbiosis** may trigger anxiety and depressive symptoms.

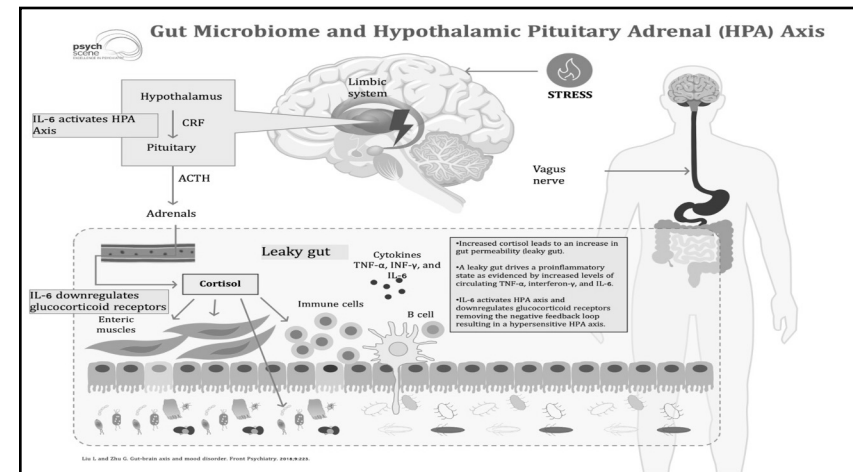
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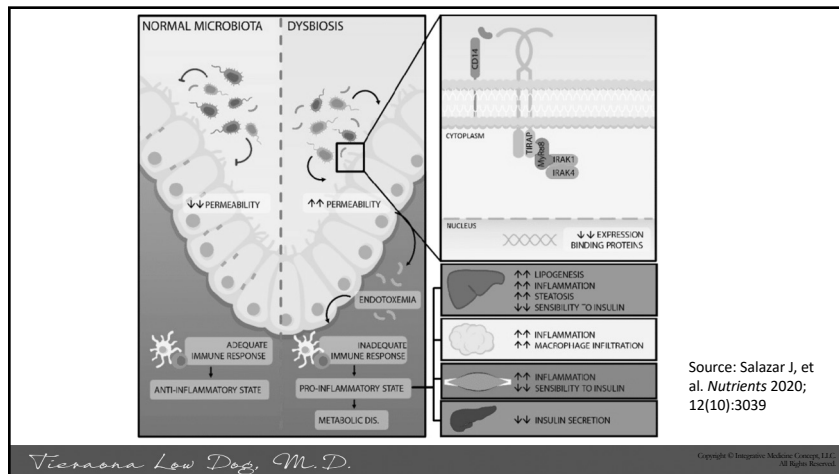
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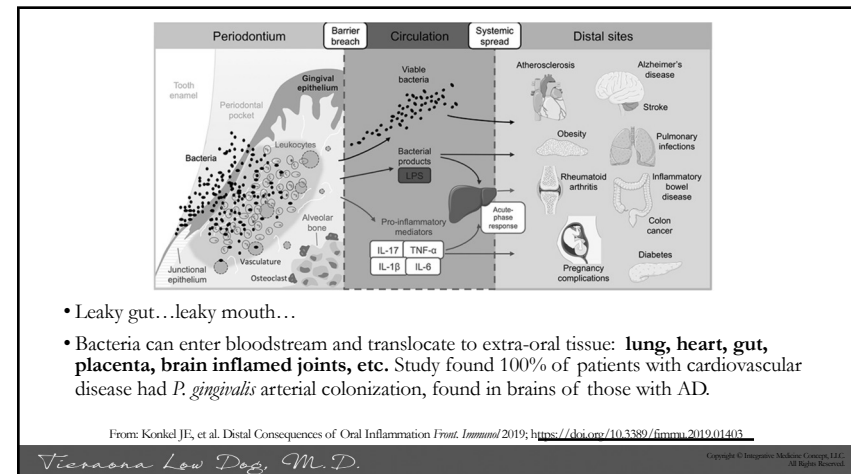
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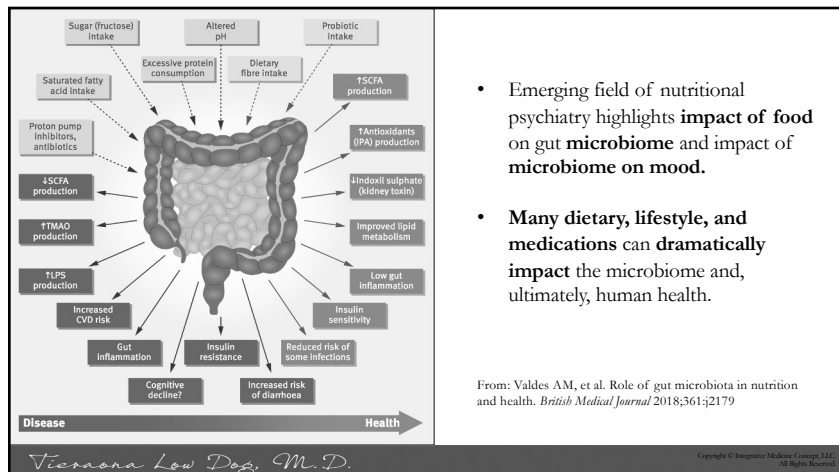
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## Two Bugs Noticeably Absent


