

LIFE MEDICINE

A NORTHWEST LIFE MEDICINE CLINIC
MINI PUBLICATION ON HEALTH,
WELLNESS, & THE ENVIRONMENT



ISSUE NO. 004

WINTER 2020

ANXIETY EDITION

WELCOME

Delighted you're here.

My name is Dr. Jenna Jorgensen, I am a naturopathic doctor, founder of Northwest Life Medicine Clinic, and creator of this publication: Life Medicine.

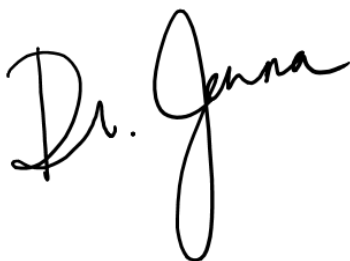
I founded Northwest Life Medicine with the belief that everyone can heal. The body quite literally has one job, and that is to heal. Our job is to remove the obstacles that prevent efficient healing while providing the building blocks for that healing to occur.

This is no small task, which is why I have spent the past few years growing a collective of compassionate, brilliant team members all with the goal of helping folks heal at a foundational level - mind, body, and spirit. Together, we aim to transform your experience of healthcare through compassion, education, and an exception combination of healing therapeutics [Naturopathic Medicine, Nutrition, Neurofeedback, and Biofeedback] to heal your mind, body, and spirit.

The word doctor comes from the Latin word docere which means "to teach." We take this to heart and find that the more we can educate folks about their health, how their body works, and why they are doing the treatments we recommend, the easier it is for them to stick to the treatment plan and to be motivated to take control of their health. The world of wellness, natural health, and environmental medicine is gigantic, with a plethora of information that can be difficult to navigate. I wanted to create a space to bring together little tidbits of information that could be consumed, when ready, at an easy to digest pace, hence the birth of this publication. I invite you to take your time investigating the areas that speak to you and to share what you find valuable. Together, we can foster health for ourselves, our community, and for the planet.

Life is medicine, live life well.

Cheers,



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Nourishing Your Spirit
Feed Your Brain
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Simply Breathe

STAFF FUN FACTS

Get to Know Our Clinic Family

This edition's theme is:

Favorite ways to de-stress!



Dr. Jenna

"I really enjoy the demolition parts of our DIY home remodel projects! Give me a good respirator, ear and eye protection, and a sledge hammer and stress just melts away."



Angie

"Music is a great way for me to unwind and de-clutter my mind."



Dr. Garrison

"Outside adventures! Or if that's not possible then hanging out with my sassy little goober of a bunny, Biscuit"



Ruth

"Up at the top of High Pass Trail is an underground stream where moss and wildflowers offer the best de-stressing atmosphere!"



Shaya

"Getting outside for quality nature time, especially near water!"



Indie

"I prefer contemplating the meaning of the universe on top of a mountain. Until the chipmunks stress me out, they are just asking to be chased and my mom doesn't always let me chase them."

THE FLOOR PLAN

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Updates and announcements from Northwest Life Medicine Clinic along with great community health events and deals at local Bellingham businesses that support health and a healthy planet.

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Get the dirt on a new environmental toxin each month: How do you get exposed to it, what effect it can have on your body, and how to get rid of it. Also, learn the details of a specific detox method.

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Life is medicine and all it takes to start living your life as good medicine is small, simple steps taken every day. This section gives you tools and tips for those simple steps to refresh your lifestyle for improved health.

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There are so many amazing minds and resources in the world of health today. Look here for free online summits, webinars, articles, and other resources that we find valuable for your continuing education.

Quarterly Discounts

Mention our E-magazine to take advantage of these deals! Discounts expire April 15, 2020

Supplement Special

Here at Northwest Life Medicine Clinic, we work with many patients to help them ease anxiety and improve mood. Although supplements are just a small component of an overall treatment strategy for anxiety, they can play an important role in alleviating symptoms so patients can focus on deeper healing work (like diet and lifestyle changes). This quarter we are offering **10% off** (for established patients) some of our favorite supplements for supporting mood:

- **OptiMag Neuro:** contains magnesium L-threonate which is a form of magnesium able to cross the blood brain barrier, helping to improve cognition, memory, sleep quality, and stress management.
- **Zen Adapt:** GABA and L-theanine help to calm over anxious states while Ashwaganda helps the body to manage stress.
- **Lavela:** a potent lavender oil to help promote feelings of calm and relaxation. Also helpful for improving sleep quality.

Service Special

10% off biofeedback packages!

Come learn how your body specifically responds to stress, train your brain to help control those responses, and learn skills to help mitigate unwanted stress reactions.

50% off craniosacral therapy with Dr. Garrison!

Come relax and engage your parasympathetic nervous system with subtle cranial movements.

CLINIC + COMMUNITY CORNER

Local Volunteer Opportunities

One way to nourish your community as well as yourself is volunteering locally. Below are some great opportunities to help you engage with both the natural and human world around you.

CHORE Program

The volunteer Chore Program pairs volunteers with elders and adults with functional disabilities to help perform needed household tasks so that they can "remain independent in their own homes." Tasks include yardwork, grocery shopping, household cleaning, and other daily chores. Visit whatcomvolunteer.org for more information.

Washington Trails Association Work Parties

Help maintain existing trails or build new ones with the friendly folks at the Washington Trail Association (WTA). The WTA regularly hosts work parties in which volunteers get put to work building walkways, planting native plants, breaking new trail, etc in many of the beautiful parks in Whatcom County and beyond. No experience necessary, just the motivation to help! Visit www.wta.org/volunteer/schedule for more info.

Maple Alley Inn

Help provide a healthy nutritious meal to those experiencing hunger in Whatcom County. They grow much of the food they prepare in their own community garden. So if you have a green thumb or talents in the kitchen, visit whatcomvolunteer.org for more info.

