

Focus Guide: Depression

**Things You Can Do *Today* to Change
How You Feel *Tomorrow***



Cheryl A Major, CNWC



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Introduction

I know the word cure is a four letter word, and while I am not a doctor and can't use it relative to other people, I certainly have the right to use it when discussing my own medical history.

The fact is that I "cured" my own depression by making changes in my food and in my own environment. Some of it I did it completely by accident, and it was an accident that totally changed my life, and some of it was a deliberate effort to continue to improve how I feel every day!

What follows in this Focus Guide is information that was instrumental in the improvement and management...dare I say remission... of my decades long battle with chronic depression. That certainly was an accurate statement for my experience, and I share it with the hope and intention that it will provide you with similar relief.

I am not unaware that I tend to be sensitive to depression. My life however is no longer one of daily fighting and struggling with depression, and it is the most liberating shift you can possibly imagine.

Please take the information in these pages to heart. It is my sincere hope that this helps you, even in a small way, as it has helped me.

Cheryl A Major, CNWC

What Part Does Sugar Play in Depression

The quick and correct answer is a big one! Numerous studies have shown that sugar consumption and more especially excess sugar consumption increase your risk factor for depression and anxiety.

The really challenging parts of this problem are that sugar is addictive, and frankly, sugar makes you feel better, even if it's only for a short time. Eating something sweet actually lights up the pleasure centers in your brain before it drops you and leaves you feeling worse than you did before you ate the cake or candy or whatever it was you reached for.

Why does sugar increase our risk of depression? There are several key reasons, and we'll discuss a few of them.

Inflammation! Sugar is a key driver of inflammation in your body. Inflammation is now known to be a major factor in the development of chronic disease and premature aging. Switching your diet focus from eating sweet processed foods to eating whole foods and fruit instead of sweets will not only reduce your body's inflammation, it will also help you to drop weight without going on a typical short term diet. If you've been following me for a while, you know I don't believe in dieting. I've never met anyone who has been on a diet long term and/or who has maintained weight loss with that diet long term. It takes changing your eating habits long term that will get you to your desired weight goal and keep you there.

Sugar is a contributor to insulin and leptin resistance. This is huge if you're trying to lose weight. Ghrelin and Leptin are your "hunger hormones", and their job is to tell you when you are hungry (ghrelin's job) and when you feel full (leptin's assignment). When we have eaten enough, leptin levels become higher. These higher levels are supposed to signal the brain that we are full. These higher levels also send a signal to the pancreas that you are full and to stop producing insulin. If you eat and eat, and don't feel full (and that eating includes sugar), you may be suffering with leptin resistance. The body releases leptin as it should, but, the brain does not correctly respond to the leptin trigger. Simply put...the brain does not get the message the stomach is full, so your appetite is not suppressed! You won't feel your best if your hormones are out of whack and you can't stop eating. Scientists are studying the effects of hunger hormones on mood disorders including depression.

If you think you'll dodge the "sugar bullet" by switching to artificial sweeteners, think again. If you are prone to depression, only a couple of servings of an artificial sweetener can trigger a bout of depression. I will not touch them! I try really hard not to preach or wag my teacher finger at people, but I'll make an exception here. Artificial sweeteners are poison! And please don't drink soda whether it's sweetened with sugar or with artificial sweeteners. Don't drink it!! Don't drink sweetened health or tea drinks either.

Having a little sugar once in a while won't kill you, but please remember, it's a slippery slope, and a little sugar can become regular sugar which can quickly and easily become an extra five or ten pounds. I speak from experience on this. You have to be mindful of what you put in your body, willing to forgive yourself if you get off track and get back on the healthy eating wagon!

Gut Health

Did you know your gut is now considered to be your second brain? In fact, recent studies show your gut may in part control a great deal of what happens in your brain. So... how does your gut health impact depression and what can you do to improve the health of your gut?

Your gut health is related to the ratio of good bacteria to bad bacteria that exists there. When that is out of balance, it can play an important role in your mental health and your mood. Eating too much sugar and/or fructose...and it's all sugar folks (see my website for the 56 Names of Sugar courtesy of the documentary "Fed Up")...causes the release of excess insulin as well as chronic inflammation in your body. Inflammation negatively affects everything and is a chief contributor to chronic disease and premature aging.