- Gut microbial diversity has been shown to be **lower** in those with depression.
- **Flemish Gut Flora Project (1054 healthy adults):** 173 diagnosed with depression or poor quality-of-life intake; research team compared their microbiomes with those other participants.
- **Two kinds of microbes, *Coprococcus* and *Dialister*, missing from microbiomes of depressed subjects**, but not those with a high quality of life. Findings true, even after age, sex, or antidepressant use, all of which influence the microbiome, were accounted for.
- **1064 Dutch people:** researchers found **same two species missing** among those who were depressed but not in those with high quality of life.
- **Intriguing...**

Valles-Colomer M, et al. The neuroactive potential of the human gut microbiota in quality of life and depression. *Nature Microbiology* 2019; 4: 623–632

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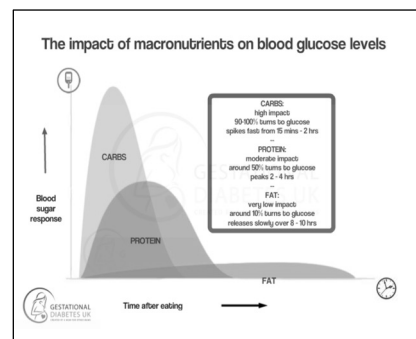


- Brain is always "on."
- Requires **constant supply of fuel**—and *what's in that fuel* makes all the difference.
- Weighs ~3 pounds but uses **20% of daily energy**.
- What you eat **directly affects the structure and function of brain and, ultimately, your mood.**

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## Refined Carbohydrates

- If you **overdo processed/refined carbs**, blood sugar goes up, insulin is released, **store extra glucose as fat, driving inflammation.**
- Blood sugar goes up and then **plummets**, disrupting **sleep/wake cycle** and leaving one tired.
- Eating lots of carbs **makes one crave lots of carbs (dopamine rush).**
- High carb/sugar diets cause **dysbiosis, degrading intestinal barrier, driving systemic inflammation.**



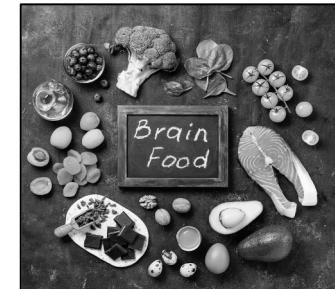
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## Fiber, Sugar, Processed Foods and Depression

- Consumption of **sweetened beverages and refined foods** associated with **increased risk of depression** in longitudinal studies.
- Women's Health Initiative (n = 87,618): higher consumption of **dairy products, fiber, fruits, and vegetables** associated with significantly **LOWER odds of depression**; **refined carbs** associated with **increased odds of depression** in menopausal and post-menopausal women.



Groves et al. High Glycemic Index Diet as a Risk Factor for Depression: Analyses From the Women's Health Initiative. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2013; Aug;98(2):64-69

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## Glycemic Load & Mood

- 82 healthy weight or healthy overweight or obese, adults enrolled in 28 day randomized, crossover-controlled feeding study.
- Compared to low GL diet, a **high GL diet** resulted in:
  - 38% higher score for **depressive symptoms** ( $P = 0.002$ )
  - 55% higher score for **total mood disorder** ( $P = 0.05$ )
  - 26% higher score for **fatigue/inertia** ( $P = 0.04$ )



Breymeyer KL, et al. *Appetite* 2016; Dec 1;107:253-259.

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## European Union: My New Gut Project

- Initiative focused on **promoting health by targeting the gut microbiome**.
- Dietary recommendation intended to improve **major depressive symptoms** by targeting the gut microbiome: **increase consumption of fiber and fish**.
- Average annual seafood intake for Americans is 14.6 pounds, and USDA estimates that **80% – 90% of the population fails to meet the recommendation of two servings of seafood per week**.

Dinan TG, et al. Feeding melancholic microbes: MyNewGut recommendations on diet and mood. *Clin Nutr* 2019;38:1995-2001

Bliss RM. Consumers Missing Out on Seafood Benefits.

