

Integrative Approaches to Mood Stabilization

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If you have a bipolar spectrum illness, it's important to be in treatment with a psychiatrist and taking medication exactly as prescribed. This handout is intended to provide diet and lifestyle modifications you can combine with your psychiatric treatment plan to support mood stabilization.

There Are 3 Key Integrative Approaches to Mood Stabilization:

- 1. Support Healthy Circadian Rhythms** – e.g., sleep 8 hours every night
- 2. Consume Mood Stabilizing Foods and Supplements** – e.g., MCT oil and magnesium
- 3. Avoid the Foods and Substances that Destabilize the Brain** – e.g., alcohol, sugar and gluten

1. Support Healthy Circadian Rhythms

Sleep

- The single most important lifestyle factor for mood stabilization is sleep.
- Aim to get **8 hours** of sleep nightly on a fairly consistent schedule.
- To figure out your bedtime, count back 8.5 hours from when your alarm goes off. For example, if your alarm goes off at 7:30am, get in bed at 11pm and read a paper book until you fall asleep.
- Reduce overall caffeine consumption and stop all caffeine by 12pm.
- Light exposure is critically important to circadian rhythm regulation:
 - o Get bright light in the morning:
 - Open your shades, get outside, avoid wearing sunglasses during your commute
 - o Be especially strategic about light at night:
 - Dim the lights after sunset
 - Download *f.lux* on your computer
 - Consider using a candle in the bathroom & bedroom at night instead of turning on the light (try GoodLight non-toxic candles on Amazon)
 - Consider wearing orange-tinted glasses at night to block melatonin-suppressing blue light (I recommend *Uvex* brand on Amazon)

Social Rhythms Therapy

- Interpersonal and Social Rhythm Therapy (IPSRT) is a type of behavioral therapy that addresses the disruption in circadian rhythms related to bipolar episodes.
- Aim to keep your sleep, meals, work, exercise and recreation on a consistent schedule.

2. Consume Mood Stabilizing Foods and Supplements

Neuroprotective Fats

- Consume liberal amounts of neuroprotective fats.
- *Neuroprotective* means it's good for the cells in your brain.
- Neuroprotective fats include:
 - o MCT Oil (www.upgradedself.com)
 - o Brain Octane Oil (www.upgradedself.com)
 - o Unrefined Coconut Oil (Dr. Bronner's, Artisana, Now Foods)
 - o Butter and ghee (clarified butter) from pastured/grass-fed cows
- While increasing consumption of neuroprotective fats, you should also avoid artificial fats:
 - o Artificial trans fats
 - o Industrially processed vegetable oils (corn oil, canola oil, soybean oil, etc.)

- You can read about the potential therapeutic uses of a ketogenic diet for bipolar illness. Only initiate a ketogenic diet under close medical supervision.
 - o Read: *Keto Clarity: Your Definitive Guide to the Benefits of a Low-Carb, High-Fat Diet* by Jimmy Moore

Maintain Stable Blood Sugar

- There are several commonalities between bipolar and seizure disorders (e.g., the same medications treat both conditions). Our understanding of seizure disorders can inform our approach to mood stabilization.
- Low blood sugar lowers the seizure threshold.
- Avoid letting your blood sugar dip or fluctuate wildly to raise the “bipolar threshold.”
- The best ways to maintain stable blood sugar are to eat regularly, eat more natural fats and protein, and avoid sugar and refined carbohydrates.
- Take a spoonful of coconut or MCT oil upon waking, before bed, and during the day.
- Try starting your day with “Bulletproof Coffee” (coffee/tea blended with butter and coconut oil):
 - o www.bulletproofexec.com
- When you’re away from home (work, travel), always carry nuts, grass-fed jerky (Epic), wild salmon jerky (Vital Choice) or packets of nut butters (Artisana) for snacks on the go.

