

Nutrients that Fuel Brain Power and Reduce Anxiety

- The nutritional psychiatry movement and food as medicine
- The impact of food on brain health, neurogenesis and BDNF
- The hippocampus and your diet
- The 21 nutrients that are key for brain health
- The impacts of low zinc, low B12 and low choline diets
- How to get these nutrients in your diet



Trudy Scott: Welcome to *The Anxiety Summit Season 4*. I am your host, Trudy Scott, food mood expert, certified nutritionist, and author of *The Antianxiety Food Solution*. Today our topic is Nutrients That Fuel Brainpower and Reduce Anxiety. And we have Dr. Drew Ramsey here to speak to us. He's a psychiatrist, author and farmer. Welcome Dr. Ramsey.

Drew Ramsey: Thank you so much Trudy. It's good to be with you guys for the summit.

Trudy Scott: I'm just so thrilled to have you speak. I know that you have just come out with yet another book. It's *Eat Complete*. We're going to talk a little bit about that so congratulations on your new book.

Drew Ramsey: Thank you so much. Thank you so much. It's always a really fun time to get a lot of engagement and I'm really hoping people listening will

check out the book and get involved in the conversation about how to beat anxiety and boost mood using food and what food choices are best for that.

Trudy Scott: I love it. And my copy just arrived and I can just totally endorse it. It's a work of art. The pictures are just beautiful. They just want to make you eat and cook and enjoy beautiful food. And there's all the science and there's just this whole yummy aspect. So I just want to say well done. You've done a great job and I'm excited to be sharing some of the science behind some of this and then also hopefully give folks some inspiration to get back in the kitchen and use food as medicine because it is just so powerful. And I love that you are a psychiatrist and a farmer, I mean what a beautiful combination that is.

Drew Ramsey: Thank you. I think they all three go together very well and thank you so much for the nice comments on the book. It was meant to be a very beautiful book. And the idea behind it is that in medicine we just have to do a much better job in how we present the message around nutrition and health and specifically brain health. People have both gotten a confusing message and the wrong message. And so many people are focused on the wrong set of rules in terms of what they should eat. So I hope other people will agree and find the book both visually compelling and engaging because that was the hope we wanted to create something really beautiful for people. But it was also full of – it's a cookbook which surprises people and it's full of really simple straightforward recipes that highlight this core set of very nutrient dense foods that we're going to talk about.

Trudy Scott: Excellent. And it's so nice that you talk about the beautiful aspects of it because it's so funny, my sister says that she cannot cook out of a recipe book that does not include beautiful pictures. Those pictures need to inspire her and I think that is the case with a lot of people. And if that's what we need to do to inspire people to get back to eating real food and cooking beautiful food then let's do it. I say kudos to you.

Drew Ramsey: Well it was funny. I never really thought about myself as wanting to be a food stylist but my second book was called *Fifty Shades of Kale* and we ended up shooting most of that ourselves. And I got into food style and gosh, that was really a lot of fun. I was thinking I needed to give up the doctoring and just do that – it's fun to make beautiful pictures of food which I think everyone listening knows, right. We are all sharing or pictures of our food on Facebook and Instagram and it's a kind of exciting development of how social media has really promoted the conversation about food and healthy eating.

Trudy Scott: Yes, it absolutely has. So before we get into our questions let me just quickly read your bio for folks who may not be familiar with you and your work. Dr. Ramsey is a psychiatrist, author and farmer. He's one of psychiatry's leading proponents of using dietary change to help balance moods, sharpen brain function and improve mental health. He's an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and in active clinical practice in New York City where his work focuses on the clinical treatment of depression and anxiety. Using the latest brain science and nutritional research, modern treatments and an array of delicious food he aims to help people live to their happiest, healthiest lives. He frequently speaks and conducts workshops nationally including two recent TEDx talks – *Brain Fork* and *Brain Pharmacy* on food and brain health. His work and writing have been featured in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Huffington Post*, *Atlantic*, *Prevention*, *Lancet Psychiatry* and NPR which named him as a kale evangelist. I love that. His recent bestseller *Fifty Shades of Kale* has made the superfood accessible to thousands. His first book *The Happiness Diet: A Nutritional Prescription for a Sharp Brain, Balanced Mood and Lean Energized Body* explored the impact of modern diets on brain health. And then of course we mentioned the very recently released *Eat Complete: The 21 Nutrients That Fuel Brainpower, Boost Weight Loss and Transform Your Health*. So let's start by talking about nutritional psychiatry and this movement of food as medicine.

Drew Ramsey: Sure. Trudy you're catching me just a few days after the American Psychiatric Association annual conference - so this is the largest gathering of psychiatrists in the world. And for the fourth year in a row my colleague Emily Deans and Laura LaChance and I, two other psychiatrists have presented a Food and the Brain symposium. And so this has been a very exciting development. What we've seen and I suspect some of the other leaders in this movement that you're speaking with we've just seen a growing sense of data that tells very clearly at this point we must engage patients with mental health concerns about food for a number of reasons.