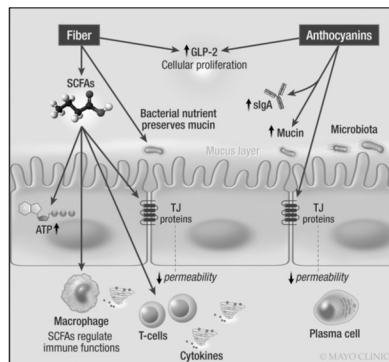
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## Eat More Fiber and Colorful Plants



- Gut bacteria digest (ferment) fibers for fuel, increasing number/balance gut microbiota

- Diets **high in fiber and anthocyanins** (purple, black, blue, red pigments in plants) **strengthen intestinal barrier**, preventing toxins from passing through intestinal wall into bloodstream, **reducing inflammation**.

Men: 38 g/d fiber  
Women: 25-28 g/d fiber

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Fruits	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)*
Raspberries	1 cup	8.0
Pear	1 medium	5.5
Apple, with skin	1 medium	4.5
Banana	1 medium	3.0
Orange	1 medium	3.0
Strawberries	1 cup	3.0

Vegetables	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)*
Green peas, boiled	1 cup	9.0
Broccoli, boiled	1 cup chopped	5.0
Turnip greens, boiled	1 cup	5.0
Brussels sprouts, boiled	1 cup	4.0
Potato, with skin, baked	1 medium	4.0
Sweet corn, boiled	1 cup	3.5
Cauliflower, raw	1 cup chopped	2.0
Carrot, raw	1 medium	1.5

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/high-fiber-foods/art-20050948>

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Grains	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)*
Spaghetti, whole-wheat, cooked	1 cup	6.0
Barley, pearled, cooked	1 cup	6.0
Bran flakes	3/4 cup	5.5
Quinoa, cooked	1 cup	5.0
Oat bran muffin	1 medium	5.0
Oatmeal, instant, cooked	1 cup	5.0
Popcorn, air-popped	3 cups	3.5
Brown rice, cooked	1 cup	3.5
Bread, whole-wheat	1 slice	2.0

Legumes, nuts and seeds	Serving size	Total fiber (grams)*
Split peas, boiled	1 cup	16.0
Lentils, boiled	1 cup	15.5
Black beans, boiled	1 cup	15.0
Baked beans, canned	1 cup	10.0
Chia seeds	1 ounce	10.0
Almonds	1 ounce (23 nuts)	3.5
Pistachios	1 ounce (49 nuts)	3.0
Sunflower kernels	1 ounce	3.0

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/high-fiber-foods/art-20050948>


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### 5 FOODS LINKED TO BETTER BRAINPOWER

**GREEN VEGGIES**




**1.** Leafy greens such as kale, spinach, collards, and broccoli are rich in brain-healthy nutrients like vitamin K, lutein, folate, and beta carotene. Research suggests these plant-based foods may help slow cognitive decline.

**FATTY FISH**




**2.** Fatty fish are abundant sources of omega-3 fatty acids, healthy unsaturated fats that have been linked to lower blood levels of beta-amyloid — the protein that forms damaging clumps in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease.

**BERRIES**




**3.** Flavonoids, the natural plant pigments that give berries their brilliant hues, also help improve memory, research shows.

**TEA + COFFEE**



**4.** Coffee and tea might offer more than just a short-term concentration boost. In a recent study, participants with higher caffeine consumption scored better on tests of mental function.

**WALNUTS**



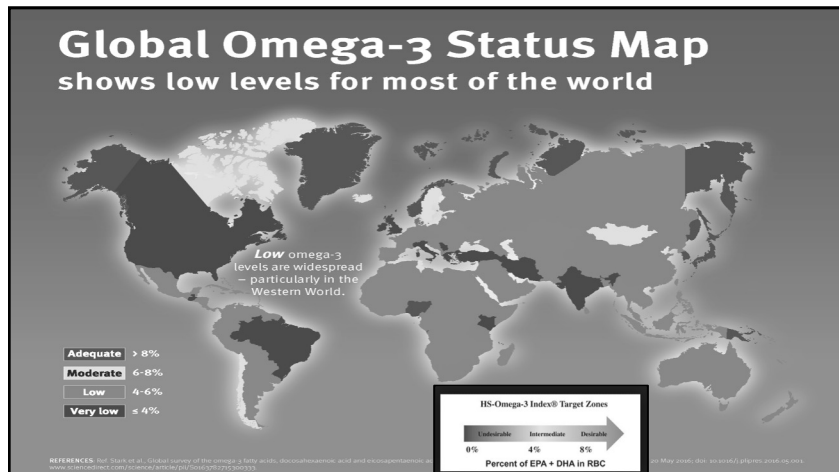
**5.** Nuts are excellent sources of protein and healthy fats, and walnuts in particular might also improve memory, according to a study.

