

# WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

ALTA VISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2018



## Good Mood Foods: How Diet Affects Happiness

Lani Muelrath is a bestselling author, speaker, and TV host known for her expertise in plant-based, active, mindful living. This article is adapted from her newest book, *The Mindful Vegan*, a 30-day plan for shedding old thinking patterns and living more joyfully with food.

If you are presently piling plenty of colorful plants on your plate, you are already at a better mood advantage. Research tells us that plant-based diets are associated with healthier mood states. The more fruits and vegetables people eat, the happier, less depressed, and more satisfied they are with their lives. Today, we'll focus on how, grounded in your biochemistry, eating more plants and eliminating animals and their products from your diet creates greater mental well-being and resilience.

### Plantified Plate = Mood Elevator Up

A recent study of nearly one thousand men and women examined the mood impact of obtaining dietary antioxidants. Antioxidants are health- and disease-protective bioactive chemical compounds produced by plants. In the study, those who ate three or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day reported significantly greater optimism than those who ate less. Eating lots of veggies also bumps up the B vitamins in your diet, positively affecting mood states.

Another recent, large-population, multi-wave study—taking place five times over the course of nine years—focused on the impact of fruit and vegetable intake on depression, anxiety, and mental health disorders.

Study after study corroborates. A large Swiss survey reported significant associations between higher fruit and vegetable consumption and reduced distress levels. People who ate less than the five-servings-a-day recommendation had a higher likelihood of reporting stress and anxiety than those who didn't. A recent study on women's health from Australia followed over six thousand women. The findings? Reduced depression among women who simply ate more than two pieces of fruit a day. And the benefit increased when accompanied by higher intakes of vegetables.

### Can Cutting Meat Improve Your Mood?

We get it—eating more plants boosts your mood. What if we look at it another way—cutting out the meat?

How might that affect your state of mind? As it turns out, emotional resiliency and elevated mood states arise for more reasons than simply because you know you are doing the right thing. There's a deeper biochemical component that underpins well-being that comes with veganizing your plate.

According to research, reduced intake of animals and their products has mood benefits in addition to those that come with a robust daily intake of fruits and vegetables. Avoiding meat, fish, and poultry leads to more frequent reports of positive states of mind. And

vegans report lower anxiety and less stress than omnivores.

### Inflammation and Increased Risk of Depression

Putting it all together, the Western diet—characterized by scanty consumption of plant foods, yet heavy on the animal products—is associated with increased risk of depression. Depression is related to inflammation in the body. Arachidonic acid, found only in animal products, is a precursor to inflammation. Research shows that high intakes of arachidonic acid promote changes in the brain that can disturb mood.

Here's how it works. By eating chicken, eggs, and other animal products high in arachidonic acid, a series of chemical reactions is triggered in your body that results in inflammation. When inflammation reaches the brain, feelings of anxiety, stress, hopelessness, and depression follow. No wonder people who avoid animal flesh and products report a happier, more positive mood. And plant foods—to the rescue, once again—naturally lower inflammation due to their naturally high antioxidant content, antioxidants being one of nature's most powerful anti-inflammatory agents.

Nutrients provide the biological building blocks for neurotransmitters—the chemicals in your brain that deeply affect how you think and feel. When you aren't eating enough vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, polyphenols, and related nutrients found in plants—known in this context as neuronutrients—you can't make adequate mood-enhancing transmitters. These gems of plant nutrition, by the way, are the same goodies proved to be brain protective against Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Diets rich in the kind of saturated fats that are abundant in animal products—and deficient in antioxidants and vitamins—appear to promote the onset of the disease, whereas diets rich in plant-plentiful vitamins, antioxidants, and polyphenols suppress its onset. All the colors plants bring to your plate are evidence of the nutrients your brain needs for better disposition. No wonder just seeing your luncheon salad makes your mood brighten.

## Blue Zones Recipe of the Week



### Southwest Quinoa Salad

We are delighted to feature a recipe from *Plant-Powered Families*. The cookbook author Dreena Burton shares over 100 delicious, whole foods plant-based recipes in her book. All of the recipes have been taste-tested by her 3 children—including this Southwest Quinoa Salad.

Serve the salad as it is or pair it with roasted vegetables.

For happy health, fuel yourself  
with dreams and greens.

-Terri Guillements

## Upcoming Events in the Community

PARENTING IN THE DIGITAL WORLD  
9.17.18

6:30PM-8:00PM

HERMOSA BEACH COMMUNITY CENTER

With support from South Bay Families Connected and Beach Cities Health, we are excited to kick-off the fall Families Connected Speaker Series with Clayton Cranford, the Cyber Cop, returning by popular demand to present Parenting in the Digital World Please join us at this event and at our small group workshops related to this topic.

FAMILIES CONNECTED PARENT CHAT  
EVERY MONDAY  
10:00AM-11:00AM  
BEACH CITIES HEALTH DISTRICT

The Families Connected Parent Chat, held every Monday in partnership with Beach Cities Health District and South Bay Families Connected, is a free support group led by a licensed professional from the Thelma McMillen Center for Alcohol and Drug Treatment at Torrance Memorial Medical Center. This free support group is open to all parents. No registration necessary.

PARENT CONNECTION GROUPS  
BEGINNING ON  
9.26.18  
9:00AM-10:00AM  
AVIATION PARK

New this year, these informal walking groups will give parents an opportunity to connect with other parents on a range of topics. Groups are led by parent volunteers. No registration necessary.

### SMALL-GROUP PARENT WORKSHOPS

New this year, a series of Small-Group Parent Workshops will expand on topics discussed during the Families Connected Speaker Series events, including cyber safety, vaping and anxiety. The workshops will be facilitated by local experts from Beach Cities Health District's Student Mental Health Provider Task Force.

Instagram

Monday, Oct. 1, 1-2 p.m.

Manhattan Beach Unified School District office

Snapchat

Tuesday, Oct. 2, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Manhattan Beach Unified School District office

YouTube

Thursday, Oct. 4, 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Location: Perras Middle School Library