Remember that everything is connected. Just as your heart doesn't function independent of your lungs or your brain, so your gut is connected to everything. In the past few decades, the hunger hormones ghrelin and leptin were discovered. When you have a healthy, correctly functioning gut, ghrelin tells you when you're hungry and it's time to eat; leptin tells you when you're full, and it's time to put down your fork and push away from the table. When your gut is not healthy, the message that you're full doesn't make it to your brain which is why so many people can eat and eat and never feel full. It all comes back to your gut and what you're putting in it!

What should you do to have your gut support a life that is not filled with depression and a body that knows when to stop eating? You need to choose foods that support a healthy, upbeat mood; foods that are whole, complex, healthy foods; not foods that are loaded with sugar or that are highly processed carbohydrates which quickly turn to sugar (and then to fat).

In addition, it's possible gluten contributes to depression in people with non-celiac gluten sensitivity. Gluten is in everything these days...including things like creams and shampoos; if you're trying to recover from depression, it's in your best interest to experiment with a gluten free diet for at least a month. You still need to read your labels though! Just because a package says the food is gluten free doesn't mean it's a healthy thing to consume. Gluten free foods can still be loaded with salt, sugar and unhealthy fats so, buyer...beware!

You also may want to consider taking a prebiotic and a probiotic every morning. If you do, take them at the same time. I've found many health professionals suggest a probiotic but not a prebiotic. From personal experience I can tell you that adding a prebiotic can bring you back from the brink of IBS (irritable bowel syndrome). The

prebiotic provides non-digestible fiber that feeds the probiotic and helps it do its job more effectively.

Eliminate Toxins

When dealing with depression and trying to find answers, it's important to look for causes and not simply go for a medication that simply suppresses your symptoms. One of the most concerning things for me is that my doctors did not look at what I was eating, nor did they ask me what I was being exposed to in my day to day life.

Did you know that your depression symptoms may be caused or exacerbated by toxins in your world? It's true, and I want to share with you a few of the possible culprits so you can evaluate your exposure to them and perhaps find some relief of symptoms.

Pesticides – Did you know the most common exposure comes from the conventionally grown food we eat? It does! The saying, “You are what you eat” is so true and actually goes beyond that to “...and you are what *they eat*...”. In this case, with conventionally grown food, what *they eat* refers to the pesticides used during the growing process.

Prescription drugs – These sometimes alter our brain chemistry. Some medications like Paxil, for instance, while technically an antidepressant, has a risk of increasing suicidal tendencies. Paxil was my antidepressant of choice, and while I was never suicidal, I was extremely miserable both on and off it. I went on it to try to control my depression and then went off it because I didn't feel well and had a number of side effects while taking the drug. You should be absolutely sure to read the fine print on your leaflet when you are prescribed a new medication. Keep a daily journal of how you feel so you know when you started taking the meds and you know how you feel while taking it. You want to track time and effects. You may think you'll remember...you won't...

Next on the hit parade list are environmental pollutants. These include, among others, radon, lead, furnishings in your house that may have been treated with chemicals, building materials in your home, cleaning products, etc. I am extremely careful, as you should be, to carefully read all labels before purchasing any cleaning products. If you see ingredients such as Phthalates (which are found in a lot of household products containing fragrance like air fresheners, dish soap, etc.), perchloroethylene, triclosan, quaternary ammonium compounds, 2-butoxyethanol (which is not required by law to be listed on a label), ammonia, chlorine, sodium hydroxide, it's in your best interest to find a healthier, less toxic alternative as these ingredients are endocrine disruptors, neurotoxins, skin irritants, etc.

Finally, heavy metals found in amalgam fillings, some fish and in cigarette smoke can influence depression. Mercury is a major culprit in this list, and you should be careful to avoid eating fish that is high in mercury such as tuna and sword fish. Eating *wild*

caught fish such as salmon haddock or cod is a better, healthier choice. I suggest avoiding farm raised fish entirely; I don't care how responsibly they tell you it is raised.

This is not a complete list of everything in your environment that can affect your mood and can trigger depression, but these are a good place to start evaluating what you are currently exposed to in your daily life.

Supplements and Tools to Support a Healthy Mood

I confess I was on and off antidepressant medications a number of times. I initially expected they would make me feel happy; I was disappointed when I realized it doesn't work that way. What it does is level you off so you can cope better with your life and with its challenges. Each time I was on the medication, I became dissatisfied with how I felt and opted to get off the medication. I did it with a doctor's supervision as should anyone who decides to stop taking this type of drug.