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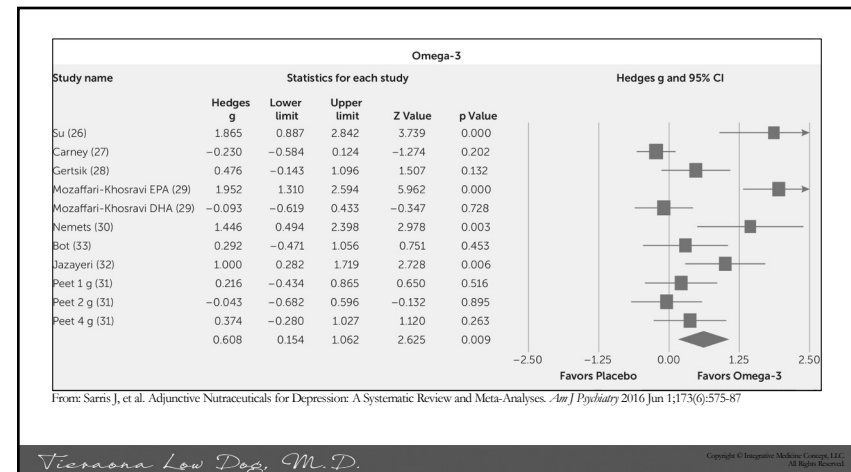
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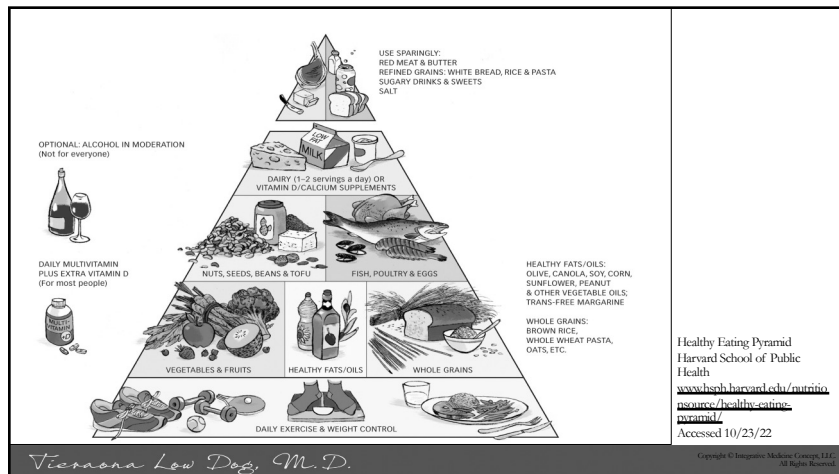
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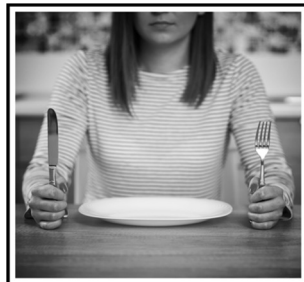
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## Take an Age/Gender Appropriate Multi

- **90 million** Americans are **vitamin D** deficient (using Endocrine Society guidelines < 20ng/mL)
- **30 million** are deficient in **vitamin B6** (mostly women)
- **18 million** people have **B12** deficiency (mostly > 50 yrs.)
- ~**21 million** Americans have serious **vitamin C** deficiency, **66 million are at risk** for deficiency
- **13% Latinas**, and **16% African American**, and **8% white women** (ages 12–49) are **iron deficient**
- **Women 25–39** overall have **borderline iodine insufficiency**



CDC: 2<sup>nd</sup> National Report on the Biochemical Indicators of Diet and Nutrition in the U.S. population

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## Micronutrient Status of Americans

- NHANES: biochemical status of vitamins A, B6, B12, C, D, E, folate, and anemia aggregated to determine overall risk of multiple concurrent deficiencies in U.S. children and adults ( $n = 15,030$ ) aged >9 years.
- **31% of population at risk of at least one vitamin deficiency or anemia.**
- **Deficiency risk most common in women** (37% overall): 19–50 years (41%) and pregnant or breastfeeding women (47%).
- **Those who did NOT take dietary supplements had highest risk** of any deficiency (40%) compared to users of full-spectrum MVI supplements (14%).
- **Individuals consuming an adequate diet** based on ERA had a **lower risk of any deficiency** (16%) compared to those with inadequate diet (57%).

Bird JK, et al. *Nutrients* 2017 Jun 24;9(7):655.

