

Gail's Story – You Are Not What You Eat

In my many years of searching for answers to my depression, panic attacks, and abdominal pain, no one ever suggested that my mood problems and belly aches were all the same problem. And certainly nobody told me that what was going on in my head was “downstream” from my gut, which is just a fancy way of saying it caused it.

I went to lots of conferences, seminars, programs, and support groups in addition to doctors and therapists. Some of them were holistic, and that's where I started to get it that nutrition was not generally examined when you present with panic attacks. It's just like Suppers says, they forgot my body. They were perfectly willing to give me pills to fix my moods and abdominal pain, but they didn't pay attention to where my mental health issues came from to begin with. Years of eating sweets and treating infections with antibiotics had ruined my digestion.

One day at a seminar, a doctor said, “You are not what you eat.” Ears perked up. “You are only what you absorb of what you eat.” And he went on to talk about all these things in our environment that destroy our digestion: sugar, processed foods, stress, heavy metal pollutants, antibiotics, failure to breast feed, lack of exercise, too much alcohol, and on and on.

This made sense to me because I ate pretty well, but I was really stressed, I'd had lots of antibiotics, and I self-medicated for anxiety with alcohol. Ultimately, good food was not enough. I had to get professional help from a doctor and nutritionist who gave me probiotics, capsules of herbs to clean out my liver, and supplements to heal my gut. Eventually the bloating subsided, not 100% but mostly. I put on a few pounds, which I needed to do. I took some anti-fungal medication recommended by my doctor and worked on the stress part (not my strong suit) by swimming and learning to breathe better. It took a really long time, but as the abdominal pain and pressure subsided my mood got better.

What I would like to contribute to Suppers is this: “Don't ever leave your body out of the equation.” Even some very bad mental health challenges start with your belly ache because the brain is downstream from the gut.