I ultimately decided to explore alternative means to handle my depression. Here are some of them as well as information on supplements I was not aware may have helped me at the time. Perhaps they will help you...

One of the most effective alternatives I used was Sam-e. I found it really elevated and stabilized my mood. SAME "is a synthetic form of a compound formed naturally in the body from the essential amino acid methionine and adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the energy-producing compound found in all cells in the body". (Cathy Wong, ND). An additional benefit is that it is good for joint health. There were no negative effects from taking this at all for me. It also has anti-aging benefits and has been shown to benefit the brain, liver, joints and other tissues of our bodies. I found it's a good one to turn to.

A lack of Vitamin D has been linked to depression. This I discovered later in my living with depression years. While you can get Vitamin D from sun bathing, we now know that the benefits of doing that can be outweighed by the associated risks. Advice on how much D to take as a supplement varies, so consulting with a nutritionist is advisable.

Selenium is next on our list, and has also been shown to have a positive effect on depression. It's an essential trace mineral, and you can get it by eating nuts, beans, seafood and whole grains as well as lean meats if you're a meat eater.

Tryptophan plays a big role in the production of serotonin. In case tryptophan is a new term to you, it's an amino acid, and the reason why it's important if you suffer with depression is because serotonin is a neurotransmitter and helps us achieve a feeling of contentment. Foods rich in tryptophan include eggs, spinach, pumpkins, nuts, and peas, so be sure to eat enough of these foods to help your body produce the serotonin it needs for you to feel better.

Omega 3 fatty acids are important to so many aspects of a healthy body and a healthy mind! Omega 3s have been shown to improve brain function. To ensure you are getting enough Omega 3s, be sure to eat wild seafood like salmon, sardines and herring. You can get Omega 3s by eating walnuts, flax seeds, hemp hearts and chia seeds. An added benefit to eating chia seeds is that they help reduce blood pressure!

B vitamins are important as well as they are considered to be anti-stress vitamins. Nutrition experts have found that folic acid (vitamin B9), niacin (vitamin B3), and pyridoxine (vitamin B6) support the amino acid tryptophan to manufacture serotonin, that “feel good” chemical we discussed earlier. Things are so interconnected. It’s really very cool!

Finally, I want to share with you a tool I used during the winter months to help my depression. It is a full spectrum light, and they have become very affordable. I didn’t sit in front of a bank of lights as people used to do. I had a small light fixture that I used almost daily for a few hours while I was working at my laptop. I suspected I suffered from SAD, or Seasonal Affective Disorder, as my depression always worsened as fall and winter set in. I used this tool in conjunction with taking SAME, and my last year as a depressed person was much easier to bear because of these two “tools”.

While there is growing evidence suggesting certain foods can improve your mental mood, and I can tell you it was absolutely true for me, using nutrition to fight depression might not work for everyone. If trying to prevent this challenge through nutrition doesn’t work, consult a medical professional in order to identify the cause of depression and the best ways to deal with it.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Such an appropriate acronym...SAD... I now know Seasonal Affective Disorder, or winter blues as they're often referred to, was a part of my struggle with depression. I always seemed to feel worse, more down and depressed, as fall approached and morphed into winter. The shadows and the light changed, the days grew shorter, the flowers and plants where I live froze and died off. I still remember being in the house where I grew up and being aware of how the light was so different in my bedroom in the afternoons of fall.

At the time I was living with depression I did not have this awareness however. When you are depressed, it's often difficult to step back and look objectively at how you're feeling and then to assess it based on your environment, time of year, etc. Being depressed always seemed to make everything so much harder. I often felt I was in a big hole standing on my toes with my eyes at ground level trying to see the outside world... just *trying* to see the outside world, never mind being present in it or in my life.

If you find fatigue, depression, hopelessness, and social withdrawal are things you struggle with at certain times of the year and it reoccurs annually, you may be subject to this as well.

The medications I was put on for my depression didn't make me feel "right", so I would eventually get off them. I tried different alternative treatments like St. Johns Wort which did not help me. I so desperately wanted it to level me off, but it didn't. I also tried taking XXXXX without benefit.