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## Twelve Antidepressant Nutrients

- Food is a **modifiable determinant** of **systemic inflammation**, which has been described as a **major cause and consequence** of depression.
- **Folate, iron, EPA and DHA, magnesium, potassium, selenium; vitamins A, B1 (thiamine), B6, B12, and C; and zinc** is crucial for brain and mood health.
- Highest-scoring **animal foods**: oysters, mussels, seafoods, and organ meats.
- Highest-scoring **plant foods**: leafy greens, peppers, cruciferous vegetables.

Kiecolt-Glaser JK, et al. Inflammation: depression fans the flames and feasts on the heat. *Am J Psychiatry*. 2015;172:1075-1091.

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## Thiamine, Obesity and Mood



GOOD SOURCES		
<b>Legumes</b> beans - peas - lentils • Lentils 'cooked' ½ cup 017 mg	<b>Whole Grains</b> wheat - oats - barley • Brown Rice 1 cup 019 mg	<b>Pork Products</b> ham - pork • Lean Pork, 3 ounces, 0.81 mg

mg = milligrams; a 3-ounce serving of meat or fish is about the size of a deck of cards

Borges-Vieira JG, et al. *Nutr Neurosci*. 2023 Mar;26(3):187-207. Kerns JC, et al. *Adv Nutr*. 2015 Mar 13;6(2):147-53.

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## Thiamine Deficiency

Potential mechanisms of thiamin deficiency

Decreased intake/absorption	Increased destruction/inactivation	Excessive losses	Increased use/metabolism
Poor diet quality	Polyphenols (e.g., in coffee, tea, and beet root)	Diuretics	High-carbohydrate diets
Excessive alcohol	Thiaminases (e.g., in raw seafood and human gut flora)	Peritoneal or hemodialysis	Hypermetabolic states (e.g., hyperthyroidism)
Excessive simple sugars, milk products, fats	Hypomagnesemia	Renal losses in diabetes	Strenuous activity
	Heat processing of food		Acute illness/fever
	Irradiation of food		Pregnancy and lactation
Inadequate whole grains/legumes	Prolonged contact with amino acids in parenteral nutrition		Adolescent growth
Anorexia			Major trauma
Prolonged enteral			Major surgery
Intestinal malabsorption (e.g., duodenal bypass, short gut syndrome, Crohn's disease, proton pump inhibitors)			Refeeding syndrome
			Chemotherapeutic agents (e.g., 5-fluorouracil)

From: Kerns JC, et al. Thiamin deficiency in people with obesity. *Adv Nutr*. 2015 Mar 13;6(2):147-53.

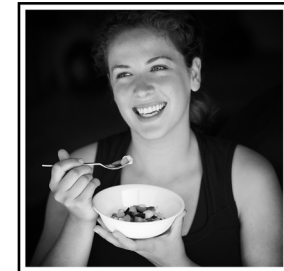
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## Vitamin B6 (Pyroxidal-5-Phosphate)

- Involved in production of **serotonin, dopamine, melatonin, hemoglobin, protein metabolism, energy production, and more.**
- **30 million Americans** deficient in B6, mostly women.
- **Oral contraceptives/hormones** lower B6 levels.
- Vancouver BC: **12.4% prevalence** of B6 deficiency and suboptimal status in women 19–32 years of age.
- Deficiency: **depression; impaired cognition, attention, memory, and sleep.**
- **Need ~4-6 mg/d** to maintain normal serum levels.



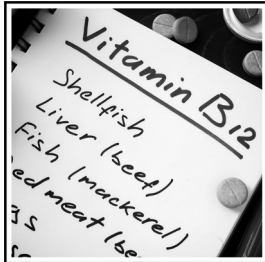
Larsson SC, et al. *JAMA* 2010; 303(11):1077-83  
 Morris MS, et al. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2008; 87(5):1446-54  
 Urvik A, et al. *Am J Clin Nutr* 2014; 100(1):250-5  
 Ho CL, et al. *Nutrients* 2016; Sep 1;8(9).

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## Vitamin B12 Deficiency



Bird JK, et al. *Nutrients* 2017; doi: 10.3390/nu9070655  
 Jung SB, et al. *Intern Med J* 2015; 45(4):409-16.  
 Out M, et al. *J Diabetes Complications* 2018; 32(2):171-178;  
 Niazar M, et al. *Intern Emerg Med* 2015; 10(1):93-1026

- Institute of Medicine recommends adults > 50 yrs. get B12 from **fortified foods/supplements**
- Deficiency: **tingling/numbness** in hands and feet, **fatigue**, shortness of breath, **loss of appetite, taste, smell; joint pain, depression, cognitive impairment, and dementia.**
- 2015 meta-analysis: **80% increased risk B12 deficiency after 10 months of regular PPI use.**
- Meta analysis 29 studies: **245% increased risk B12 deficiency metformin use. Low B12 shown to increase progression of diabetic neuropathy.**