CSA Fair

Nothing nourishes the mind quite like fresh healthy produce grown by local farmers! Come check out Sustainable Connections' annual CSA Fair to find out how you can get fresh local food delivered weekly.

When: March 17th, 11am-3pm
Where: Bellingham Farmers Market



HOLISTIC HAVEN

Anxiety 101

Most, if not all, of us have experienced anxiety on some level throughout our lives. Anxiety can be a healthy response to stress when it motivates us to study for a test, for instance, or heightens our level of awareness when driving through a downpour. But when feelings of anxiousness are experienced on a regular basis and out of proportion to their triggering event, anxiety can cause significant detriment to our quality of life.

The word “anxiety” comes from both the Latin root *anxieta* meaning “uneasy, troubled mind about an uncertain event” and the Greek root *anxo* meaning “to squeeze, strangle, or press tight”. People who suffer from anxiety have intense feelings of apprehension, dread, worry, and tension in response to perceived stress that interferes with their lives and can affect relationships, sleep, health, work performance, and overall wellbeing.

It is estimated that over 40 million American adults (over 18% of the population), and 25% of teens between the ages of 13-18 suffer from an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders encompass a wide spectrum of disorders ranging from generalized and social anxiety disorder to specific phobias. All have feelings of extreme anxiousness, tension, and discomfort. Often other symptoms such as sweating, nausea, abdominal pain, dizziness, palpitations, and pins and needle sensations can co-occur.

The causes of anxiety are many and can differ from person to person. A mix of genetic predisposition, brain chemistry, personality, trauma, and social factors can play a role. For this reason, there is no “cure-all” solution that works for everyone. Effective treatment for someone suffering from an anxiety disorder requires customized care that is based on individual needs, lifestyle, and preferences. In this edition, we’ll cover some of our favorite treatments but will in no way be able to report on all the options that are available and appropriate for each person, as there are a multitude!

Specialty Lab Testing Highlight:

Organic Acid Tests

Organic acid testing (OAT) measures the amount of organic acids in the urine. These acids are a byproduct of metabolic processes. Think of them as leftovers from chemical reactions that help the body to either build or breakdown molecules in order to eliminate waste or produce energy.

When they are at significantly decreased or elevated concentrations, they can suggest possible issues with vitamin and hormone metabolism, bacterial and fungal overgrowth (dysbiosis), and neurotransmitter functionality. For this reason, OAT can be useful in patients with chronic illnesses, allergies, GI issues, chronic anxiety and depression and neurological conditions, to help uncover possible attributing factors.

At Northwest Life Medicine Clinic we use the organic acid test by Great Plains Laboratory. This test looks at 75 metabolites in the urine to help provide a better picture of overall metabolic, hormonal, nutritional, neurotransmitter, and microbiome health.

The Nervous System: A Brief Explanation

By: Dr. Kelley Garrison

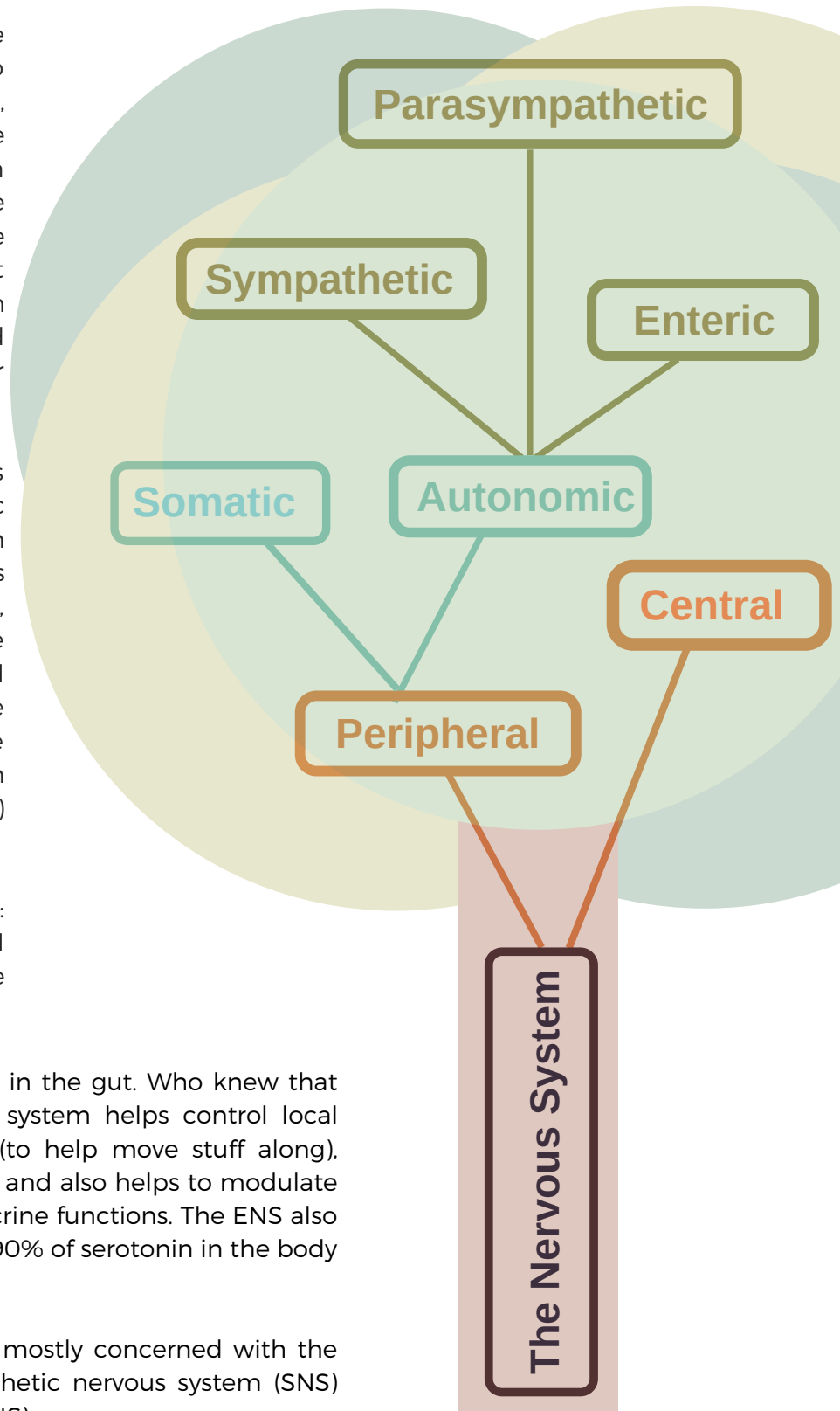
The best way to picture the layout of the nervous system is to think of a tree with two main branches, one that is long and straight, and the other that keeps branching. These branches represent the two main components of the nervous system: the central nervous system which includes the brain and spinal cord (the long straight branch) and the peripheral nervous system which includes all the nerves that extend from the brain and spinal cord into other parts of the body (the branchy branch).

