

How to use amino acids like GABA and tryptophan to end sugar cravings and ease anxiety

By Trudy Scott, Food Mood Expert and Nutritionist,
author of *The Antianxiety Food solution*



Food like sugar and carbs can be as addicting as drugs and you often experience mood changes - like increased anxiety or stress - when you have an addiction or out of control sugar cravings. Read on to learn about the amazing amino acids and how addressing neurotransmitter deficiencies can end out-of-control sugar cravings/carb addictions, and at the same time help to eliminate or reduce anxiety and stress, mood issues and insomnia - all very quickly.

Using the amino acids GABA and tryptophan (and others like tyrosine, glutamine and DPA) can really help you end the sugar and carb cravings you may experience with hormonal changes during perimenopause and menopause (as progesterone and estrogen levels shift. They are a powerful tool to help you get off sugar and end your addictions and emotional eating with no willpower required and no feelings of deprivation.

Low GABA: physical tension and self-medication to calm down

Let's take GABA as an example: low GABA leads to physical-tension and stiff-and-tense-muscles type of anxiety.

The other symptoms we see with low GABA are panic attacks, physical tension in certain settings like public speaking or driving, and the need to self-medicate to calm down, often with alcohol (like needing a glass or two of wine at the end of the day) but often with carbs and sugary foods too. Insomnia can also be caused by low GABA and you'll experience physical tension when lying awake in bed rather than the ruminating thoughts which is the low serotonin type of insomnia. It's not uncommon to experience both. GABA also helps with muscle spasms and pain relief when muscles are tight.

The biggest take-aways with GABA:

- Sublingual is best. I find that GABA works best when used sublingually and this is one reason I like Source Naturals GABA Calm so much. If this is not an option (it does contain sugar alcohols that some clients can't or won't use and does contain tyrosine which has some contraindications) then opening a capsule of a GABA-only or a GABA-theanine combination are my next choices when working with clients.
- I have clients start very low and increase as needed. I have found 125mg to be a good starting dose but some pixie dust clients do well on a dab or pinch
- I have clients do a trial to determine if the anxiety is in fact due to low GABA. I always do this with clients before starting any amino acid. Be sure to read [how to do an amino acid trial](#) – it has the low GABA questionnaire, the precautions and information on how to use targeted individual amino acids.

GABA reduced cravings and helped with stressful holidays

Here is another example: Melissa started taking Source Naturals GABA Calm in anticipation of stressful holiday travel and holiday gatherings. She felt much calmer when she used GABA Calm and discovered that a wonderful side-benefit

(we like side-benefits vs side-effects!) was reduced cravings as well as improved sleep:

An unexpected result was that I stopped craving sweets after about a week of taking it! I didn't even realize this until I was grocery shopping and out of habit walked towards the ice cream – I stopped and realized I didn't want ice cream. So I walked toward the chocolate – same reaction. For once in my life, I was not craving sweets. I made truffles for a NYE party and only ate two. But what is really shocking is that the leftovers are still in my refrigerator two days later and I haven't touched them. I don't understand what is going on! Can this be the GABA Calm?

Yes, it was the GABA Calm! She was pleasantly surprised as many of my clients are – she felt calmer, she had better sleep and saw an end to her cravings!

Low serotonin: worry anxiety and afternoon/evening sugar cravings

Tryptophan and 5-HTP are other amino acids which help with sugar cravings. They do this by helping to address the low serotonin type of cravings for carbs and sugar which tend to occur mid-afternoon and evening, and can be more severe with hormonal swings.

When you address the low serotonin with tryptophan or 5-HTP (some do better on one vs the other), mood symptoms such the worry-type of anxiety, ruminations, sadness, negative self-talk, irritability, insomnia and pain are also eased and sometimes resolved.

PMS and perimenopausal symptoms ease with the amino acids

PMS and perimenopausal symptoms can often start to ease within 1 or 2 cycles when using tryptophan and GABA (together with liver support and addressing pyroluria).

In a study published in 1999, *A placebo-controlled clinical trial of L-tryptophan in premenstrual dysphoria*, tryptophan was found to reduce symptoms of PMS when used in the luteal phase or second half of the cycle (i.e. after ovulation).

They looked at dysphoria, which is defined as a state of unease or generalized dissatisfaction with life, plus mood swings, tension (and anxiety), and irritability and they found a 34.5% reduction of symptoms with tryptophan after 3 cycles.

Which brain chemistry imbalance is driving your cravings?

I use a chart like this to help my clients figure out what may be driving their cravings and mood issues and hopefully it will help you too.