There were two "tools" that seemed to make a difference for me. The first was SAME. SAME has a positive effect on your mood and is a chemical that is found naturally in the body. This fact alone made it much more attractive to me than the prescription medications I had been on and off several times with their unpleasant side effects. SAME has additional benefits in that it is beneficial for your joint health and also supports your liver where the SAME your body makes is produced. Specifically, it supports joint strength, liver detoxification, mood and brain function. Cool! And I could swear I felt a little bit more "up" with my mood about 30 – 40 minutes after taking it.

The second was full spectrum light therapy. I had read about it and decided to try it. It used to be that you had to buy a huge bank of full spectrum lights which were very expensive and bulky to say the least. Now they have small, portable units you can carry with you, so in winter months you can have it on your desk at the office and enjoy the benefit while you work. The full spectrum light units give off light that is similar in color composition to natural daylight, and my personal experience using them was really

good. The last year I struggled with depression, the combination of SAME and the full spectrum light unit really helped me greatly.

Later that year, I accidentally achieved permanent relief from my depression by changing how I eat, and my blog <http://ThinStrongHealthy.com> is inspired by my success story and my victory over depression after decades of struggle. I am on a mission to share the simple lifestyle changes I made that created a miracle in my life. I am driven to help you create a miracle for yourself too!

Exercise and Depression

If you've ever struggled with depression, you know it's hard to move never mind get it together to exercise. When some days you don't even want to get out of bed, the prospect of running, going to the gym or just walking around the block can be the last thing you want to consider.

If you've ever struggled with depression and have done any research on it...about what you should be doing to feel better...no doubt you are aware one of the first things you'll hear is that exercise will help you feel better, more upbeat – it will improve your mood. Not what I wanted to hear; just give me a pill to make me feel better, please...

I've never been a very sporty person. I tend to be more naturally sedentary than active. I have to stay on myself to stretch, exercise and keep moving. Exercising causes your body to release endorphins, which trigger positive feelings in your body, as well as the neurotransmitter norepinephrine which is believed to improve our mood. I remember talking with someone who had undergone a heart transplant. He said that he was on the stationary bicycle very shortly after the surgery to try to keep his endorphins surging. He didn't want to give in to the depressive feelings he had about the surgery. He was a truly remarkable person. I can't be sure I would do the same.

Regular exercise has also been shown to increase self esteem. This is important for people struggling with depression as one of the symptoms is that we often don't feel that great about ourselves. I know I suffered from that as I was embarrassed and probably a bit ashamed to admit I was depressed. It was a lot of work to fool the world and to hide my depression. Looking fit and healthy will make anyone feel better!

Exercise increases energy levels. One of the classic symptoms of depression is lack of energy and lack of enthusiasm. Increasing your energy level with regular exercise can only help. This doesn't mean you have to become a gym rat. Go for a walk with a friend, put on some music and dance around by yourself or with others. Run up and down a flight of stairs until you feel it in your legs and you're out of breath. There are easy, instant ways to get some exercise.

Getting your heart rate and your breathing rate up is good for you in so many ways. When you stop and catch your breath, you'll feel considerably more relaxed after expending energy and working off some of your stress and anxiety as well!

So, dance; golf (but forget the golf cart and walk); jog or run; ride your bike; get outside and do some yard work; garden; take a yoga class, a tai chi class or a qi gong class. You have options, and it's fun and exciting to try something new. Maybe your efforts to use

exercise to alleviate your depression will lead you to experience a form of exercise you will really enjoy and that will benefit you physically and mentally!

Meditation and EFT Tapping for Depression

Meditation – I have read about people who swear meditation “cured” their depression. I use the quotes as one has to be very, very careful about using that four letter word, “cure” ...

This is so well written by Ocean Malandra that I’m just going to quote this for you...”When it comes to the real cause of depression, many scientific studies have shown depressed people actually have more [asymmetry in their brain function](#) than normal, especially between the right and left frontal lobes; areas responsible for thought and emotional processing. This asymmetry is even considered a marker, or a predictor, of depression in people and is associated with depressive thought patterns like hopelessness.

And what causes this asymmetry? The answer is stress. Depression, like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is actually [caused by brain damage from stress](#). This explains why numerous aspects of modern life...are linked to depression...

This opens up a can of worms about how society is structured, but it also begs the question: If stress causes depression, can calmness reverse it? [Meditation](#), the age-old technique of focusing on the present in order to dwell in a state of tranquility – the ultimate stress buster.