One, oftentimes mental health symptoms stem from dietary insufficiencies. So people can feel more down, more anxious, more cloudy in their thinking based on the types of food that they're eating. And then secondly the strongest data is in terms of prevention. So if you do have a disorder – if you have an anxiety disorder or you do really struggle in a way with your mood there's some data that both the development of depression and the recurrence of depression - it's very highly correlated with your dietary pattern. And so nutritional psychiatry in summary is looking at mental health through the lens of

food and then adding nutrition as a tool to our toolbox as clinicians. I suspect most folks who are listening, maybe you've seen a mental health clinician. If you think back to that initial intake was there really detailed dietary history that understood you as an eater? And usually the answer is no. And even in my own practice until a number of years ago that was no. And I've trained at some of the best places when it comes to mental health.

No fault of those organizations but it feels to me that this has been a tremendous blind spot for us both in medicine and in mental health. So I'm very excited to see this growing movement. We have the new International Society of Nutrition and Psychiatry Research (ISNPR). There's been tremendous interest from the American Psychiatry Association in terms of how do we get this into our treatment standards. So it's a very exciting moment I think in mental health. And I also personally like it because it allows me to talk about some other subjects besides psychotherapy or medications with my patients. And so it's a lot of fun to be talking about kale salads and do you know how to make ceviche and have you ever made mussels at home.

I find that it's a really nice experience for my patients and me to be able to talk about their food in a detailed way and I also learn so much about them as their doctor. But that's nutritional psychiatry in a nutshell that our food profoundly affects our brain health and our mood. That makes kind of common sense. We all know you are what you eat and that's particularly true for the brain. How many omega-3 fats you have, the level of kind of inflammation as it were in your brain. The largest factor you have under your control when it comes to those things is your food.

Trudy Scott: This is wonderful and I just applaud you for taking this information to the American Psychiatric Association. And I love that you're presenting it there and that it's being considered as part of treatment. I just think it's wonderful and I'm always looking at the latest research.. I know the ISNPR is amazing in terms of gathering researchers and disseminating this information. We've had Dr. Felice Jacka present on the first anxiety summit and Dr. Julia Rucklidge present on another summit. So I just love seeing the research and I'm really excited to hear that there's this interest at the American Psychiatric Association. Going back to your comment about presenting at this recent conference. Were you seeing a lot of interest from people who are not really familiar with the research up until now?

Drew Ramsey: Yes. And people are very curious about the research. So I've developed what's called a simple food assessment for clinical practice which is just a very simple series of questions to help understand an

eater. So instead of just asking what we eat, getting really more granular and into the details of what you actually do eat for breakfast. And very quickly helping clinicians understand their patient's dietary pattern.

And then we go through all of the data. Felice's data and all the work that she and her work have done. We go into a lot of mechanistic data about inflammation and some of the nutrients and phytonutrients. And there's incredible engagement. We're one of the most popular symposia. Actually this year we had between 400 and 500 psychiatrists in the audience and the engagement just off the charts. I mean we've all been to these academic conferences where people wander in and wander out of a big symposium. Every year we've done this people are sitting in the aisles. The rooms are crowded and people are really engaged. Actually after our symposium this year we had an hour and a half of questions from psychiatrists.

Trudy Scott: Wow.

Drew Ramsey: And then my inbox is just full of emails of folks just saying thanks. They're excited that we're talking about it. I think oftentimes people think about the American Psychiatric Association as kind of big pharma and that's really not the case. Because of my work on food the president of the APA just asked me to chair their council on communications. And I think that's just a kind of testament to the organization of they're just very interested in this movement and how it can broaden the conversation about mental health and get people more engaged in talking about mental health and feeling empowered that we have a lot of control over our mental health and there are a lot of treatments that are very, very effective. And that people don't need to suffer in a way that so often they do.

Trudy Scott: This is just so wonderful and so encouraging. I'm very, very excited to hear this. And I believe that you also teach brain nutrition to graduate students which I think is so wonderful for people to be getting this information as they are becoming psychiatrists.

Drew Ramsey: Yes, it's really been very wonderful. Columbia has really been wonderful in terms of embracing this. Beginning with my third book my chairman, Dr. Jeffery Lieberman is really one of the great leaders in American psychiatry. He was the past president of the APA. And Dr. Maria Oquendo is the current president of the APA. And they've really embraced this and they were very encouraging to me in my career. But yes, I teach at the Institute of Human Nutrition. Their graduate students get specialty lectures so I get to give a long lecture on brain nutrition. I think we're actually one of the first residencies in psychiatry so this is

the specialty training that psychiatrists get or physicians get in psychiatry.

