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FIVE WAYS YOU CAN USE  
NUTRITION TO IMPROVE YOUR  
MENTAL HEALTH



**Dr. David Wiss PhD, MS, RDN**

*Nutritional Psychology | Lifestyle Medicine | Disordered Eating Recovery*

*If you're just starting out on a new nutritional journey, or have been through several of them,* it's likely that you have a ton of confusing and conflicting information to process -- don't stress. One of the best ways to understand and reach optimal nutrition and brain health is explained in this free resource. These small changes can make a big impact and it is not only for the purpose of general wellness but also to help alleviate depression, anxiety, and other food or mood-related issues.

*How is this possible?* After working in the field of mental and behavioral health for over a decade, I developed a gentle framework for **eating that is designed to improve gut and brain health without taxing your mental health.** It is a transformative educational journey of empowerment designed to **increase your confidence and competence as an eater.**

*The good news?* It is designed to be portable across all scenarios – **at home, at a restaurant, or even at a convenience store** – easily sustained over time, unlike many “diets” that seem to eventually reach an endpoint.

Diets tend to offer rules that are pass/fail whereas **Wise Mind Nutrition offers guiding principles** that can be adapted to personal preference and can be easily implemented in even the most unpredictable circumstances.

Have you ever wondered why so many nutrition frameworks are centered on mathematical approaches that require mind-taxing computation processes and can sometimes lead eaters astray?

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*Maybe you tried a few “calorie counting” or “tracking macros” diets?* Then you likely know the challenges associated with the whole notion of focusing on the quantitative components of food (how much you eat) that often overlooks the important qualitative components (how well/nutritious you eat).

*Math-centric approaches are known risk factors for disordered eating and they can create unnecessary stress for individuals looking to develop a better relationship with food.*

The **Wise Mind Nutrition approach** will not only teach you best practices for eating food for mood and brain health, but it will also encourage you to think about food and your body in an entirely new way.

If you experience any symptoms of depression, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), addictions (including food), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or any form of disordered eating -- **Wise Mind Nutrition** may be that missing puzzle piece to better overall mood and gut health.



### *Did you know?*

Optimal health happens at the intersection of the gut, brain, and mind. The gut has been termed the “**second brain**” because it communicates with the brain bidirectionally and is a potent source of wisdom and intelligence that we are only beginning to understand. The term “**trust your gut**” has been around for a long time, but we are finally understanding that the **gut actually does create signals** that can be accessed by your body and integrated into your mind. It’s exciting times! So much more information is available to better understand how nutrition is connected to our **mental, emotional, and spiritual** health.

# How does this help you?

**Wise Mind Nutrition** aims to improve the following outcomes:

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Anxiety symptoms
- Depressive symptoms
- Substance use disorder
- Eating disorders & disordered eating
- Food addiction
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Resilience
- Perceived social support
- Sleep quality issues
- Mood issues
- Challenges with executing cognitive processes (brain fog)
- Yes, it even helps achieve other goals as well.



If the different body systems are not communicating well with each other --- not feeling hunger or moving through emotional extremes --- **nutrition** can help bring your body back into homeostasis (balance) and toward mind-body integration.

*The catch is that it doesn't happen overnight.*

The impact of nutrition can be slow, therefore requires consistency and patience.

**But the results are life-changing and can last a lifetime!**



*"You are perfect as you are  
and there is always room for  
improvement"*

– Shunryu Suzuki

What you'll find inside.

## FIVE WAYS YOU CAN USE NUTRITION TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

*Start your journey to improving your nutrition and mental health... for good.*

- STEP 1: Meal Timing Strategies
- STEP 2: Spa Water to Increase Water Intake
- STEP 3: Making your Own Salad Dressings
- STEP 4: Visual Portion Guide
- STEP 5: Hunger and Fullness Scale



## Get started, today!

Although creating an individualized plan for optimal health takes some time to get to know you first, I am sharing **5 ways** you can use nutrition to start improving your gut and brain health without taxing your mental health.

### STEP ONE

***Meal Time Strategies:*** When your body is evenly fueled throughout the day, it doesn't need to send the signal for help. You know that sensation you feel when your stomach feels rumbling or empty or your mood quickly changes? That can be prevented! Start with picking a "when to eat" strategy by distributing your meals and snacks evenly throughout the day. By avoiding the extremes of hunger and fullness, your body will begin to get the message that it is safe and can begin to heal. It doesn't need to be perfect or exact, it just needs to be more consistent.

