

Mood Questionnaire

Including the Body in Your Depression Relief Equation

Respond yes or no to these questions to get a sense of the role your physical body likely plays in making or keeping you depressed. Interpretative statements and suggested reading follow.

1. Does anyone in your biological family show symptoms similar to yours that relate to depression? (This could include inadequate sleep, fatigue, low mood, food cravings, the need to self-medicate with food or beverages, or dependence on mood-elevating drugs).
2. Is there alcoholism, diabetes or blood sugar issues, obesity, anxiety or learning issues in your biological family?
3. Do you yourself have any of the above challenges?
4. Do you usually get enough rest?
5. Do you usually have enough energy?
6. If your mood is low, can you usually make sense of it based on what is going on in your life and relationships?
7. Do you eat or drink things to get relief or somehow change how you feel (for example, to lift mood, calm down, get energy, quiet emotions)?
8. Do you or have you ever restricted calories to lose weight?
9. Do you think or has someone said you may have an eating disorder?
10. Is your mood lower in winter?
11. Do any of your ancestors come from cold weather geographic areas where the diet was high in fish, like: The British islands, Scandinavia, coastal Native American cultures, or Japan?
12. Do you know if you eat adequate protein to give your brain the building blocks of good mood chemistry?
13. Are you a woman?
14. Are you aware of being exposed to any dietary or environmental toxins?
15. Are you aware of having any allergies or sensitivities to specific foods?
16. Is your evening weight more than two pounds greater than your morning weight?
17. If you have health issues for which you are medicated, does the list of possible side effects include depression?
18. Do you skip breakfast?
19. Is your sex drive about right for your age and circumstances?
20. Do you have any digestive issues like bloating or fullness, pressure, too much gas, constipation or diarrhea?
21. Do you feel you are more sensitive than other people to light or sound or that your natural "shock absorbers" are used up?
22. Does the thought of eating healthy food like fruits, vegetables, lean meats, whole grains, and legumes sound depressing, boring or disappointing?

Interpretation

Questions 1–3

These questions suggest that your physical body is involved but not necessarily that depression relates to genetics. Genetics never stand alone. Genetics express in context. So, for example, if your parent was depressed for reasons of genetic vulnerability plus a diet deficient in essential fatty acids, depression might seem heritable. More will be explained.

Question 4

Sleep deprivation is often associated with depression, but is it the chicken or the egg? The chemistry of good mood is the chemistry of good sleep, too. It could be both or either. Read T.S Wiley's [Lights Out: Sleep, Sugar and Survival](#) to understand more.

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Question 5

Lack of energy is often associated with deficient mood chemistry, for example, low dopamine. Chicken or egg? It could be either or both. Depressing life circumstances, stress, and poor nutritional status reinforce one another. To rule out the body as the source of low energy, read Julia Ross's [The Mood Cure](#).

Question 6

If you can't make sense of your mood misery based on life circumstances, investigate the possible role of your physical body. Again, stress, depressing life circumstances, and poor nutritional status reinforce one another. Read orthomolecular psychiatrist Michael Schachter's [What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Depression](#).

Question 7

If you said yes, this is a dead giveaway that your body is a key player in your depression. Briefly, it sounds like your body looks to refined carbohydrates to get a quick but temporary blast of blood sugar- and mood -raising carbohydrates and the attendant lift of endorphins, serotonin and other neurotransmitters that deliver sense of well being. All of the books on the reading list address this key issue. For people from families with alcoholism, be sure to read Joan Mathews Larson's [Seven Weeks to Sobriety](#). She describes low blood sugar as both a risk factor for problem drinking and a risk factor for relapse. The Suppers programs can help you establish the diet and lifestyle changes you need to correct this.

Question 8 and 9

If you answered yes, this is again a dead giveaway. Unless you are eating a good balance of only the most nutrient-dense, high quality whole foods when you restrict calories, calorie restriction can be a ticket to low mood brain chemistry. Brain cells are made out of protein and high quality fat. Refined carbs and poor quality fats build depressed brain matter. (60% of the dry weight of your brain is fat. If you don't eat the right kinds of fats, depression is the logical conclusion.) Read more on omega 3 fatty acids. Any of the books on the reading list address this key issue.

Question 10

If you answered yes, read more on seasonal affective disorder. If this is the problem underlying your depression, you can fix or improve the situation with more sunlight or special light bulbs. Read T.S. Wiley's [Lights Out: Sleep, Sugar, and Survival](#).