We include lectures now on nutrition and assessment really for the first time ever. So that's very exciting. It makes sense. In mental health we've been talking about omega-3 fats and B12 and B9 and zinc and magnesium. But we hadn't made that really critical step of translating that to food. So as opposed to just giving people a fish oil pill saying hey, do you like wild salmon or do you know something interesting to do with anchovies? Or you made that wrinkly nose about seafood. Maybe do you like any other seafoods like mussels or clams? We don't translate those nutrients in just food and that's really the whole goal of *Eat Complete*. The subtitle of the book is *The 21 Nutrients That Fuel Brainpower, Boost Weight Loss and Transform Your Health*.

And that sounds maybe to some people a little hyperbolic transform your health but I think all of us have seen people or know people or ourselves have changed our food and our lifestyle and have radically transformed our health. And so I really don't think of that as a hyperbolic promise but it's something that I really believe is true for people that if you focus on these nutrients that the brain really needs and that so many people aren't getting. I mean Trudy, the rates of the nutritional insufficiency so people not meeting the recommended daily allowance of certain nutrients.

That's probably the most surprising thing as I researched the book. Incredibly high in America and incredibly high insufficiency. I mean you're not getting enough on a daily basis for some of the most critical brain nutrients. When I think about the long chained omega-3 fats - 99 percent of Americans don't even come close to meeting the international recommendations for those fats. Zinc, almost half of people don't meet the recommended daily allowance for zinc. Zinc has a direct pathway by which it puts the brain into grow mode and it gets the brain growing and healing itself. So as you said it's an exciting time and it's really very cool to see the field adopting and changing and transforming itself.

Trudy Scott: It certainly is and if we can address some of those nutritional deficiencies by getting people inspired to cook again I think it's wonderful. It's really sad when you see posts on Facebook. I saw one recently where mom said "My kids eat fast food and I'm not ashamed of it and I don't know how to cook." All I know how to do is use the microwave. And we need to get people back in the kitchen and we need to let them know that as you say food does profoundly affect our brain. So you talk about neurogenesis and this compound called

BDNF. Can you tell us a little bit about why we would be interested in this and how some of these key nutrients play a role in neurogenesis.

Drew Ramsey: For sure. So just to break those terms down neurogenesis just means production of new brain cells so these are the birth of new brain cells happening a number of areas in the brain. I finished medical school in the year 2000 and we weren't taught about this. We didn't really know about it. This is a reasonably new discovery. Back in the day we were taught hey, you've got about 100 billion brain cells. Take really good care of them. A lot of them are going to die. And hopefully you won't run out. Good luck. Now we know that into adult life brain cells keep getting born. That provides a really exciting opportunity because who doesn't want more brain cells.

So BDNF is brain derived neurotrophic factor. It's a fancy way of saying it's a hormone, a neurohormone that gets produced in the brain and it leads to the birth of these new brain cells. It also helps brain cells when they're stressed out or when they are thinking about turning in their cellular machinery to die. BDNF helps the cells be more resilient so when you have BDNF present brain cells just stay alive longer. They're more resilient. They're kind of tougher is how I like to think about them.

And so there are about five or six nutrients that directly impact brain derived neurotrophic factor. And it's something that we want to focus on because it serves as a bit of a biomarker for us in mental health. We don't use it clinically but when you see a nutrient that promotes brain growth and when you see the people who get more of that nutrient tend to have lower rates of depression and anxiety that's the type of data we really want to pay attention to and then help patients actualize. Actually make those changes. So that's where things like zinc and magnesium both directly impact BDNF as do the long chained omega-3 fats. As do a bunch of or several polyphenols. People might be surprised in the book that of the 21 nutrients a few of them are very nontraditional. So polyphenols are molecules in plants. We often call them antioxidants. They are much more complicated and powerful than just simple antioxidants. They send signals to our cells. And one of those signals from the flavonols that you find in onions and green tea and dark chocolate, one of the signals is to promote the production of BDNF. So that's kind I guess a short synopsis of how food impacts brain growth and BDNF is really kind of the molecular mediator of that.

Trudy Scott: Wonderful. That was a beautiful short summary and to the point. And it's so interesting that these same nutrients that promote BDNF and help with brain cell production are also often used for making our brain

chemicals - like zinc and magnesium and the omega-3's are so important for making serotonin and GABA and the other neurotransmitters. So we're getting benefits in many different areas which is just wonderful.

Drew Ramsey: Yes. It's a nice way to think about dosing patients which is that we already know everyone is eating usually three meals a day. And we know that by simply shifting, what I call brain food swaps. Taking something that's no good for the brain. Like my favorite example are white chocolate covered pretzels. These are horrible for your brain. White chocolate has none of the benefits of chocolate. It's just sugar and milk over a pretzel which is just empty carbohydrates and usually some strange chemicals, brominated flours and who knows what. Nobody thinks a pretzel is brain food.