...a slew of recent studies have found that meditation does actually “shape” the brain; it [corrects damage from stress](#), enhances connectivity between the two lobes and even promotes cell growth in key regions that are underdeveloped in depressed people, like the hippocampus. This means that meditators are changing the actual structure of their brains ..., thereby rewiring their emotional reactions and thought patterns to a calmer baseline on a physical level. This makes them more resilient to depression permanently.”

I expect a practice like meditation would help control your mind, your mental state and your emotions, but in my world, the changing of what I ate made all the difference to me. Adjusting my food affected the chemistry of my body and my mind. Different strokes for different folks, I guess...

We do what we call “breathe and pray” in our house, and we practice it before breakfast and dinner. It’s not really praying; it’s more about taking a few minutes to breathe deeply and then remember the people, events and things in your life for which you are grateful. I’m not traditionally religious, although I was raised to be so. My mother’s not so secret dream was that I would marry a minister. That didn’t happen... Sorry Mom. I do believe the minute or two this takes twice a day would be a good thing for everyone to

do. It slows you down, and the practice of being grateful puts into perspective your day to day good stuff and not so good stuff...we'll call them "challenges" for the present.

EFT Tapping – EFT stands for Emotional Freedom Techniques. My first exposure to this was watching the film Nick Ortner did, "The Tapping Solution" several years ago. I was struck by the change, by the shift in the people who participated in the program. Not all the participants thrived and showed the same amazing benefit; it really was dependent upon their level of commitment and involvement...as is the case with anything. There was a Vietnam Veteran who was one of the subjects. I was struck by the reduction in his level of back pain and by his story during the follow up later where he said his children said they had their father back...finally. It was very powerful stuff.

EFT tapping draws on different aspects of alternative medicine including acupuncture, neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) , energy medicine, and Thought Field Therapy (TFT).

I admit I have not had the discipline to tap on a regular basis, so I can't give a personal endorsement of the practice. After writing this however, I will be tapping again. Nothing like revisiting something to renew your interest in it!

Changing What You Can to Feel Better

When it comes to living with and combating depression, changing what you can to feel better is really important. While you're figuring out what is causing your depression, changing your eating habits and patterns as well as vetting personal care and cleaning products for ingredients that may be affecting you, it can be helpful and a bit uplifting to change a few simple things that are around you every day.

Surround yourself with cheerful objects and furnishings. A photo or painting that makes you feel good can go a long way to giving you a boost when you need it.

Do you have a favorite color...one that lifts your mood? Think about painting a room or maybe just one wall that color. Choose a room you spend time a good amount of time in. Along with enjoying that newly painted wall, getting it done...completing a project will help you feel good!

Another idea that helped me when I was feeling down was to buy some fresh flowers. It doesn't have to be a huge expensive bouquet. Alstroemeria are generally inexpensive, come in a great variety of colors and can last a long time. Make sure you place them on a table or counter where you can see them and enjoy them!

Do you enjoy candles? The warm light they cast and their different scents can certainly soothe you and/or boost your mood. Choose a color you really like; one that will enhance your décor and brighten your spirits. For a scent, citrus will energize you, and a scent like vanilla or lavender will be softer and more soothing.

Speaking of scents, aromatherapy is another tool you may choose to try. Even a simple cup of warm chai tea, with its aromatic properties, can be soothing and can help lift your mood. Essential oils can be used with a diffuser or can be used in creams on your skin. The following scents are typically used when combating depression:

Basil, bergamot, cedarwood, frankincense, geranium, grapefruit, lavender, lemon, jasmine, rose, sandalwood, spruce, orange and ylang ylang.

The citrusy scents tend to stimulate your mood while scents like lavender and jasmine tend to be more calming and relaxing.

Do you have favorite music? Play it and enjoy it both at home and while you're driving in the car. Music can be so uplifting, so don't underestimate its ability to help you feel better!

I can tell you from experience that dealing with depression is a real life challenge. It can feel like a second job...it's a lot of work to live with depression and still function in your

daily life. Don't underestimate the benefits of small things that can make you feel a bit better while you sort through and resolve your depression.

Choose the People Around You Wisely

Sometimes making your life better involves some painful decisions regarding friends and sometimes family.

When you're depressed, you are often not feeling very good about yourself. You can be vulnerable to the opinions and attitudes of others. Here are three suggestions to incorporate into your decisions about the people with whom you surround yourself.