The peripheral nervous system branches further into the somatic and the autonomic systems. The somatic nervous system controls voluntary actions. You are using this system when you move your legs to walk, when turn your head to peek out the window, or when you lean your body forward so that you can smell a fragrant flower. The autonomic nervous system (ANS) is the opposite, involuntarily controlling (although as you'll learn later, this is not always true) smooth muscle, cardiac muscle, and glands.

The ANS splits into three terminal branches: the enteric, sympathetic, and parasympathetic nervous systems. These are the branches that we will focus on.

The enteric nervous system (ENS) is housed in the gut. Who knew that your belly had its own brain? The enteric system helps control local blood flow, contraction of your intestines (to help move stuff along), secretion of mucus to protect the gut lining, and also helps to modulate the immune system as well as various endocrine functions. The ENS also can play a key role in mental health. In fact, 90% of serotonin in the body is made in your bowels!

When we experience anxiety, we are often mostly concerned with the other two remaining branches: the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS).



The Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

The SNS is often described as the one controlling your “fight or flight” response, mainly your primal defense response. This is the system that we rely on to get us out of danger quickly. It does this by:

- dilating the bronchi in your lungs to optimize oxygen intake increasing blood flow and thus oxygen delivery to vital organs by increasing heart rate and blood pressure, allowing your body to move fast
- releasing glucose into your blood, giving your body quick fuel, while also releasing adrenaline, boosting your energy
- dilating your pupils so that you can better see items far away. When you are running from a predator it is better to see the way out ahead of you than to focus on the tiny details up close.

In order to perform these functions the SNS has to decrease other activities in the body, most notably:

- fuel storage and insulin activity: focus is on burning through energy rather than storing it away
- digestion and salivation: when you are actively trying to get out of danger, digestion is not of prime importance and so energy and blood flow is shunted away from these systems to help deliver more blood and oxygen to your heart, lungs, brain, and muscles.

- relational ability: your brain is focused on staying alive, sacrificing your ability to relate and connect with others so that you have more energy and resources to run or fight.
- immune response: because immune system support is not necessary in immediate survival, this system is dampened.

For most of us, the SNS is the system that is overly engaged in times of heightened stress and especially anxiety. Unfortunately it responds to many of our daily stressors in the same way it would respond to a life threatening situation, so even though you might be taking a test instead of running away from a bear, your SNS is in charge and the effects become one and the same. It makes our palms sweat when we are nervous for instance or makes our hearts pound and mouths go dry when we are about to give a speech. It can also make it near impossible to have a rational conversation during an argument.

The Parasympathetic Nervous System (PNS)

The other autonomic component is the parasympathetic nervous system, known as the “rest and digest” system. Often seen as the antithesis to the SNS, this system is engaged when you are in a relaxed state. If the SNS is the accelerator ramping up your defense response, the PNS acts as the brakes. It does this by:

- decreasing your heart rate back to normal levels after a stressor
- increasing saliva, blood flow to your gut, and intestinal motility to help digest and eliminate foods
- constricting your pupils to allow you to see up close (like reading this newsletter for instance).
- Enhancing your immune system response.
- Increasing circulation to non-vital organs such as your skin and extremities.
- Releasing oxytocin to strengthen social bonds
- Modifying your tone of voice so that you are better able to relate to others socially

As you would expect, in order to perform the above functions properly, the PNS downregulates your body’s defensive responses.

For most of us, being in a parasympathetic state brings us that sense of ease and calm that helps us to relax and unwind. However too much can be problematic resulting in a “freeze” or immobilization response to stress. People who react this particular way tend to freeze up, their minds go blank, and their heart rates can plummet sometimes to the point of passing out. Therefore, an optimally functioning autonomic nervous system holds the PNS and SNS in a healthy balance, not too much and not too little of either. Unfortunately for those who experience anxiety, the balance is often tipped heavily toward the sympathetic system, keeping us in a constant state of danger surveillance.

Holistic Treatment Options

Biofeedback and Neurofeedback

So what do you do if your nervous system is out of balance? The good news is that the autonomic nervous system is not completely out of voluntary control as was once thought.

Through proper training the brain can “relearn” more helpful and efficient pathways that promote sympathetic and parasympathetic balance and allow you some control over physiological symptoms.