But think about what you want with that white chocolate covered pretzel. You want a snack. You want some crunch. You want a treat in the middle of the day because you're really struggling. So a brain food swap is to take that experience of an eater and turn it into something that feeds the brain. So I in my office would if I hear of somebody hooked on white chocolate covered pretzels start working with them to get them onto dark chocolate covered almonds. And you still get your sweet treat. You still get something that's delicious. But now you're getting the fruit of the cacao which is one of the most powerful brain foods, dark chocolate, covering an almond which is also an incredibly nutrient dense brain food. One of the top sources of vitamin E.

Another nutrient that's in the book that 98 percent of Americans don't meet the recommended daily allowance. Between 90 and 98 percent depending on which population you look at. So it's a simple swap really. You're just picking something different at the grocery store. Maybe it costs just a little bit more but you're actually making a choice that feeds your brain.

So that's really I guess the basis of my work. I'm a practical guy from a farm and so I really am very intent on having my recommendations actually work for people. At the end of the day I am a practicing clinician so if it doesn't work I'm not doing my job and I hear about that. And I take my job getting people's mental health better very seriously. So that's where food can be just a really helpful tool.

Trudy Scott: This is wonderful. I'm just salivating listening to you talk about all these beautiful foods and all the beautiful compounds that are so beneficial for our brain and for our mood. That's really, really wonderful. I'm sure everyone's enjoying it as much as I am. Now I

want to go through some of the other nutrients that you've talked about. And we're going to go into a little bit more detail on zinc and possibly a few of the other nutrients. But there was one other thing that I found really interesting and I like to look at the research and we talked about some of the research earlier on in our conversation. But there's a study that was published in 2015 that looks at the impact of food on the size of a hippocampus. And this is an area of the brain that's involved in emotional regulation and learning. But let's talk a little bit more about this and why we would be interested in knowing about this research.

Drew Ramsey: Yes, this is a great study actually. We featured this on our brain food blog for Medscape psychiatry. This is Felice Jacka's work from last fall. It's really the first study looking at dietary pattern and brain size. And so when you think about brain size I mean your brain is made up of billions of cells. So more cells means bigger brain. And what Felice showed in her group, everyone's brain starts to shrink at about age 40-45. And how fast your brain shrinks though obviously is a very important factor. We want to slow down that brain shrinkage.

And what Dr. Jacka and her group found is that people who ate more of a Mediterranean diet – and we call this diet a lot of things because it's a dietary pattern. Sometimes it's called the whole foods diet or other times it's called a traditional diet. But these diets that are similar in several ways. They have more plants in them. They have more colorful plants in them. They have more seafood in them. They have more whole grains. And they get rid of in general the kind of processed foods, the garbage, the simple carbohydrates. People who eat that "healthier diet" they have bigger brains as they get older and their brains shrink more slowly. The study looks at people between the ages of 60 to 65 and over several years found that those who ate a healthier diet had bigger brains and their brains were shrinking at a slower rate.

And so we think this is really an exciting finding because the hippocampus is one of those areas where neurogenesis happens. So it's really a nice way of showing that this works. If we get brains into grow mode. If we get people on these more nutrient dense what I call brain foods. We have people eat complete. Their brains will literally be bigger. And who doesn't want a bigger brain, Trudy. I mean that sounds nice, right. We joke about that and now it seems like it's possible. And so that was a very cool study.

What else happened last fall. We had our first study ever about the treatment of depression using a probiotic and that study was positive. Really one of the first ones that's shown there is some utility in probiotics and the treatment of depression. So that was very exciting. There was another very quick study last fall looking at high glycemic

index foods. So they looked at the simple sugars I've been talking about. Very clear correlation with an increased risk of depression.

Trudy Scott: Beautiful. And you're talking about this garbage foods so those white chocolate covered pretzels are definitely going to contribute to brain shrinkage or certainly not help with brain growth. So swapping it out for the dark chocolate covered almonds is going to help with the size of your hippocampus.

Drew Ramsey: Yes.

Trudy Scott: Then use that as your motivation.

Drew Ramsey: We never thought that would be like an attribute on a dating site but it is. You can tell people I eat for a bigger hippocampus.

Trudy Scott: There you go. I love it. It's fantastic. And I just saw a study that came out I think this month talking about blueberries. It was an animal study looking at the fact that they help boost serotonin and could have an impact on PTSD. So we've got so much research coming out. And I just love it that once we get a few studies coming out we just see more and more. And I think this area of nutritional psychiatry research is just going to be growing by leaps and bounds. And it's really exciting to be involved at this time and to have your contribution and to hear all this information is really exciting. So I want to go back to some of the foods because I can hear this is an area that you just love to talk about. And when you start talking about it I get excited so I know everyone will as well. You talked about zinc being a common deficiency and it's something that I certainly see with so many of my clients with anxiety. Let's talk a little bit about zinc for brain health and mood. I mean let's talk about one of your beautiful recipes that you have in your book. I know you've got a lovely recipe that uses beef and a cauliflower mash.