### STEP TWO

***Spa Water To Increase Water Intake:***

It is imperative to drink an adequate amount of water each day, which is generally somewhere between 2-4 Liters. Decreasing consumption of other beverages may be helpful in reaching this goal. If plain water does not always appeal to you, spruce up your water by creating delicious and refreshing spa waters.

### STEP THREE

***Making Your Own Salad Dressing:*** Experiment with making some of your salad dressings for use on vegetables or any savory dish. Getting comfortable in the kitchen and making salad dressings is an excellent place to start, especially if you are not yet confident and comfortable with cooking. This is also a way to make plain foods delicious and nutritious.



## Get started, today!

Although creating an individualized plan for optimal health takes some time to get to know you first, I am sharing **5 ways** you can use nutrition to start improving your gut and brain health without taxing your mental health.

### STEP FOUR

**Visual Portion Guide:** Use the food group system to create balanced meals and snacks that contain multiple food groups and estimate the amount of space they take up on your plate, rather than counting calories or grams. Once again, it doesn't need to be perfect or exact, it just needs to start being more consistent.

### STEP FIVE

**Hunger And Fullness Scale:** Check in with your hunger and fullness before and after every meal and strengthen the communication network between your gut and brain. After practicing this for a while, you will find that you can trust your body's cues of hunger and fullness and won't need someone else to tell you how much food you should eat.

Welcome to your *nutrition for mental health* journey.

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# Meal Time Strategies

## STEP ONE

Start with picking a **when-to-eat** strategy by distributing your meals and snacks evenly throughout the day. By avoiding the extremes of hunger and fullness, your body will begin to get the message that it is safe and can begin to heal.

Then pick how many times you intend to eat each day.

Finally, pick an ideal time frame (window) for consuming those meals and snacks.

*Please note that times are not intended to be exact but rather used as a rough guide.*

### NUMBER OF TIMES TO EAT

#### 10-HR WINDOW

#### 12-HR WINDOW

#### 14-HR WINDOW

#### 16-HR WINDOW

3 Times

7 am, 12 pm, 5pm

8 am, 2 pm, 8 pm

NOT OPTIMAL

NOT OPTIMAL

4 Times

8 am, 11 am,  
2 pm, 6 pm

9 am, 12 pm,  
4 pm, 9 pm

7 am, 12 pm,  
5pm, 9 pm

NOT OPTIMAL

5 Times

NOT OPTIMAL

7 am, 10 am, 1 pm,  
4 pm, 7 pm

9 am, 12 pm, 4 pm,  
8 pm, 11 pm

6 am, 10 am, 2 pm,  
7pm, 10 pm

6 Times

NOT OPTIMAL

NOT OPTIMAL

8 am, 10 am, 12 pm,  
4 pm, 7 pm, 11 pm

7 am, 10 am, 1 pm,  
4pm, 8 pm, 11 pm

Gold Indicates  
Meals / Day

Red Indicates  
Time Frame

Purple Indicates  
Wise Mind Nutrition  
Top Picks



# Spa Water To Increase Water Intake

## STEP TWO

It is imperative to drink an adequate amount of water each day, which is generally somewhere between 2-4 Liters. Decreasing consumption of other beverages may be helpful in reaching this goal. If plain water does not always appeal to you, spruce up your water by creating delicious spa waters.

*Please note that spa waters should be consumed within 48 hours, as the fruit may begin to ferment.*

## FRESH WATER RECIPES

### Cherry lime

- 1 cup cherries
- 1 lime, sliced
- 4 sprigs mint
- 1 half gallon water

### Cinnamon apple

- 2 red apples, sliced
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 half gallon water

### Pineapple Orange

- 1 orange sliced
- 1 cup pineapple
- 1 half-gallon water

### Honeydew lime

- 3 slices honeydew
- 1 lime, sliced
- 4 sprigs mint
- 1 gallon water

### Cucumber lemon cilantro

- 1/2 lemon, sliced
- 6 sprigs cilantro
- 1/2 cucumber sliced
- 1 half gallon water

### Strawberry cucumber

- 1 cup strawberries
- 8 cucumber slices
- 1 half gallon water

### Rosemary berry

- 1 cup blueberries sliced
- 3 sprigs rosemary
- 1 half gallon water

### Peach mint

- 1 peach, sliced
- 2 sprigs mint
- 1 half gallon water
- 3 sprigs lavender

### Mixed berry

- 1 cup blackberries
- 1 cup raspberries
- 3 sprigs rosemary
- 1 half gallon water