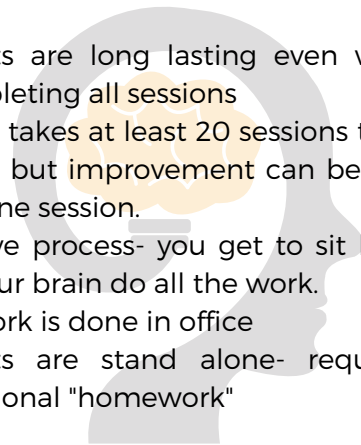
One way to retrain your brain is through a process called biofeedback. Biofeedback uses monitoring instruments to assess your neuromuscular and autonomic activity in order to gain a better understanding of your individual response to stress. Common monitoring parameters include temperature, heart rate variability, sweat conductance, and respiration rate. That feedback is then used to help create awareness of these responses so that you can recognize them as they come on, and training to allow you to gain some control over them. An example of this might be recognizing that your heart is beating faster and using breathing exercises to help prevent an oncoming panic attack.

Neurofeedback is a subset of biofeedback that monitors EEG and brain wave activity and, using special equipment trains your brain to be more resilient by strengthening appropriate brain networks.

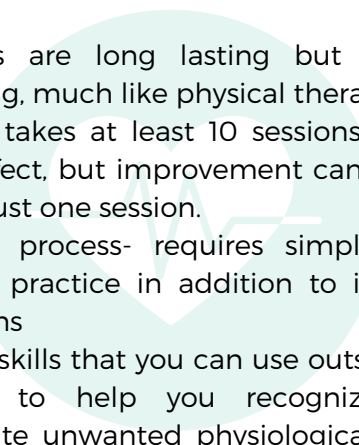
In this way biofeedback and neurofeedback can help treat many different conditions, including PTSD, anxiety/depression, ADHD, high blood pressure, migraines, and much more.

At Northwest Life Medicine we offer both neurofeedback and biofeedback to support our patients' healing. How do you choose which is right for you? See below for more details. There is no right or wrong choice. Both work on the nervous system to establish more efficient neuronal pathways. Both help to enhance the ability of the vagus nerve to promote healthy SNS/PNS balance. They can even be combined for optimal outcome. Common results seen include: increased focus and work stamina, reduced anxiety, reduced pain, improved mood, and improved sleep.

Neurofeedback

- 
- Effects are long lasting even well after completing all sessions
 - Often takes at least 20 sessions to get full effect but improvement can be felt after just one session.
 - Passive process- you get to sit back and let your brain do all the work.
 - All work is done in office
 - Effects are stand alone- requiring no additional "homework"

Biofeedback

- 
- Effects are long lasting but require training, much like physical therapy
 - Often takes at least 10 sessions to get full effect, but improvement can be felt after just one session.
 - Active process- requires simple daily home practice in addition to in-office sessions
 - Learn skills that you can use outside the office to help you recognize and mitigate unwanted physiological stress responses as they occur

Meditation and Mindfulness

By: Shaya Mercer, NTP

Meditation and mindfulness are simply tools for quieting the mind and relaxing the body. There are many ways to practice and integrate these tools, but each method essentially works by repeatedly bringing your attention back to the present moment. Some practices may include counting breaths or noticing sensations in the physical body, for instance.

When we focus more of our attention on the present moment, we begin to relax our stressful thought patterns that fixate on the past and the future. Studies show that among their many health benefits, meditation and mindfulness practices are very effective for managing and reducing stress, and thus alleviating stress-related mood disorders like anxiety and depression.

There are many styles of meditation and a growing body of meditation resources to choose from, which has helped bring meditation and mindfulness to the mainstream public. You don't have to be a monk, study with a religious guru, or join an esoteric community to learn meditation and reap the benefits.

Meditation is a mental exercise and like physical exercise, you may experience greater and more lasting benefits with consistency over time. However it doesn't have to be long or complicated. In fact, studies show that simply sitting quietly while counting your breath in and out for 20 minutes a day will rewire your brain's neurological pathways and improve your behavior patterns. Even meditating for just 10 minutes a day has been scientifically shown to result in faster response times, greater accuracy, less distraction, and an enhanced ability to sustain attention.

Still, it can feel daunting to get started. So we suggest that you begin with something short and easy, like a simple breathing exercise or a 5-minute guided meditation. If 5-minutes feels too hard, start with just one minute and work up from there.

MINDFULNESS RESOURCES

Free Apps:

- **Calm** – Apple Editor's Choice winner and Healthline's Best of 2018, "Calm is the #1 app for sleep, meditation, and relaxation." Great for beginners up to advanced users.
- **Headspace** – Another Apple Editor's Choice winner, Headspace "teaches you how to meditate, breathe, and live mindfully. It includes exercises for managing anxiety, stress relief, breathing, happiness, and focus".
- **Omvana** – Winner of Healthline's Best of 2019, Omvana "gathers the world's best meditation experts," and more than 50 free guided meditations and sleep sounds.
- **Smiling Mind** – developed by mental health professionals specifically for adolescents dealing with stress, anxiety, and depression.
- **Stop, Breathe & Think for Kids** – meditation and mindfulness made easy and fun for kids to help them "develop their superpowers of sleep, being calm, learning to breathe, or to resolve conflicts." They also have an adult version that won Healthline's Best of 2019 Award.

Web resources:

- **Mindful.org** – is a non-profit, donation-based online resource providing guided meditation and mindfulness instruction for beginners in a magazine format, including working with stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as articles that explain the science behind the benefits.
- **Mindworks.com** – is a nonprofit, subscription-based mindfulness community that offers meditation courses, guided meditations, video resources, and podcasts. Helpful for anyone who thrives with the structure of a class or connection to an online community.
- **SoundsTrue.com** – is an online publishing house that has many digital books and courses for mindfulness and mediation from various researchers, authors, and teachers.

Medicinal Music

Psychological research has recently proven that listening to music can be beneficial for your health, and a new study from the British Academy of Sound Therapy, entitled Music as Medicine, now provides the “dosage” for what type of music and how long to listen for your desired outcome. Turns out that certain styles of music in relatively small doses can have a big effect on relaxation, mood, focus, and performance. Music is very easy and affordable to access, making it a great self-care therapy.