Drew Ramsey: Yes, so very quickly so zinc is a mineral and minerals tend to be more absorbable in animal forms. I think a lot of people are very confused about meat and seafood and often intimidated and scared. And then we've had this message to go plant based and even vegan which is not a diet that is healthy for the brain. Certainly it can be if people take supplements but a part of eating complete, part of the philosophy is that you get all of your nutrients from food. Because after all this is how human beings have always gotten their nutrients just from food. And so a lot of times when people want more zinc they'll say well I'm going to take a multivitamin with zinc.

And what we do in my practice is say let's find the top nutrient sources of zinc. So something like pumpkin seeds is very high in zinc. Or red

meat is high in zinc. So are a number of seafoods. So the cauliflower mash and the steak, it's a grass fed steak. Whenever you move your meat to grass fed you're getting a more nutrient dense cut of meat meaning you get more nutrients per calorie. Because grass fed meat doesn't have that kind of – it's not artificial but most meats, a cow that's raised in pasture doesn't have a lot of extra intramuscular fat and conventionally raised meat does. So it's a way to actually that dish has 99 percent of your daily need of zinc. One of the smoothies in the book, my kiwi brain smoothie has a third of the need of zinc. So there's a variety of both plant and animal sources but I tend to steer people towards seeds, beans, some seafood and then some grass fed meat.

Trudy Scott: Excellent. And I think a lot of people as you say have been concerned about red meat and that's definitely a quality issue. And we are seeing some research to support the fact that grass fed red meat is actually okay. I know the study that Dr. Felice Jacka published in 2010 looking at the risk of anxiety and depression in Australia in women found that those eating the traditional diet - and it actually included grass fed red meat - had a lower risk of both anxiety and depression. So I'm hoping that we're going to see more research supporting this. It's wonderful that it provides all of the zinc for us.

Drew Ramsey: People have such a negative opinion of red meat and some of those criticisms are very valid. We need to eat less meat. The average American eats 270 pounds of meat per person per year. That's way too much. And at the same time I think we need to not be I don't want to call it hysterical but we don't want to swing the pendulum the other way and cut out entire food groups. I mean certainly you don't need to eat red meat. You can get all the nutrients you need from fish and seafood. But the full reality is a lot of people struggle to get the right types of seafood in their diet.

Trudy Scott: Yes. And lot of people who have given up red meat are happy when they hear that they can add it back and it can be part of a healthy diet. So I'm glad that you talk about it and I love that this recipe has so much zinc. We'll make sure to share a copy of this recipe on the blog that goes with this interview so thanks for letting us do that.

Drew Ramsey: Yes of course. I'm excited that you get to see the recipe and share it with everybody.

Trudy Scott: Good. And that will inspire people to eat some of these beautiful foods that you're talking about. I want to just talk about another nutrient that we don't hear a lot about and this is choline, a really important brain nutrient. And you talk about the fact that 90 percent of the population

in the U.S. are deficient in choline. Tell us why we need choline for brain health and where we can get it from.

Drew Ramsey: Sure. And Trudy we're using these terms sort of insufficiency and deficiency a little interchangeably. So 90 percent of Americans aren't getting enough choline. We don't know actually how many are deficient because it's not something that we measure levels of traditionally. But we can assume that if most of us aren't getting enough of it every day over time we probably don't have as much as we could use in our tissues. So choline is a B like vitamin. Many people may have heard of folates or folic acids because it's something that we at least in American supplement our flour with. And the idea there you can see how quickly it relates to brain health. We put folic acid into flour to prevent what are called neural tube defects.

So this is when a baby is forming in utero and you need all these B vitamins to create a spinal cord and a brain. So we started augmenting flour because when people don't get enough folate the spinal cord doesn't close. What's interesting is that that decreased neural tube defect for sure people feel it's a great public health intervention. But the effect, the biggest effect or the biggest change in terms of decreasing neural tube defects probably came from us eating just more nutrient dense foods. So how does this all relate to choline? Well choline is a B vitamin. It's very similar to folate. You find it in eggs. You can also find it in tofu and you find high amounts in liver as well.

It's the most recent essential nutrient in terms of the National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine. In 1998 they decided this is an essential nutrient that we need. And I think it's an interesting nutrient because eggs are something that have largely been kind of demonized and people have moved away from. And if you look especially in terms of anxiety really there's not a lot of data, not a lot of scientific data about anxiety disorders and food. There's some but the clearest data signal comes from the Hordaland study that looked at correlations of anxiety disorders and different nutrients and found choline. People who got lower choline had much higher rates of anxiety. So I think it's some of these nutrients that we don't think much about and many people haven't heard of that have very, very important role when it comes to mental health and how we feel.

And it's why a big part of my work is really pushing people to think about what they want to eat. What nutrients they're missing and what foods they need to seek out to get those nutrients. And choline is a really good example of if you're following a low fat, low cholesterol dietary pattern you're not getting a lot of choline because you're not eating many eggs. So it's just a good example of how we want to help

people focus on these specific brain nutrients. As I tell people I want people I want folks to stop counting calories and worrying about cholesterol and start counting brain nutrients.

