



# Nourish to Flourish: Nutrition and Mental Health Guide



What you eat can influence your mood, focus and stress levels. While nutrition isn't a replacement for mental health treatment, balanced meals and steady eating habits can support emotional wellness and mental clarity. Try the following ideas to strengthen the connection between food and how you feel.

## Build a Brain-Supporting Plate

Balanced meals help steady energy and mood. Aim to include:

- Protein (eggs, yogurt, beans, chicken, tofu) to support focus and mood
- Complex carbs (oats, brown rice, whole grains, fruit) for steady energy
- Healthy fats (avocado, olive oil, nuts, salmon) for brain function
- Colorful produce (leafy greens, berries, peppers) to support overall wellness

## Steady Eating = Steadier Mood

Skipping meals can lead to irritability, fatigue and cravings. Try:

- Eat every 3–5 hours to avoid energy crashes
- Include protein + fiber to stay full longer
- Keep easy snacks available for busy days
- Eat something within 1–2 hours of waking when possible

## Mood-Supporting Snacks

Simple snacks can help prevent "hanger" and brain fog:

- Apple + peanut butter
- Cheese + whole grain crackers
- Greek yogurt + berries
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Nuts + dried fruit (trail mix)
- Banana + handful of nuts

## Hydration & Mental Clarity

Even mild dehydration can affect energy and concentration. Try:

- Keep a water bottle nearby during the day
- Drink water with meals and snacks
- Add lemon or fruit if plain water feels boring
- Balance caffeine with extra water

## Caffeine & Sugar: Use with Awareness

These can impact anxiety, energy and sleep. Consider:

- Keep caffeine earlier in the day when possible
- Notice if caffeine increases anxious feelings
- Pair sweets with protein (like chocolate + nuts) to reduce crashes
- Reduce sugar gradually—restriction can increase cravings

## Support Emotional Eating with Compassion

Emotional eating is common, especially during stress. Try:

- Ask, “What do I need right now—comfort, rest, or support?”
- Add non-food coping tools (walk, music, journaling, calling a friend)
- Avoid shame—progress comes from awareness, not guilt
- Focus on balance over perfection