RELAXATION

- Optimal listening time: 13 minutes, optimal
- Style of music: slow tempo, simple melody, no lyrics
- Benefits experienced: ‘decreased muscle tension, negative thoughts disappearing, feeling peaceful and contented and being able to sleep better’

RELEASING SADNESS

- Optimal listening time: 13 minutes
- Style of music: music with lyrics you can connect to
- Benefits experienced: sense of relief, less overwhelm, more stable, less triggered

UPLIFTING

- Optimal listening time: 9 minutes
- Style of music: driving rhythm, fast tempo, positive lyrics
- Benefits experienced: improved energy, feel happier, more laughter, feeling more in control, able to ‘take on anything’

FOCUS

- Optimal listening time: 13 minutes
- Style of music: slow tempo or ambient, no lyrics
- Benefits experienced: better concentration, less mental clutter, enhanced job performance, clearer decision making

EXERCISE

- Optimal listening time: length of workout
- Style of music: high-tempo pop, over 170 beats per minute
- Benefits experienced: more effort, more endurance

Simply Breathe



Thanks to our amazing nervous system, while we are alive our body breathes without any conscious effort or attention required. When we are relaxed we breathe slow and deep. When stressed we breathe quick and shallow. Chronic stress can leave us with shallow breathing habits that in turn make it hard to relax and restore deep breathing. However, we can break this viscous cycle with a little bit of attention and a little bit of effort toward breathing more consciously. Simply by noticing the quality of our breath, in and out, we can begin to guide our nervous system from stress back to calm.

There are many breathing exercises and techniques out there of varying length and complexity, but here is a simple three-breath technique that can be used anytime, anywhere to stop stress in its tracks:

1. Close your eyes, only if safe (not if you are driving or operating a power tool)
2. Feel your feet on the ground – whether you are standing or sitting
3. Find a good posture, with the crown of your head gently lifting to the sky
4. Take a slow, deep inhale breath through your nose until you are filled with breath
5. Hold your breath for a couple of seconds
6. Take a slow, deep exhale through your mouth until you are empty of breath
7. Repeat two or more times

Interested in delving deeper? The meditations page at thebreathspace.com, has a variety of guided breathing exercises to help you slow down and connect with your breath.

Spiritual Counseling

Holistic health promotes healing through the integration of therapeutic techniques that help to heal and nourish the body, mind, and spirit. Many of us are familiar with ways to support our bodies and our minds – like healthy eating, exercise, and relaxation. But how do we heal on the spiritual level and why is it important?

As we go through life, our stressful experiences - such as traumas, losses, injuries, illnesses, and negative messages – cause various forms of spiritual disempowerment that can negatively impact our lives. These impacts, great or small, build up over time and can affect every aspect of life including career, finances, relationships, physical health, emotional wellbeing, and our overall ability to experience joy and a sense of fulfillment.

Common signs of spiritual disempowerment:

- You keep repeating the same self-destructive patterns over and over
- You know you need to make a change in your life but it feels impossible
- You feel like you've tried everything and nothing seems to make a lasting difference
- You start to feel better and then plateau or something sets you back
- You don't feel like yourself, or you feel like part of you is missing
- You feel a lack of self-care, self-confidence, self-esteem, or self-expression

Recognizing the importance of spiritual health and its role in the healing process, Shaya offers spiritual counseling at the clinic in addition to nutritional counseling. She truly believes in the importance of not only nourishing your body and mind, but also your spirit.

During spiritual counseling sessions, Shaya will lead you through a guided meditation to promote the relaxing brain wave state between awake and asleep – the Theta State – to engage the right brain where imagination, creativity, and connection to spirit are most available. Spiritual counseling is beneficial anytime, but particularly when you are feeling blocked, confused, stuck, frustrated, or just not “yourself.”

Come experience some spiritual counseling with Shaya, to re-empower yourself and nourish your spirit.

Craniosacral Therapy

Craniosacral therapy (CST) is a treatment modality that bridges physical palpation and manipulation with energetic work. It is a gentle, non-invasive therapy in which practitioners use subtle palpations to assess and help release restrictions found in the sheets of connective tissue (called fascia) that attach to the cranial and sacral areas of the body. These restrictions can have effects on the musculoskeletal, vascular, endocrine, and parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems, leading to symptoms such as neck pain, headaches, anxiety, congestion, etc. By gently unwinding them, patients often experience an ease in these symptoms. In addition, because CST activates the parasympathetic nervous system, patients often feel a sense of calm and relaxation during and following each session.

Neurotransmitter Balance

Neurotransmitters form the chemical messenger system of the brain. As with most things in the body, they require a healthy balance in order for the nervous system to function properly. When out of balance, issues such as anxiety can result. The following are neurotransmitters, their precursors, and their nutritional cofactors that have been found to be helpful in relieving symptoms of anxiety.

GABA: one of the most important inhibitory (calming) neurotransmitters in the brain. Too much can lead to sedation and amnesia, too little can result in restlessness, insomnia, and anxiety. It acts as a brake on our excitatory pathways, helping to calm over-anxious states.

5-hydroxytryptohan: 5-HTP is a building block required for the manufacturing of serotonin. Serotonin, when in healthy amounts, helps to stabilize mood and promote a sense of wellbeing. Studies have shown that 5-HTP taken at appropriate doses before bed, can improve sleep quality and reduce anxiety throughout the day. Because too much serotonin can be dangerous, consult with your doctor before supplementing, especially if you are on medication for anxiety or depression.

L-theanine: L-theanine helps to reduce anxiety by increasing GABA synthesis and enhancing alpha brain wave activity (alpha waves are associated with a state of calm). L-theanine also has the added benefit of not causing drowsiness and so can be taken at any time throughout the day.