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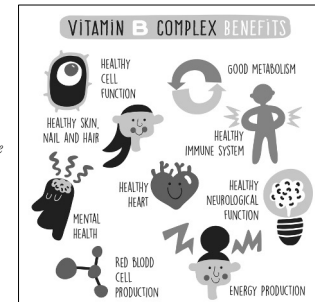
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## B-Vitamins for the Brain

- Adequate levels of ALL B vitamins are *essential* for optimal physiological and neurological function.
- Evidence from human research clearly shows a significant proportion of populations of developed countries suffer from deficiencies/insufficiencies in one or more B vitamins.
- In the absence of an optimal diet, administration of *the entire B-vitamin group*, rather than a small sub-set, at doses in excess of current governmental recommendations would be a rational approach for preserving brain health.

Kennedy D B Vitamins and the Brain: Mechanisms, Dose and Efficacy--A Review. *Nutrients* 2016 Jan 27;8(2):68.



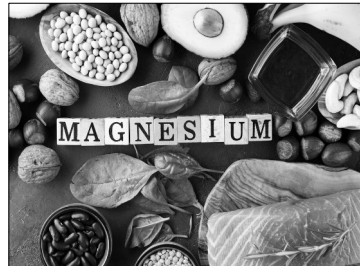
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## PPI & Magnesium

- ~50% Americans do not meet RDA of magnesium from their diet.
- Stomach acid necessary for **ionization and absorption** of magnesium & calcium
- **FDA (2011):** long-term PPI use (>one year) can cause **dangerously low levels.**
- **2015 meta-analysis** (n=109,798): **63% increased risk** of hypomagnesemia in those taking PPIs, compared to non-users.<sup>1</sup>
- **2018 review** of patients hospitalized for extreme hypomagnesemia found **70% were taking PPIs.**<sup>2</sup>



1. Chongpasitporn W, et al. *Rev End* 2015.  
 2. Chemturi G, et al. *Intern Emerg Med* 2018

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## Magnesium Supplementation

- Magnesium supplementation: **300–600 mg daily of magnesium glycinate, citrate, and malate.**
- Caution in those with **diminished renal function. Diarrhea is side effect with larger doses.**
- Note: Anyone with **migraines** should do trial of magnesium prophylaxis. Most patients with **hypertension, diabetes, inflammation** should consider magnesium supplementation.



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## Where Can You Get Tested?

- Talk to your healthcare practitioner about potential concerns around micronutrient deficiencies.
- Most lab tests are readily available through LabCorp or Quest.
- If you order your own tests, [www.requestatest.com](http://www.requestatest.com), Vibrant America, EveryWell, and SpectraCell are commonly used.



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- Exercise causes release of neurotrophic molecules that promote **neurogenesis** and brain growth, **improve memory**, and **stave off age-related cognitive decline**.
- **Aerobic exercise increases microbiota diversity**
- **Increases insulin sensitivity** moving glucose into muscle. **Increases efficacy of immune system**, especially with age.
- Our bodies evolved to **require daily physical activity**. Exercise does not make our body work more—it *makes it work better*.

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## Circadian Rhythms

- The microbiota modulates circadian rhythm and circadian disruptions can affect the intestinal microbiota. **Microbes and humans share circadian clock**.
- More than **90 million Americans struggle** with getting **regular, restful sleep**.
- **Major depressive disorder** is often associated with a **dysregulation of the circadian clock**.
- In a **wake-centric culture**, what would it look like if we **shifted** the way we think about sleep?



Farre N, et al. Sleep and circadian alterations and the gut microbiome: associations or causality. *Current Sleep Med Reports* 2018; 4(1):50-57  
 Li, Y, et al. The role of microbiome in insomnia, circadian disturbance and depression. *Front Psychiatr* 2018; doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2018.00669

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## To Sleep is to Heal

- Sleep—both quantity and quality—crucial for **brain health**. Correlation between **poor sleep and stroke, cognitive aging, Alzheimer's dementia, Parkinson's disease, and others**.
- **Slow-wave sleep**, or deep sleep, **decreases with age**. Less deep sleep associated with increase in **beta-amyloid**, protein found to accumulate in people with Alzheimer's.
- **Lack of sleep also linked to type-2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity, and depression**.



Koffel E, et al. *J Gen Intern Med* 2018 Jun; 33(6): 955-962.