Trudy Scott: Beautiful. That is perfect. And thank you for making that clarification about the insufficiency versus the deficiency. I'm glad you made that clear for me. And going back to the whole egg thing again a lot of people think they shouldn't be eating eggs and it's such a beautiful nutrient dense food with the choline and a good source of protein. You've got a wonderful recipe that includes eggs and avocados in your book.

Drew Ramsey: Yes. And again the way the book works is it takes something like choline and it says all right, it kind of goes over all the basics. What does this do in the brain. We did mention a few of the things. People have heard of phosphatidylcholine. That's a very, very important fat in the brain and of course you can tell phosphatidylcholine to make that you need choline not surprisingly. So the book works by then telling you about the nutrient, how much you need, how many people are deficient in that nutrient. I give you the top food sources. So every nutrient has a section on it. And then giving you the top recipes in the book.

Trudy Scott: Wonderful. Well thank you for inspiring us to want to find healthy foods and cook these foods. Before we end I would love you to just share a story of someone that you've worked with. I read about a young man called Tommy and he shared that if he didn't eat right he didn't feel right. And this is so amazing when we hear the feedback from our clients and patients. So tell us a little bit about what he was doing before he worked with you and the turnaround that he saw.

Drew Ramsey: So he was a young man who came to see me in practice with a story of a lot of young men and women who are really struggling in a different economy to get a job and move out of mom and dad's house. And he was living back with his parents. He was really not feeling good, feeling very anxious. And some of that is very appropriate. He didn't have a job. He didn't have a girlfriend. He didn't have his own apartment. And he really didn't – well he had pretty severe symptom actually. He was like many of our patients averse to taking anything.

And that puts us in a difficult situation as psychiatrists. I know a lot of people are kind of anti-medication or have questions about them and I'm not one of those folks. I'm very – my main goal is to get people better and I will employ whatever – if it takes me tap dancing to make that happen, okay, that's what you get – tap dancing. But he didn't want any medication and he was interested in food. And one of the

things he thought about is maybe even being a cook someday and he had some ideas about different types of restaurants he might want to work in.

And so I really just engaged him around food. I did a photo food journal with him. It's so easy when people have their phones now to just literally snap pictures of everything that they eat. And in doing this we discovered a very serious syndrome that I see in a lot of eaters called the beige diet where he's not eating any colors. He's eating mainly beige food. And that then those colors represent all these different flavonols and polyphenols. The colors represent different molecules. That's why we want people to eat the rainbow.

So we focused on that and just some very specific foods. He wasn't a big vegetable eater but his family was originally from the Mediterranean. He was actually very interested in making his own pasta. None of us think pasta is our top brain food. But what Tommy and I started to talk about as he started to make his own pasta dough. He started making these like mezzalunas and putting things like Swiss chard and red pepper and a little bit of fresh ricotta in there. And you could see that beige diet of his starting to kind of color up.

We got him a blender. He was really struggling, he wasn't a very big guy and he was really wanting to gain more weight and was struggling very much with not having a big appetite. And so the issue with that being you don't have a lot of appetite, you're not taking in a lot of nutrients. And so he had a blender and we worked on some smoothie recipes. Again my classic smoothie recipe is going to have lots of greens. It's going to have usually some striking color be it a kiwi or a blueberry or a pumpkin that again are going to signal different types of molecules you're getting that are good for the brain. There's also going to be a nut and some seeds in my smoothies again trying to increase the proteins and the fats and the fiber. All those things that kind of keep you full and prevent our smoothie from being just a big sugar bomb.

So what happened is he began to engage with his food more. In doing that he was engaging actually with his family a little bit more, going shopping with his mom, talking about nutrition. And kind of step by step life started to fall more into place. His mood improved. His sleep improved. Part of him being a little bit more structured and engaged with food is he had a less passive role in his family. And he began to feel better. And so there were some other interventions. We did a little psychotherapy. For a little period I gave him a little St. John's Wort. But overall what was very clear is when his food plan was dialed in and when he was caring for himself, this self-care, right. He tended to treat his anxieties by improving self-care. Anybody out there listening and

you struggle with anxiety you know the day that you wake up you have a good healthy breakfast, you take some good mindful breaths, you get yourself into a centered spot. You get some good exercise. That's generally a day that's going to go better, right.

And we all kind of struggle to keep ourselves in that routine but I think my experience with Tommy just showed me what all of us have seen. That when people take better care of themselves and nourish themselves their mental health symptoms get better. And if their mental health symptoms come up one thing I like about food interventions is if you've got your food right and you're still having horrible panic attacks you know you've done everything in your power and maybe you need something else. Maybe you need a different type of therapy or a different medication.