I have them think about something decadent they love to eat - like chocolate chip cookies or their favorite candies or a giant piece of chocolate cake or a bowl of ice-cream - and ask themselves this: How do I feel before I eat the cake? And how do I feel after I've eaten it? This can help them figure out which brain chemistry imbalance they may have and which amino acid is most likely to help, always keeping in mind that many of them need support in all areas. In this instance we trial one amino acid at a time, starting with the area that most resonates with them.

How you feel before	How you feel after	Brain chemistry imbalance	Amino acid to supplement
Anxious or stressed AND stress eat	Calm or relaxed	Low GABA	GABA
Depressed or anxious AND eat for happiness	Happy or content	Low serotonin	Tryptophan or 5-HTP
Tired or unfocused AND eat for energy	Energetic, alert, or focused	Low catecholamines	Tyrosine
Wanting a reward or sad AND eat for comfort	Rewarded or comforted	Low endorphins	DPA (d-phenylalanine)
Irritable and shaky AND eat to feel grounded	Grounded or stable	Low blood sugar	Glutamine

Meme Grant, GAPS Practitioner, Nutritional Therapist, FNTTP, participated in my Amazing Aminos for Ending Emotional Eating group program and this is what she said afterwards:

“I still am amazed at how quickly the panic attacks, binge eating, and mood swings disappeared. Tyrosine enabled me to focus and gave me energy to do things again, glutamine allowed me to walk past the gluten and dairy free junk foods, d-phenylalanine [DPA] stopped my comfort eating, tryptophan enabled me to stop my negative thoughts and helped me sleep but the best was when GABA was introduced, the panic attacks disappeared.”

This is why I call them the amazing amino acids. And this is why addressing neurotransmitter deficiencies (or brain chemistry imbalances) can end food addictions and out-of-control sugar cravings and at the same time they help to eliminate or reduce anxiety, mood issues and insomnia – and very quickly!

I start trials of the amino acids on day 1 when I’m working with a client. They get relief from anxiety, low mood and cravings right away and feel hope. It also makes it SO much easier to make all the other dietary changes because there is no willpower and no feelings of deprivation.

There is some further reading on these topics on my blog:

GABA for ending sugar cravings (and anxiety and insomnia)

<https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/gaba-for-ending-sugar-cravings-and-anxiety-and-insomnia/>

Tryptophan for the worry-in-your-head and ruminating type of anxiety

<https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/tryptophan-worry-head-ruminating-type-anxiety/>

The Antianxiety Food Solution Amino Acid and Pyroluria Supplements (that I recommend) <https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/amino-acids-pyroluria-supplements/>

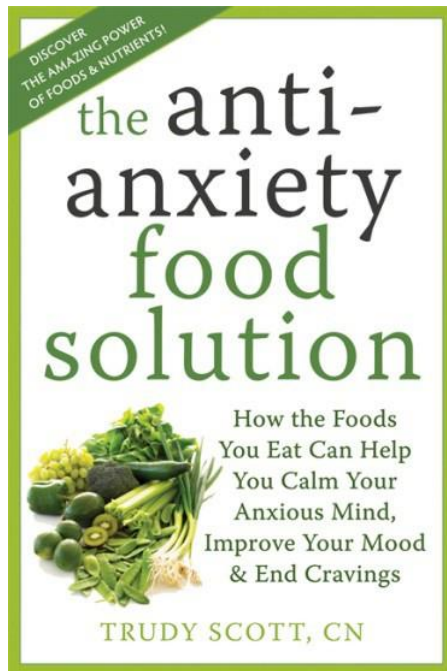
The Anxiety Summit <https://www.theanxiety summit.com/>

(get access to prior interviews when you register for the next summit in Nov 2019)



Food Mood Expert Trudy Scott is a certified nutritionist on a mission to educate and empower anxious individuals about natural solutions for anxiety, stress and emotional eating. She is passionate about sharing the powerful food mood connection because she experienced the results first-hand, finding complete resolution of her anxiety and panic attacks.

Trudy is the author of [The Antianxiety Food Solution: How the Foods You Eat Can Help You Calm Your Anxious Mind, Improve Your Mood and End Cravings](#), available in major books stores and via online stores like Amazon. You can [find out more here](#).



“Excellent job of explaining the science behind anxiety and then bringing it to a practical level”
- Elizabeth Lipski, PhD, CCN, author *Digestive Wellness*

“A real tour de force in complementary mental health literature & refreshingly original”
- Jonathan Prousky, ND, author of *Anxiety: Orthomolecular Diagnosis and Treatment*

“Replete with specific and practical suggestions, this book is backed up by research and clinical expertise”
- Julia Ross, MA, MFT, author of *The Mood Cure*

“I recommend this book not only to those who suffer from anxiety, but to their health care providers too”
-Karla Maree, certified nutrition consultant