First, you can't choose your family...we all know that. I think most families have some degree of disfunction just by virtue of the fact that your family members are there by default; they are not chosen. This means people with diverse personalities and traits are thrown together and expected to get along and thrive. But how do you handle it if your family situation doesn't support you in feeling good about yourself...especially when you're dealing with depression? You need to give yourself permission to take a break if you need one. The world won't end if you skip a holiday. The important thing is to decide if skipping the event will be less traumatic than attending it. If it's something you feel you have to attend, give yourself a time limit for the visit. That way you'll know you're not there feeling badly with no end in sight.

On to friends... They can be great and can help elevate your mood or they can be toxic. One thing to keep in mind is that as we grow and change, sometimes we outgrow our friends, even previously good friends and change is necessary. This can be awkward, and admittedly you can find yourself in a situation where you feel badly with a friend and badly because you don't want to be in a friendship with them anymore. Again, it's ok to take a break. Explaining you need to have more time to yourself and appreciate that person's understanding can go a long way to taking pressure off you to interact and can also put some distance between the two of you. Sometimes time just resolves relationships you've outgrown over time if you take a break. People move on...

What about relationships at work? We've all worked with people who complain about everything and everyone, who gossip about others, who spread rumors and who pretty much are poisonous... I've found that people who are negative and gossipy need an audience. If someone like that has latched on to you, take a different attitude, and try not getting involved in the conversations that are negative or unkind about others. When you remove yourself as a willing and engage audience, you'll most likely find the person will move on to someone else who gives them more feedback and gets involved egging them on. You'll feel better about yourself if you can stay above the office fray and office gossip, too.

Trying these suggestions won't necessarily solve your depression, but they can be useful tools to help you feel better while you're making other lifestyle changes that may help elevate your mood and help alleviate your depression.

What to do When You Slip Back into Old Eating Patterns and Blow Your Diet

When you make significant lifestyle changes, the journey is often not linear... There are bumps, disappointments and setbacks along the way. Here are a few thoughts about what to do when you slip back into old eating patterns and blow your diet...

If you're most often at home and rarely eat out or with others, it's easier to stay on track. This is not how most of us live however. There are holidays and events, parties, dinners out and vacations where we don't have total control over the food we have available to eat. So what do you do when you slip backwards?

First and foremost, I can tell you from personal experience that drilling down and being very strict with what I'm eating pulls me right back if I've been wandering and eating a little more widely. This is most likely to be a challenge at holiday time or while on vacation. I don't hesitate to have a bite (or two) of dessert at holiday time. That alone really isn't the problem. It's the buildup of the bites...also, you can become overly confident that you are doing really well and feeling fine while eating a bit more widely. It can sneak up on you, and before you know it, you start to feel a little off. Maybe a bit less up, less energetic. I become edgier and less patient as well as just not feeling as positive and upbeat. Sometimes I start to feel down and "in my head" again, which lets me know I need to take a look at what I'm eating.

The question of what to eat when you're travelling and on vacation is also a challenge. When I'm flying, I always take food with me to eat on the plane. The last thing I want to do is start a vacation or a business conference off on the wrong foot by eating food that will not support me in feeling well or enjoying myself. I make sandwiches out of gluten free bread I make and put almond butter in it. That with some cucumber slices, almonds, walnuts or cashews and a piece of fruit is plenty for the day until I get to my destination.

For me, getting back on track means lots of green salads with fresh vegetables and a small serving of protein with nearly every meal. Not only do I feel better in a couple of days, my energy level goes up and frankly, I drop a few pounds.

I guess rule #1 for all of us is to take something healthy with us that will stop us from making a choice that we will regret later. One nutrition bar I use as my go-to choice is **Nu-Go Slim Brownie Crunch Bars**. They are gluten free, have only 2 grams of sugar, which is really low for a nutritional bar and they have 16 grams of protein!

Be aware of when you feel great and what you're eating and when you don't feel so great and what you're eating. This awareness gives you wonderful guidance in your not so linear journey to feeling better mentally and physically through healthy eating!

Summary and Postscript

As I write the final page of this focus guide, I have to include that recently I became very depressed again. Although I have been miserable, I am trying to view it as an exercise to help me better help you.