So there's a way that it feels to me that first foundational step we need to take in helping our patients in mental health is getting their food right. I tell people it's very simple. For most people it's more plants. I tell people it's seafood, greens, nuts and beans. When I look through dietary history almost always they're missing the rainbow vegetables. They're missing my favorite sources of seafood. Almost always they're entirely missing seafood which naturally your top source of those long chained omega-3 fats. They're not getting nuts and they're not getting beans. And then I always ask people to throw in a little dark chocolate. For some people with anxiety dark chocolate is not the best choice because it's a little stimulating with all those theobromines in there.

But that's what happened with Tommy and I just said look, I just know. And it's not rocket science, right Trudy. Everyone else knows this. People listening know this. When we eat well we feel much better. And when we don't eat right we don't feel as well. When we were at the American Psychiatry Association talking about brain food it was kind of hard to find brain food. And I was really happy when I got back to New York and kind of got back on my food plan with my family. Because as much as I was trying to make the right choices I just wasn't eating as well as I wanted. So a lot more meat than I wanted to usually eat. It was hard to find a salad. It was hard to find things like lentils and beans and all the foods that my body runs best on.

Trudy Scott: Wonderful. Well I love that story of Tommy. Thank you for sharing that and what a wonderful turnaround. And I'll just have to say you need to come to some of our nutrition conferences because we feed the people who come to our conferences organic local food, all the brain food you're looking for. Maybe we need to have some of our folks talk to the APA folks and get them on board with suitable brain food.

Drew Ramsey: We just need to bring some good food teams to the APA and then I think that we will just demonstrate for people. Actually it's interesting Trudy. I work with the Center for Mind Body Medicine in Indiana called the Eskenazi Hospital. It's a very beautiful new hospital where they have a big garden on the roof. And we did a training with the staff here. About 200 staff members teaching them mindfulness, teaching them meditation. But also teaching them about food. And one of the really kind of interesting parts of intervention when we got feedback a year later and people told us that they changed their food because they'd eaten healthy food for five days in a row. And a lot of people said something like quinoa. I know I'm supposed to eat quinoa. I know that it's good for me. I know it's easy, la, la, la. But I buy it. I just wouldn't really know what to do with it.

Well after being at our conference for four or five days and getting quinoa in two or three or four of the dishes those folks are now buying it and including it in their meal plans. So I think it's just a nice lesson when we're going to adopt these new habits or when we're going to do something like feed a conference. That actually makes a difference, especially if you're introducing new foods to a person that they get to experience it. And I do think for things like our conferences or my favorite are the lunches in hospitals. They'll bring us together and someone will do a PowerPoint on whatever and meanwhile we're getting like pizza and soda and an iceberg lettuce salad.

Trudy Scott: That's great.

Drew Ramsey: So it's not what we want people feeding their brains on by any means. And it's funny you mentioned that because I was thinking boy, next year I want more of my colleagues to be able to come and really leave feeling healthier. Wouldn't that be a great outcome of a psychiatry conference, leave feeling better.

Trudy Scott: Beautiful. I'll help you make it happen if I can help in any way. I would love to. I think that's great. They experience it. As you say they taste the food, they see it and they leave feeling better and they'll be much more inclined to be on board. Even though the fact it sounds like they really are very excited, this will just take it to the next level. So I'm excited. I'm excited for this in the future and I appreciate you so much and the wisdom that you have and that you are so instrumental in bringing about change and sharing this information both with the public and also with the doctors so they know that this is something that we need to start talking about. They need to start talking about it with their patients and it can make such a big difference.

So I just want to again say to everyone this new book *Eat Complete: The 21 Nutrients That Fuel Brainpower, Boost Weight Loss and Transform Your Health* is really fabulous. We just touched on a few of the nutrients here but as you can see by the subtitle there are 21 of them that Dr. Ramsey has highlighted and the recipes are just inspiring. And as I said the pictures are beautiful. And Dr. Ramsey you actually have a resource for folks who want to learn a little bit more other than getting the book. Tell us a little bit about your brain boost resource.

Drew Ramsey: Yes Trudy. As part of the effort to launch the book I created a seven day brain boost program. So it's a free program. People can go to my website drewramseymd.com/brainboost. And if you sign up for the program it gives you a video instruction that walks you through my simple food assessment, the same assessment I use in my clinical practice. And then you get seven days of tips and tricks. Things like snack hacks to protect your memory. Foods that eliminate or help fight anxiety. What are the top two or three foods that I think really can help people boost their mood. And you get a video about that for seven days in a row. So it's just really simple straightforward content of really practical tips that I've learned in my practice. So I'd love for folks listening to sign up and please also check out the book. *Eat Complete* has really been a wonderful project to work on but this is really the most exciting stage which is the stage where I get to share it with people and people get to get engaged in the conversation and let us know what's working for them, what challenges they continue to have. I'm also on Facebook at [drewramseymd](https://www.facebook.com/drewramseymd). I'm on Twitter as [drewramseymd](https://twitter.com/drewramseymd). I'm on Instagram as [drewramseymd](https://www.instagram.com/drewramseymd). And I'm even on Snapchat these days. So if folks want to get engaged with me on social media that's really, really easy to do. And so I'd really just be thrilled if people check out the book and pick up a copy. Get involved with the conversation, sign up for the brain boost program and ideally if you like the book I'd really appreciate any comments on Amazon or Barnes & Noble, whatever platform you're using just to spread the word if you have a good experience and help our fellow citizens feed their brains.