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## Basic Sleep Hygiene



1. **Make your bedroom** dark, quiet, and cool. Invest in good mattress and pillows.
2. **Turn off** TV, computers, tablets, and smartphones 1 hour before bedtime.
3. **Avoid caffeine** after 12:00 PM (e.g., coffee, tea, soda, chocolate).
4. **Limit alcohol** intake and don't drink within 2-3 hours of bedtime.
5. **Try not to exercise** within 2 hours of bedtime.
6. **Consider a hot bath** 1–2 hours before bedtime.
7. **Try not to eat right before bed.** A glass of warm milk, bowl of cereal okay.
8. **Keep same sleep schedule** 7 days a week.
9. **Get sleep evaluation** if sleep disruption and/or daytime fatigue continues.
10. **CBT for insomnia**, or CBT-I, best treatment for chronic insomnia and should be **first line of treatment**

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## Oral Lavender Essential Oil (*Lavendula angustifolia*)

**Meta-analysis** randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trials show **Silexan, essential oil from lavender** licensed in 14 countries worldwide, has **pronounced anxiolytic effect and beneficial effects on sleep**. Adverse events similar to placebo.



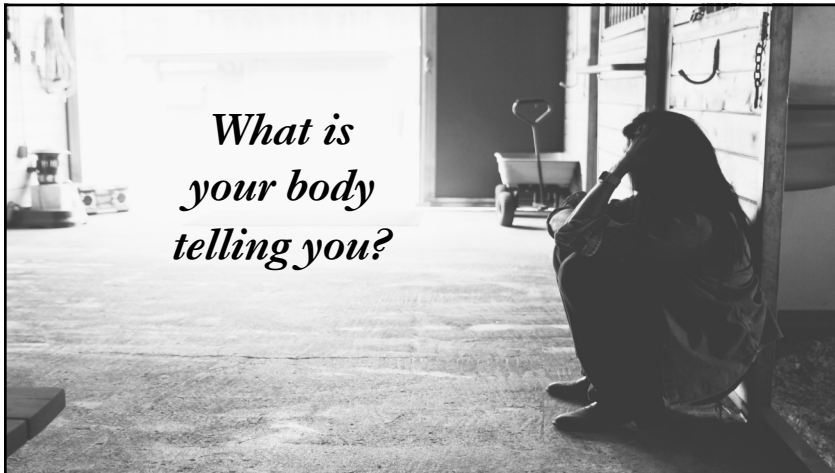
Møller HJ, et al. Efficacy of Silexan in subthreshold anxiety: meta-analysis of randomised, placebo-controlled trials. *Eur Arch Psychiatry Clin Neurosci* (2017).  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00406-017-0852-4>

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*What is  
your body  
telling you?*



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What is your why?



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*Feeling numb is another way of saying disconnected.  
While we often describe this as being detached from family, friends, work,  
Nature, or Creator—what lies underneath for most of us is a profound  
separation from our own deep inner self.*

*Staying busy is one way we avoid dealing with unpleasant feelings and emotions.  
It is when we step out of the busyness of our lives and into solitude that we come  
face-to-face with things that are hard to look at.*

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It is impossible to avoid the shadowy places where our fear and sadness live.

But these hidden emotions come at a hefty price to our mental and physical health.

We feel anxious, tired, or “stuck;” we mindlessly eat and gain weight; we struggle to sleep or concentrate; we deal with digestive problems, headaches, and muscle tension.

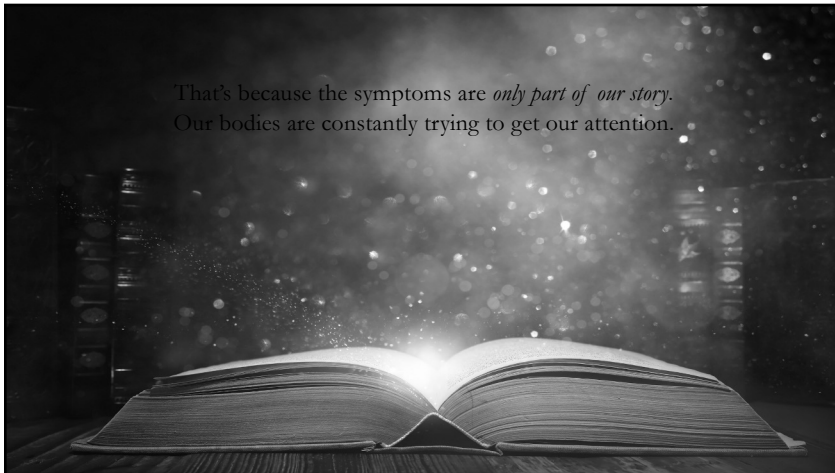
How many have taken anti-depressants, benzodiazepines, sleeping pills, or other drugs to alleviate symptoms but, in the end, did not find relief?

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That's because the symptoms are *only part of our story*.  
Our bodies are constantly trying to get our attention.