Cannabinoids: Similar to GABA, to be effective in helping to relieve symptoms of anxiety, cannabinoids (CBD) have to be dosed correctly. Low doses help to relieve anxiety, whereas high doses can result in anxiety.

Melatonin: Not just useful for sleeping! Melatonin has been found to have beneficial effects on anxiety, sleep, mood regulation, appetite, and cardiac and immune functions. Melatonin receptors in the brain, when activated, have been found to help reduce anxiety.

Zinc, B6, B12, Folate, Magnesium, Vitamin C: All are cofactors for building GABA, serotonin, and dopamine. Deficiencies or imbalances of these nutrients can have both short and long term impact on neurotransmitters and mental health. We often test for levels of many of these nutrients when assessing possible causes of anxiety. This helps us fine tune our treatment plans to each individual.

Feeding the Microbiome



Recent research indicates the bacteria that make up our gut microbiome not only can have significant effects on the workings of the gastrointestinal system, but also the central nervous system. Our gut bacteria use various system pathways including nervous, immune, and endocrine to communicate with the brain. Much like the brain, the gut has its own form of a chemical messenger system in which bacteria play a large role. They help to produce some of the same neurotransmitters found in the brain (recall that 90% of serotonin is produced in the gut). Gut bacteria secrete and respond to dopamine, serotonin, and GABA which are all important in regulating mood. These gut neurotransmitters then communicate with the brain via the vagus nerve, creating a pathway for our gut bacteria to affect our mental health. Thus when our gut microbiome is out of balance, there can be potential impacts on mood. To help boost your gut health and thus their proper production of mood balancing neurotransmitters, eat a healthy diverse diet rich in organic fruits, vegetables, fermented foods, and fiber. Avoiding food intolerances and proper stress management can also help the microbiome stay balanced. For additional support, consider probiotics that have a high population of GABA promoting species such as *Bifidobacterium longum*, *Lactobacillus casei*, *Lactobacillus helveticus*, *Lactobacillus reuteri*, and *Saccharomyces boulardii*.

DETOX DEN

SPOTLIGHT TOXIN: SOCIAL MEDIA

Tweets, Instagrams, Facebook posts, Snapchats, TikTok; we are inundated with opportunities to get lost in the wormhole that is social media. Recent sources estimate that the average social media user spends 1-3 hours on social media platforms per day. Sometimes this use benefits us; for example by allowing us to keep in touch with distant loved ones. Other times it works against us: allowing us to procrastinate on work projects for example, or spend less face time interacting with our family and friends. Whatever our feelings about social media, it has become a dominant force in many of our lives. The question is how do we modify our use of it so that we are able to find a healthy balance that adds to our life rather than detracts from it.

HOW CAN IT AFFECT HEALTH?

One meta analysis found a significant association between social media use and increased likelihood of anxiety and depression. The reasons for this association are many. Social media use adds a persistent low level stress when users feel the need to stay updated, respond to other posts, etc. Added onto this is the social pressure many experience to get likes, positive comments, and more followers along with the potential emotional fallout from mean/bullying comments or lack of positive responses. Additionally, the more time that we spend on social media, the less face to face time we have with our partners, friends, and family members. For this reason, even though social media touts its benefits as enhancing connectedness, for many it actually increases feelings of loneliness and isolation. Other effects include encouraging addictive behavior, disrupting healthy sleep patterns, and decreasing productivity.

The good news is that it isn't all bad; the type of use matters. One study found that the most problematic use involved engaging on multiple platforms, increased time on each, and increased frequency. Users that had engaged only in a singular social media platform, spent less than one hour per day, or described their use as infrequent, did not show significant correlations with anxiety or depression.

HOW DO WE DETOX?

Social media detox can come in many forms. To go completely cold turkey, you can inactivate all your social media apps for an extended amount of time and see how it affects your mental and physical health. These "fasts" can last as long as you like, from days to weeks to months to forever. Afterwards some will end up deleting these apps altogether while others might choose to limit their platforms to only one or make their accounts private to help limit feedback. Another option is to download social media blocking apps that help to control the amount of time you interact on various platforms. Some popular ones to try are: Offtime, Flip'd, Freedom, Focus Me, and Cold Turkey.