Trudy Scott: Wonderful. I was going to ask for any final words of wisdom but I think that said it in a nutshell. You've inspired us with your beautiful food stories and this research and your passion for sharing this information. And I appreciate you spending the time with us Dr. Ramsey. It's been absolutely fantastic speaking to you.

Drew Ramsey: Thank you so much Trudy. And yes it's nice for me to do an interview that's just not all about kale. But the last thing I didn't mention is October 5 is National Kale Day. And part of my second book *Fifty Shades of Kale* is we started a national nonprofit and we have some

very exciting news about National Kale Day. We think we're going to have celebrations in over 20 countries this year. Last year we had literally millions of students in the U.S. were served kale so that was at nationalkaleday.org. I just wanted to drop that in there. If you don't know how to make a kale cocktail or you don't know quite what to do besides kale salad and kale chips and you're looking for all kinds of exciting ways to prepare kale I'm your guy and I'm happy to help – one of my favorite things in practice is what I call the kale consultation which sounds something like oh, I know I should be eating kale but I don't really like it. I can fix that nine times out of ten. So but thank you Trudy and thanks for putting on the summit. It's just so important for us to continue having a conversation about mental health and about anxiety. Anxiety as everyone knows is the most common psychiatric disorder with 40 million Americans suffering with an anxiety disorder. And let's keep the conversation going. As I always say the most dangerous thing about mental illness is silence. And that if we're talking and if we're supporting one another and if we're inspiring people with many ways that we can improve our mental health that's how I think we win this fight. And so I'm just really thrilled to be part of the summit and I want to thank you for bringing together this community and providing this excellent information. So thanks so much Trudy.

Trudy Scott: Thanks so much Dr. Ramsey. And thank you everyone for joining us on another amazing interview on *The Anxiety Summit*. Please join us for other interviews. This is Trudy Scott signing off.

Speaker Blog: <http://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/nutrients-fuel-brain-power-reduce-anxiety>

Dr. Drew Ramsey, psychiatrist, farmer, author of *Eat Complete*



Dr. Ramsey is a psychiatrist, author, and farmer. He is one of psychiatry's leading proponents of using dietary change to help balance moods, sharpen brain function and improve mental health. He is an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and in active clinical practice in New York City where his work focuses on the clinical treatment of depression and anxiety.

Using the latest brain science and nutritional research, modern treatments, and an array of delicious food he aims to help people live to their happiest, healthiest lives.

He frequently speaks and conducts workshops nationally, including two recent TEDx talks BrainFork and Brain Pharmacy on food and brain health. His work and writing have been featured by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Huffington Post, Atlantic.com, Prevention, Lancet Psychiatry, and NPR, which named him a “kale evangelist.” His recent bestseller *50 Shades of Kale* (HarperWave 2013) has made this superfood accessible to thousands. His first book, *The Happiness Diet: A Nutritional Prescription for a Sharp Brain, Balanced Mood and Lean, Energized Body* (Rodale 2011) explored the impact of modern diets on brain health. Coming up next is *Eat Complete: The 21 Nutrients that Fuel Brain Power, Boost Weight Loss and Transform Your Health* (HarperWave Spring 2016.)

Trudy Scott, CN, host of The Anxiety Summit, Food Mood expert and author of *The Antianxiety Food Solution*



Food Mood Expert Trudy Scott is a certified nutritionist on a mission to educate and empower anxious individuals worldwide about natural solutions for anxiety, stress and emotional eating. Trudy serves as a catalyst in bringing about life enhancing transformations that start with the healing powers of eating real whole food, using individually targeted supplementation and making simple lifestyle changes. She works primarily with women but the information she offers works equally well for men and children.

Trudy also presents nationally to nutrition and mental health professionals on food and mood, sharing all the recent research and how-to steps so they too can educate and empower their clients and patients.

Trudy is past president of the National Association of Nutrition Professionals. She was recipient of the 2012 Impact Award and currently serves as a Special Advisor to the Board of Directors. Trudy is a member of Alliance for Addiction Solutions and Anxiety and Depression Association of America. She was a nominee for the 2015 Scattergood Innovation Award and is a faculty advisor at Hawthorn University.

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* (New Harbinger 2011). She is also the host of the wildly popular *Anxiety Summit*, a virtual event where she interviews experts on nutritional solutions for anxiety.

Trudy 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.

The information provided in The Anxiety Summit via the interviews, the blog posts, the website, the audio files and transcripts, the comments and all other means is for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from your physician or other health care professional. You should consult with a healthcare professional before starting any diet, exercise, or supplementation program, before taking or stopping any medication, or if you have or suspect you may have a health problem.