### Strawberry basil

- 2 cup strawberries, sliced
- 1 cup basil
- 1 gallon water

### Lemon Lavender

- 3 lemons, thickly sliced
- 1/4 cup lavender
- 1 half-gallon water

### Melon Berry Coconut

- 4 cups coconut water
- 4 cups water
- 1 cup melon
- 1 cup strawberries
- 1/2 cup of blueberries

# Make Your Own Salad Dressing

## STEP THREE

Experiment with making some of your own salad dressings for use on vegetables or any savory dish. A big part of our program involves getting comfortable in the kitchen, and we have found that making salad dressings is an excellent place to start.

Eating the right kind of fats is a critical component of nutrition for mental health, and these oils are some of our top picks!

## FRESH DRESSING RECIPES

### Dressing #1

- 3 tablespoons white vinegar
- 6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 -1/2 tablespoons coarse grain mustard
- 2/3 clove garlic, very finely chopped
- Freshly ground pepper to taste

### Dressing #2

- 1/3 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro

### Dressing #3

- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 4 small cloves of garlic minced
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste

### Dressing #4

- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons minced onion
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar
- 1/3 cup walnut oil

### Dressing #5

- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 3 tablespoon avocado oil
- 1/2 teaspoon grated ginger
- Pinch of chili powder
- Pepper to taste

### Dressing #6

- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 3 tablespoon choice of vinegar
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- Pepper to taste

### Dressing #7

- 1/3 cup avocado oil
- 1 oz lime juice and zest
- 1/4 cup minced cilantro

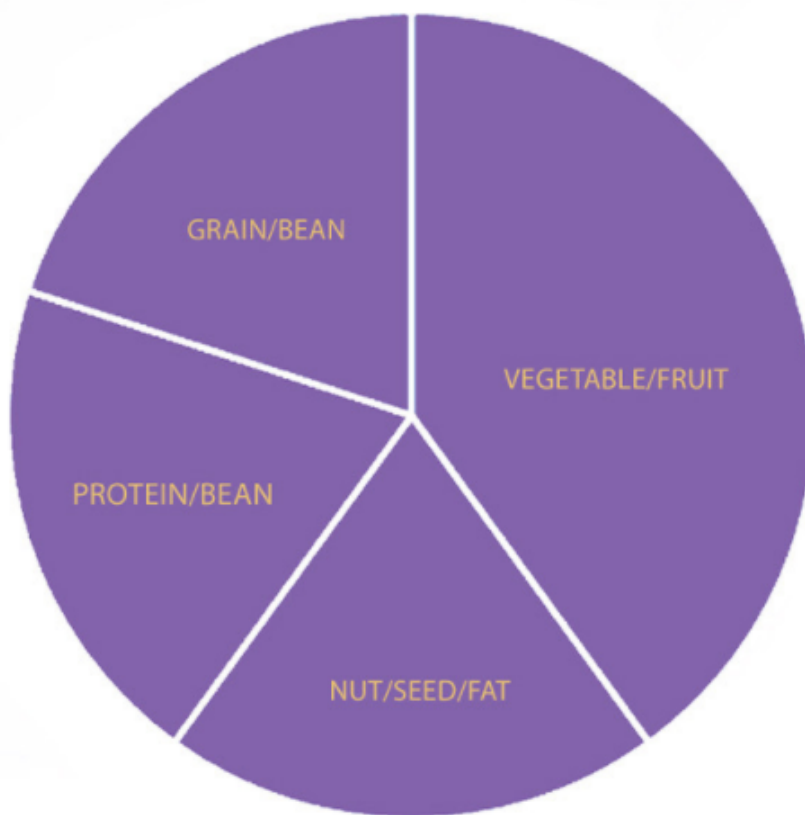
# Visual Portion Guide

## STEP FOUR

**Wise Mind Nutrition** food group system has six categories:

1. **Fruit (F)** which could be fresh, frozen, or dried
2. **Vegetables (V)** could be fresh, frozen, or fermented
3. **Grains (G)** which should be whole in-tact grains when possible (potato counts as a grain even though it is technically a vegetable)
4. **Dairy** or dairy alternative (**D**) which is not represented on the visual portion guide below but can easily complement any meal or snack
5. **Protein** or protein alternative (**P**) which includes animal proteins, plant-based meat alternatives, and protein powders
6. **Beans, nuts, and seeds (bns)** represent sources of plant protein, and nuts and seeds represent excellent sources of fat.