LIFESTYLE LOFT

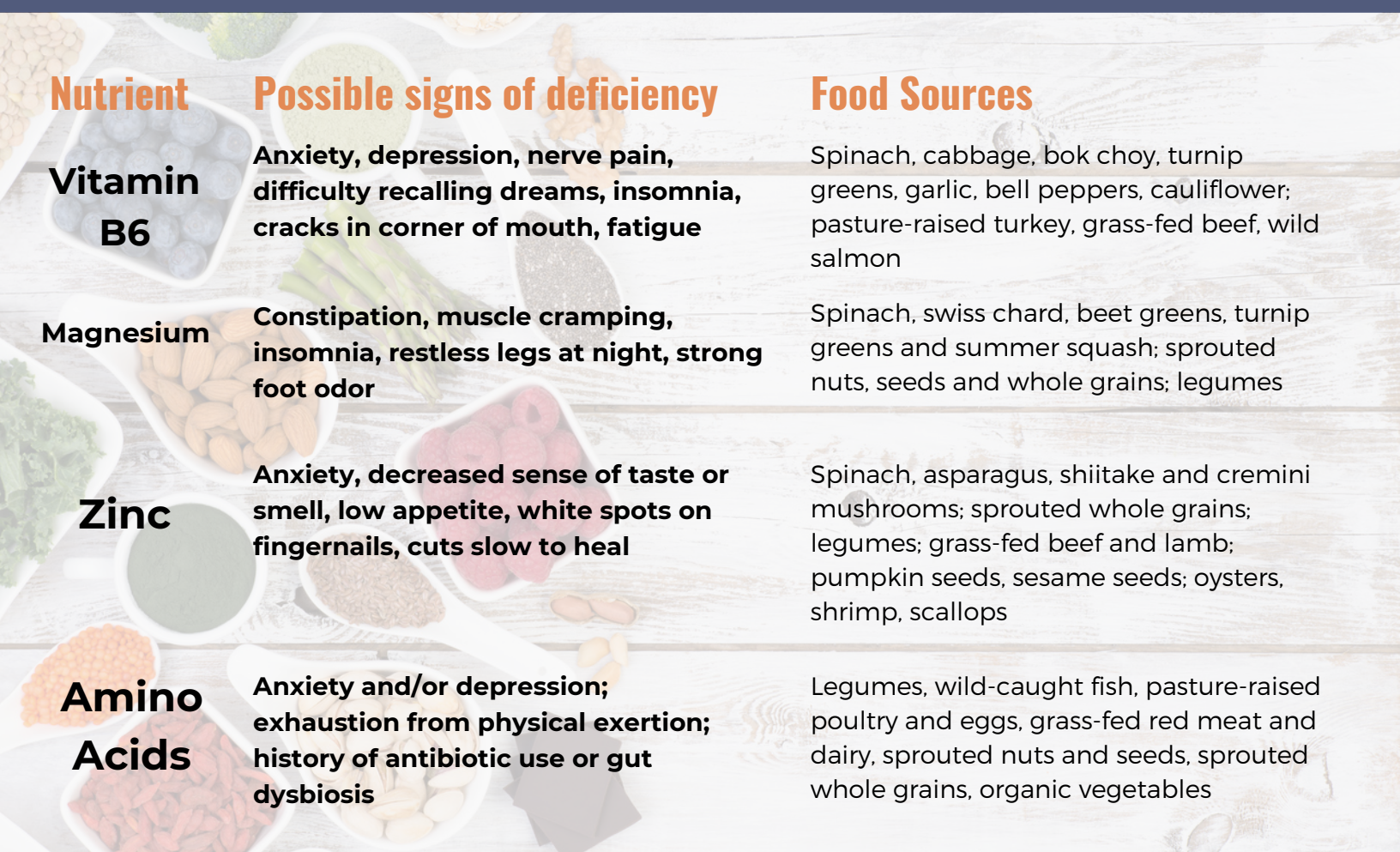


FEED YOUR BRAIN

Nutritional imbalances and deficiencies are often underlying or contributing factors in mental health issues. Research shows a direct correlation between nutrient levels in the body and brain chemistry, specifically the key neurotransmitters that we need to be healthy and happy: GABA, serotonin, norepinephrine, endorphin, and dopamine. While diet, exercise, and stress management are all important foundations for producing and maintaining healthy levels of these neurotransmitters, proper nutrition is most essential.

In many cases, supplementing specific nutrients can be necessary and very helpful for reducing or alleviating symptoms of anxiety, depression, and mood swings. Ideally, we get the essential vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, and amino acids by eating a balanced diet of nutrient dense food AND digesting it well. To support digestion be sure to be in a relaxed state when eating, chew well, and avoid your food intolerances. Sometimes digestive function needs supplemental support, so be sure to check with your medical provider if you are having digestive issues, including bloating, cramping, loose stool, constipation, irritable bowel, abdominal pain, or nausea.

Deficiencies in these key nutrients can fly under the radar screen, and it's always recommended to work with your medical providers to assess nutritional imbalances, but here are some red flag symptoms to watch for and dietary solutions to consider (see table below).



Nutrient

Possible signs of deficiency

Food Sources

Vitamin B6

Anxiety, depression, nerve pain, difficulty recalling dreams, insomnia, cracks in corner of mouth, fatigue

Spinach, cabbage, bok choy, turnip greens, garlic, bell peppers, cauliflower; pasture-raised turkey, grass-fed beef, wild salmon

Magnesium

Constipation, muscle cramping, insomnia, restless legs at night, strong foot odor

Spinach, swiss chard, beet greens, turnip greens and summer squash; sprouted nuts, seeds and whole grains; legumes

Zinc

Anxiety, decreased sense of taste or smell, low appetite, white spots on fingernails, cuts slow to heal

Spinach, asparagus, shiitake and cremini mushrooms; sprouted whole grains; legumes; grass-fed beef and lamb; pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds; oysters, shrimp, scallops

Amino Acids

Anxiety and/or depression; exhaustion from physical exertion; history of antibiotic use or gut dysbiosis

Legumes, wild-caught fish, pasture-raised poultry and eggs, grass-fed red meat and dairy, sprouted nuts and seeds, sprouted whole grains, organic vegetables

THE GARDEN

LAVENDER

Most of us know lavender from the pleasant aroma that it adds to many of our soaps, shampoos, and lotions. As many of you are already aware, the effects of lavender go well beyond the potpourri bowl and can have powerful effects on the nervous system. You might even have experimented with lavender essential oil or the distinct calming effect it can have when you are feeling overly stressed or anxious.

Not only is lavender a relaxing nervine, able to induce relaxation and sedation, it also has antidepressant actions, helps to relieve gas and digestive pains, and when used topically is a strong antimicrobial. Studies have shown that when taken orally for at least 6 weeks, lavender significantly improved symptoms associated with anxiety, remission rates, and quality of sleep in patients with generalized anxiety disorder. Over time it can act to strengthen the nervous system, helping to relieve symptoms of nervous debility and exhaustion.

Lavender can be taken internally as a tea, capsule, or tincture, or via aromatherapy.

CHAMOMILE

A popular herb known for its relaxing properties, chamomile is widely used for the treatment of anxiety, insomnia, restlessness, and ADHD. Like lavender, it helps to relax and tonify the nervous system, easing symptoms of anxiety and helping the nervous system to be more resilient to stress.