Question 11

Here is another brain/body issue that combines genetics and environment. The dry weight of your brain is about 25% omega 3 fat. Many people including especially those whose ancestors came from areas where the diet was rich in cold water fishes may not be able to absorb omega 3 essential fatty acids from vegetable sources. The solution to this source of depression must include supplementation with fish oils if you can't or don't eat a lot of cold water fish. This is a common, easy to resolve physical underpinning of depression and is an addiction risk factor as well.

Question 12

Neurotransmitters – the brain chemicals of mood - are made from amino acids. The only dietary source is protein. If you do not eat enough protein, your brain does not have the building blocks for good mood chemistry. Any of the books on the reading list address the critical issue of protein nutrition and restriction of junk food carbohydrates. See endocrinologist Diana Schwarzbein's [The Schwarzbein Principle](#). At Suppers, you'll learn to enjoy and prepare foods that promote good mood chemistry, even though they may seem

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boring at first. Most of our recipes call for 4 or 5 ounces of protein per meal from various sources.

Question 13

If you are a woman, depression is complicated by hormone issues, many of which can be addressed with better diet, supplementation, and exercise. If symptoms are or were tied to the cycle, a consultation with a medical nutrition professional may be needed.

Question 14

We are all exposed to a greater or lesser degree. The question is does toxicity enter into your depression equation. Many of the environmental and dietary pollutants are neurotoxins (poisonous to the brain) and endocrine disrupters (adversely affect hormone production), both of which can have depression as an effect. This is a complicated problem requiring medical attention.

Questions 15 and 16

Depression is a common response to certain food sensitivities. One easy way to rule out food sensitivity is to compare morning and evening weight. Accounting for evacuation, if your evening weight is less than 2 lbs more than your morning weight, food sensitivity is less likely to be an issue. But if your evening weight is over 2 pounds greater than morning weight, it is possibly an indication that you are having a toxic or allergic reaction to something you are ingesting. True weight does not go up that much in a day. This is an indication you may be hanging on to water, in which case doing a food/mood chart (see below) may give you useful information about yourself. At Suppers meetings, you can get help with this process.

Question 17

Medication issues require speaking to the prescribing physician. In a general sense, however, it is important to understand that depression is often a cumulative effect of many causes. Reducing the load in some areas may place your depression further from the center of your radar screen. That is to say, partial relief may be possible by addressing whichever diet and lifestyle factors are active in your particular case.

Question 18

Skipping breakfast can be a ticket to panic attacks, bingeing, low mood, and suboptimal brain function all day.

Question 19

Sex drive appropriate for your age and circumstances is sometimes a good indication of what is going on with your mood chemistry. The above principles apply: to the extent that protein malnutrition, overconsumption of refined carbohydrates, an exhausted endocrine system, lack of sunlight and exercise, etc. are the causes of your depression, it is to that extent that making the corresponding lifestyle changes can bring relief.

Question 20

Here is another dead giveaway that your body is somehow involved. In some cases of depression, the point of origin of poor mood chemistry is the gut, not the brain. Think of the brain as "downstream" from the gut. This is another complicated issue that may require help from a medical nutrition professional. It may be useful to know that the most likely culprits are milled cereal grains (pasta, baked goods) sugar, and dairy foods. The more hooked on these foods you feel, the more likely they are to be a problem. Read Dr. Schachter's book. The Suppers food/mood journaling process may narrow this down for you.

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Question 21

Yet another dead giveaway. If you feel so frazzled that you have developed sensory sensitivity, it is likely to be an indication of endocrine (hormonal system) exhaustion. Even if the source of stress is purely a counseling or life stress issue, it will be difficult to restore energy without including the body in the restoration process. A comprehensive approach will require stress management, the support of the important people in your life, and improved nutrition. It may also require supplementation and assistance from a medical nutrition professional.

Question 22

If the thought of eating healthy, whole foods sounds depressing, boring, or disappointing, it is likely that your body is struggling with drug-like foods, probably refined carbohydrates. Depression and anxiety are logical consequences.

Reading List

Joan Mathews Larson: [Seven Weeks to Sobriety](#)

Julia Ross: [The Mood Cure](#)

Michael Schachter: [What Your Doctor May Not Tell You About Depression](#)

Diana Schwarzbein: [The Schwarzbein Principle](#)

T. S. Wiley: [Lights Out: Sleep, Sugar, and Survival](#)