Use the **food group system** to create balanced meals and snacks that contain multiple food groups and estimate the amount of space they take up on your plate, rather than counting calories or grams.



**Tip:** Fat is a macronutrient and not a food group, but is present in dairy, most protein products, nuts/seeds, and in three foods that do not easily classify in the food group system: **avocado, coconuts, and olives**. Since we are not tracking fat, these three foods can count as a "wildcard" which means they can count toward any food group that you like! We encourage these!

# Hunger Fullness Scale

## STEP FIVE

**Check in with your hunger and fullness** before and after every meal and strengthen the communication network between your gut and brain. After practicing this for a while, you will find that you can trust your body's cues of hunger and fullness and won't need someone else to tell you how much food you should eat.

**Avoid the red zone and aim for the green!** This is the first step in mindful and soulful eating. Tracking your hunger and fullness before & after meals can be done in the Wise Mind Nutrition App, which we encourage you to download if you haven't already done so. Until then, a journal or calendar works too!

**0** - Fasting numbness. Beyond hunger food is no longer craved.

**1** - Starving or ravenous for food.

**2** - Irritable, angry, weak, dizzy, headache, etc.

**3** - Stomach feels empty and occasionally growls; need to eat soon.

**4** - Neutral zone - not hungry or full, food still looks/tastes good.

**5** - Satisfied feeling - still a bit more room to eat.

**6** - Comfortable fullness - truly satisfied; food is no longer appealing/tasty.

**7** - Uncomfortably full; does not feel physically pleasant.

**8** - Bloated, distended stomach; physically uncomfortable.

**9** - Feeling sick with stomach and back pain.

**10** - Binge-like fullness; possible vomiting.

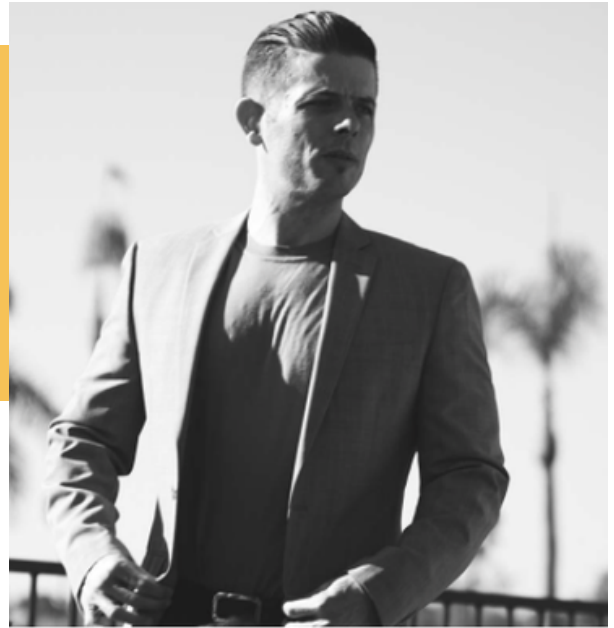
**Tip:** Many people find this process difficult at first but then feel more attuned to their body's cues. The goal is to practice being present and start listening to your body. You might also start to recognize patterns linked to the food groups present in the meal or snack. Get curious!

# Ready to take action?

Dr. David Wiss - PhD, MS, RDN

*My mission is to help you through your quest for optimal wellness by improving your relationship with food and body.*

*Thought leader and advocate for change and improvement in the emerging fields of nutritional psychology and nutritional psychiatry.*



As a registered dietitian nutritionist and doctor of philosophy in public health with extensive training in health psychology, I have spent over 10,000 hours conducting one-on-one nutrition counseling to clients and families both in-person and virtually.

My focus is on nutrition as a potent biological intervention to the gut and brain using a functional medicine approach. I have an in-depth understanding of cognitive processes related to eating behavior, which incorporates the importance of body image and the emotional aspects of eating.

I always consider how social context differs from person-to-person and strongly encourage people to become the expert on them. Based on my extensive professional and academic experience, I strongly support the healing power of food, as well as the importance of how we think (and talk) about food (and bodies).

*I invite you to embark upon your nutrition for mental health journey with me!*



*David Wiss*  
PhD, MS, RDN



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by downloading the app **TODAY**