Not only does it act in the brain, it also acts in the periphery, helping to ease muscle tension, a common side effect of anxiety. Chamomile is very calming to the gut and combined with its nervine actions, can help those that experience stomach aches, nausea, and indigestion as part of their anxiety picture.

Chamomile can be taken as a tea, tincture, or put in bathwater for a nice relaxing soak (especially useful for helping to calm anxious children).



HYDROTHERAPY HAUS

Short Wraps

Short wraps come from the Kneipp tradition of hydrotherapy, named after the Bavarian priest Father Kneipp, who dedicated much of his life helping to cure ailments of the poor in Worishofen, Germany in the mid to late 1800s.

To apply a short wrap three materials are needed: a linen cloth, cotton cloth, and wool cloth all cut or folded so that they cover your abdomen from just below the armpits to mid-thigh. The linen cloth is soaked in cold water, wrung out and then wrapped snugly around the abdomen. The cotton cloth comes next, applied dry and wrapped snugly so that it covers the damp linen layer. The wool cloth comes last, applied dry in the same manner so that you resemble a nice snug burrito. Additional blankets can be laid on top for extra warmth if needed. Then just lie back and relax for at least 45 minutes.

The positive effects are many, indicated for a wide spectrum of ailments including metabolic syndrome, constipation, stress, and anxiety. As your skin first encounters the cold, blood is shunted away to help conserve heat which also acts to stimulate your sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight). However, after about 5 minutes this process reverses and increased circulation and vasodilation help bring warmth to the area, and your nervous system switches to parasympathetic (rest and digest) for the remainder of the treatment. Despite the initial jolt of the cold sheet, patients often describe this treatment as very relaxing and calming both to body and mind.

RELAXATION RESPITE

Forest Bathing

The concept of forest bathing comes from Japan where it is known as Shinrin-Yoku. Shinrin-Yoku is an intentional mindfulness practice that involves immersing yourself in nature while engaging all five senses. It therefore is not simply a walk in the woods, as it requires you to be present to and mindful of the sounds, sights, tastes, smells, and textures of the natural world around you. Shinrin-Yoku arose in the 1980's in Japan as a legitimate treatment tool readily recommended by many Japanese healthcare practitioners for the treatment of anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, and general immune system health. Only recently has the idea started to gain traction in the United States. Research studies show numerous benefits when forest bathing is practiced regularly, including significant reductions in chronic pain and depression, decreased stress and anxiety, decreased heart rate, and increases in natural killer cells which are essential for healthy immune system function and cancer prevention. Don't have time to get out into the wilderness? The good news is that these benefits occur even in urban parks at just 15 minutes a day. And lucky for us Bellingham and Whatcom County are teeming with many natural public areas in which to "bathe".



Matcha Latte

Green tea is known for its gentle energy boost and general health benefits, but did you know that it is also helpful for anxiety? Green tea and especially matcha, are high in L-theanine which is an amino acid shown to help decrease anxiety while at the same time increasing cognitive performance.

Ingredients:

- 1/2 teaspoon matcha powder
- 5 fluid ounces of hot water
- 2 teaspoons honey or agave
- 1/2 cup of milk or milk alternative (room temp)

Sift the matcha powder using either a traditional matcha whisk or tea strainer into your favorite drinking mug. Slowly add the water as you whisk gently until all the powder dissolves (usually about 45 seconds). Next add honey or agave and whisk until combined. Finally add in your milk or milk alternative slowly while whisking until you have a smooth, frothy texture. Snuggle up with your favorite book and enjoy!



RECIPE
ROOST

NURTURE LEARNING NEST

Wild Whatcom offers fun community programs in local natural areas encouraging connection to the natural world as well as to each other.

Visit: <https://www.wildwhatcom.org/join-an-outing/#nature-outings>

The Mindful Couple Workshop: A One-Day Workshop for Couples

Presented and created by Connie Feutz, MA, LMHC

March 7, 2020 9:30am-4:30pm

Visit: www.nwmarriagecounseling.com/register

For book lovers, we recommend [The Body Keeps the Score](#) by Bessel Van Der Kolk, [The Brain that Changes Itself](#) by Norman Doidge, and [The Buddha's Brain](#) by Rick Hanson

REGULAR REMINDERS

If you like getting these mini-magazines and emails, be sure to **add Northwest Life Medicine to your email contacts** so your junk folder doesn't steal your health insights.

You can **schedule a FREE 15-minute discovery session** with any provider on the website: www.nwlifemedicine.com/schedule

Find Dr. Jenna on **Facebook** at **Dr. Jenna Jorgensen**

Find Dr. Jenna on **Instagram** at **Docjorgensen**

Please humor us and our architectural theme. Dr. Jenna's husband, Zach, is a talented architectural designer and we often discuss the similarities of healthy human structure and healthy dwelling structures. **If you are looking for a healthy and sustainably designed home or business space, we recommend his services at Bundle Design Studio:**
www.bundledesignstudio.com

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Meet the Northwest Life Medicine Family



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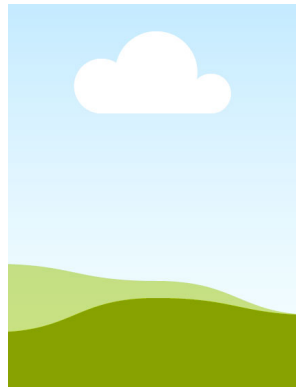
Owner, Northwest Life
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**Ruth
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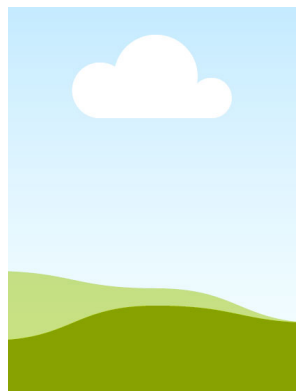
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