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When we ignore our emotions, they keep popping up in all kinds of places, saying, “*Hey, deal with me. I’m hurting.*”

What would it look like to care for your body lovingly?

To deliberately give it nourishing food, healthy movement, adequate rest, lots of joy, and play?

To care for your body as if it were your beloved?

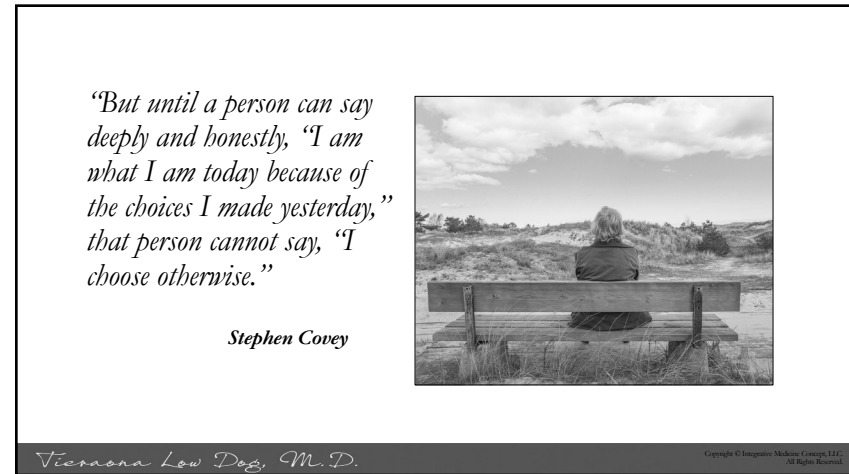
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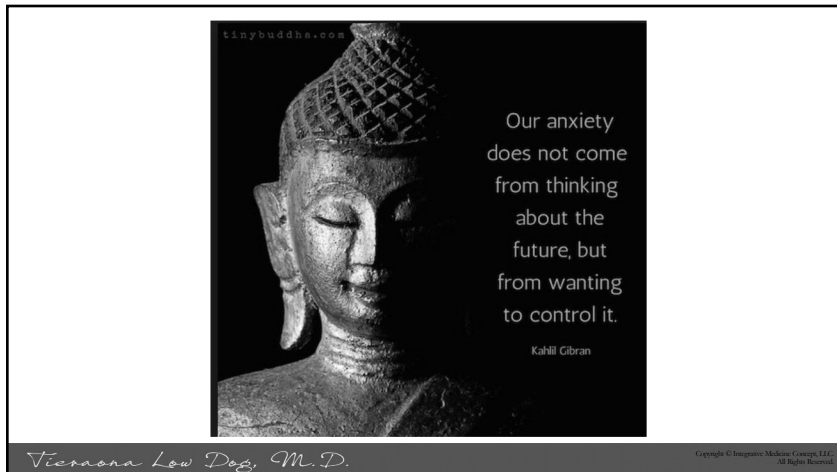
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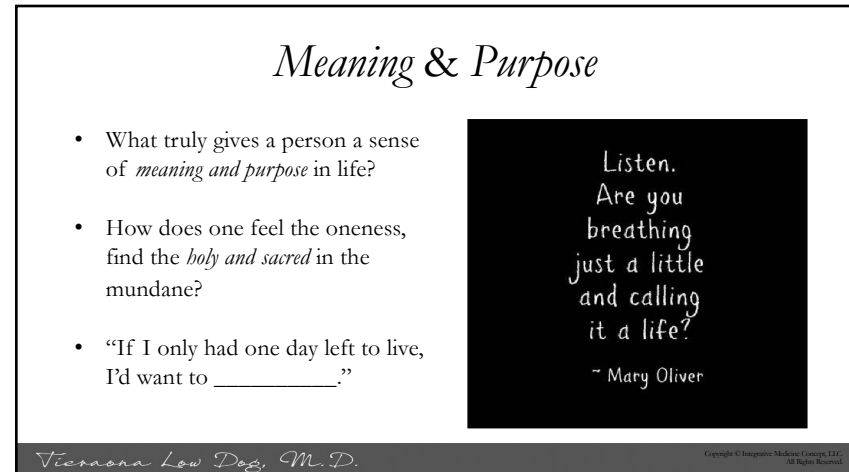
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## Praying

by Mary Oliver

It doesn't have to be the blue iris,  
it could be weeds in a vacant lot or a few small stones;  
Just pay attention,  
then patch a few words together  
and don't try to make them elaborate,  
this isn't a contest but the doorway into thanks,  
and a *silence in which another voice may speak.*

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WHICH ONE WILL WIN?

THE ONE YOU FEED

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*"Be patient with yourself. Self-growth is tender; it's holy ground.  
There's no greater investment."*

Stephen Covey

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