Nutrition

- You can’t overestimate the relationship between food and mood stability. It is primary.
- Eat real food and avoid processed food.
- Avoid gluten, dairy, sugar and industrial vegetable oils.
- Eat pastured meats, eggs and poultry, wild fish, organ meats, veggies, starchy tubers (sweet potatoes, white potatoes, taro, yucca, plantain), fermented foods, bone broth, nuts, seeds, sprouted rice and legumes, the less sweet fruits (e.g., berries), and consume more natural fats (butter, ghee, coconut oil, olive oil).
 - o Seafood: www.vitalchoice.com
 - o Pastured meats: www.grasslandbeef.com
 - o Fermented foods: www.wisechoicemarket.com & www.hawthornevalleyfarm.org
 - o Sprouted rice: TruRoots Organic Germinated Rice & Lentils
 - o I recommend *Your Personal Paleo Code* by Chris Kresser as a helpful guide

Supplementation

- Supplements can be helpful, but they’re never a replacement for diet and lifestyle modifications.
- I recommend the following supplements *in addition* to everything else in this handout.

Morning

- **Fish oil** - *Green Pastures Blue Ice Royal Butter Oil Fermented Cod Liver Oil Cinnamon Tingle Flavor*
 - o I recommend the gel, but if you think you won’t tolerate it, take capsules instead
- **Multivitamin** – *Pure Encapsulations Nutrient 950 with Vitamin K*
- **Turmeric** – *Source Naturals, Pure Encapsulations or New Chapter*
- **Probiotic** – *Prescript Assist*
- **Coconut Oil, MCT Oil or Brain Octane Oil** – *Bulletproof, Artisana or Dr. Bronners*

At Bedtime

- **Magnesium** – *Pure Encapsulations Magnesium Glycinate* ~400mg at bedtime
 - o Note: magnesium is particularly important for the seizure threshold and therefore the “bipolar threshold”
 - o You can also try Epsom salt baths (bonus points for bathing by candlelight) and topical magnesium (MagneGel by Designs for Health)
- **Coconut Oil** – take a spoonful before bed

Supplements to avoid if you experience mood instability:

- o 5-HTP, Tryptophan, Rhodiola, Saint John’s Wort, SAME

3. Avoid Destabilizing Foods and Substances

Avoid Neuro-Irritants

- Substances that may irritate your brain include:
 - o Alcohol, gluten, MSG, food coloring, preservatives, artificial sweeteners, processed food, sugar, and benzodiazepines (*Klonopin, Xanax, Ativan*; only make changes to these medications under close medical supervision; never stop these medications suddenly).
- A note about gluten: there's a relationship between gluten and thyroid dysfunction, and there's a relationship between thyroid dysfunction and mood instability. I strongly recommend a 2-month trial off gluten to observe any relationship between gluten and your mood.

Alcohol

- There is a strong relationship between alcohol and mood instability.
- If you can significantly reduce or eliminate your alcohol consumption, you will very likely experience improved mood stability.

Inflammation & Gut Dysfunction

- Some studies identify a relationship between bipolar disorder and systemic inflammation.
- Do everything you can to reduce inflammation in your body:
 - o Take a turmeric supplement (*Source Naturals* brand)
 - o Consume more ginger, olive oil, fermented foods and wild fatty fish
 - o Avoid inflammatory foods (processed food, gluten, dairy, sugar, industrial vegetable oils)
 - o Decrease exposure to environmental toxins (use eco cleaning and personal care products; avoid plastics and other chemical exposures)
 - o Heal your gut – gut dysfunction is at the foundation of inflammation in the body
- To heal your gut:
 - o **Eliminate what irritates the gut**
 - Avoid antacids, antibiotics and the inflammatory foods
 - Cook your veggies to make the insoluble fiber easier to digest
 - If you suspect you have a gut infection, get evaluated and treated
 - o **Add in what heals the gut**
 - Fermented foods, bone broth, starchy tubers and probiotics
 - o **Give your gut a chance to heal**
 - Sleep, manage stress and get a squatty potty (www.squattypotty.com)

Miscellaneous

Yoga & Meditation

- Yoga and meditation help us develop skills to self-regulate emotions and maintain equanimity when stressors arise. This can prevent a stressful experience from precipitating a full-blown mood episode.

Exercise

- Exercise improves mood and is an effective adjunct treatment for bipolar disorder.
- There are several ways to make exercise quick and convenient:
 - o Take a 20-minute walk after dinner
 - o Walk to work
 - o Take the stairs
 - o Do a 10-minute yoga video on www.yogaglo.com or www.yogavibes.com
 - o Try the 7-minute workout on YouTube
 - o Get a standing desk or treadmill desk