I know what happened. It was the holiday season, and I had been doing so well for so long that I thought I was bullet-proof. I ate widely, had food with sugar, preservatives, wheat; all the things I now know create inflammation in my brain. Then I got sick. I got the flu that is going around this year where you are just suddenly sick. No warning of a scratchy throat or feeling off. I just woke up one morning full blown sick. I've been struggling for a couple of weeks now. I was out of the office for a full week and just can't seem to feel rested or get my energy back. As the people around me say, I am good at taking care of people when *they* are sick, but I am terrible at being sick myself.

I take full responsibility for my depression this time. I know better. I've tried to use this as an opportunity to better express what it feels like to be depressed. When I began the book I am writing, I had not been depressed in a couple of years and was trying to remember and express the symptoms, the feelings.

Now I can tell you firsthand what it feels like... it's hard to get up in the morning; I start wishing I could get under the covers at around 4:00 in the afternoon. My brain is like a hamster on a wheel with negative, down thoughts; I am totally inside my head; I can't get out of it and be in the world. There is no joy. I go through the motions. I am unproductive; why bother...nothing works out. I am a failure; a disappointment to me, my biggest critic. It's exhausting...

I've tightened up on my diet big time and last night, for the first in what seems like forever, I started to feel a little brighter, a little less in my head. I also realized I have not been consistent in taking some of the vitamins and supplements that help me like vitamin D.

I was listening to a webinar yesterday, and part of the message was...if you want people to hear your message, that is hear what you have to offer that can enrich their lives, *focus on the result not the process*. I found this interesting as my heart's desire is to share what I have learned that has changed my life so profoundly.

If you struggle with depression, I know what it is. I know how it feels and what it does to you and to those around you every day. More importantly, I know how to manage mine and make it leave my life. Happy to share...

About Cheryl A Major, CNWC

Cheryl has been on a healthy eating journey for many years. Beginning at age 28 when she discovered she was severely hypoglycemic, she has adjusted and changed her diet and the eating habits of those around her.

This journey led her to remove all processed foods, gluten and preservatives from her diet. The change in how she felt both physically and mentally has been the inspiration for her flagship blog <http://ThinStrongHealthy.com> . An unexpected result of these changes was a significant drop in weight... and then she knew she was really on to something others needed to know!

Imagine! Americans changing the way they eat and losing weight without trying and without subjecting themselves to “diets” and the resulting yo-yo weight- lose then gain, lose then gain again that we see happen all the time. Americans changing the way they eat and losing the chronic depression that plaques so many in our society.

Cheryl’s mission is to share her discoveries with as many people as possible. What she has discovered can change the lives of others as it has changed her life, both mentally and physically.

Cheryl says, “I’ve read books by people who have studied depression, but you can tell they don’t *feel it*.” She says, “I didn’t learn this... I live it!”

*Cheryl A Major lives in West Suburban Boston and is a Certified Nutrition and Wellness Consultant. Her TV show **Thin Strong Healthy** airs on WestfordCat and is an offshoot of her blog <http://ThinStrongHealthy.com> Cheryl offers ongoing information and personal health coaching to help you feel better and be healthier. She works with people of all ages and challenges to help them understand how and what to eat to get healthier quickly and deliciously. Download your [10 Tips for Healthy Eating on a Budget](#), and get started right away!*

2018 Resources

[Vitamins and Foods for Hormone Reset](#)

[Example Food Journal](#)

[Food Journal](#)

[Different Names of Sugar \(from the Documentary “Fed Up”\)](#)

[Clean Fifteen and the Dirty Dozen \(EWG.org\)](#)

Books:

[The Blood Sugar Solution](#) – by Dr. Mark Hyman

[Sugar Blues](#) – by William Dufty

[Grain Brain](#) – by Dr. David Perlmutter

[Wheat Belly](#) – by William Davis MD

[The Disease Delusion](#) – by Dr. Jeffrey Bland

[In Defense of Food](#) – by Michael Pollan

[The 30 Day Heart Tune-Up](#) – by Steven Masley MD

[Salt Sugar Fat](#) – by Michael Moss

[Fat Chance](#) – Robert H. Lustig, M.D.

[The Tapping Solution](#) – Nick Ortner

DVDs:

[Fed Up](#)

[That Sugar Film](#)

[Food Matters](#)

CDs:

[Eat for Health – Dr. Joel Fuhrman](#)

Charts, Graphs and Other Info:

[The 56 Names of Sugar](#) (courtesy of the movie FED UP)

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