

Mental Health Wellness: Causes & Alternative Treatments

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Are you not sick, but not well? Are you the kind of patient many doctors can't seem to help? Your doctor may say to you, "I can't find anything wrong." And it's true. There's nothing immediately obvious to treat and the standard laboratory tests are normal. In this case, you may suffer from a neurotransmitter imbalance. Common symptoms can include:

Feelings of sadness, feelings of anxiousness, stress and fatigue, irregular sleep patterns, poor concentration, headaches, cravings or addictions, binge eating, aches and pains, behavioral problems, lack of focus, mind racing or lack of motivation.

Our mental health is not as simple as it may seem. There is interconnectedness between the different biological systems in the body. The nervous, endocrine, and immune systems of our bodies all influence each other. These systems are also influenced by our genetics, environment, emotions, values and beliefs.

Common complaints such as stress and fatigue, anxiety and depression, sleep disorders and insomnia can be treated with conventional prescription medications and be effective in many cases. As a functional medicine physician, I see patients that either do not want to take prescription medications or have not obtained good results from these medications or could not tolerate the side effects. Getting to the root of the problem is the goal; by assessing family of origin issues, genetics, stress management strategies and in some cases, neurotransmitter levels.

As Dr Mehmet Oz, says in his book, [You, Staying Young: The Owners Manual for Extending Your Warranty](#). "The good part is that food, exercise and good sleep work as dials on your neurotransmitter radio, regulating how you feel from day to day and hour to hour, and thus have a profound impact on the emotional side of aging." Yes, you can impact how you deal with stress by learning relaxation techniques, meditation or exploring underlying issues with psychotherapy.

The human nervous system is one of the most complex systems in nature. The brain is like the ultimate communications company. It's in the business of sending and receiving messages that help dictate how you act, how you feel, whether you want to be asleep, or whether you are craving drugs or chocolate. The brain is the center of the nervous system and contains over 100 billion cells called neurons. The nerves of your body communicate through spaces called synapses with chemicals called neurotransmitters.

Some of these neurotransmitters include serotonin, epinephrine, norepinephrine, dopamine, Gaba and glutamate. There are alternative laboratory tests that can be obtained to assess these levels. When imbalances are determined, treatment consists of amino acids, minerals and herbs. These treatments, combined with lifestyle changes can prevent the need for prescription medications in many individuals. Natural supplements may also be used in combination with prescription medications to reduce the dose of the prescription and minimize side effects.

An interesting story regarding depression is found in the book, written by Helene Leonetti, M.D., [Hard Wired for Love, Nurturing Yourself to Vibrant Health](#). Dr Leonetti writes, "The hell of depression is a place I will never again allow myself to visit. Each day, as I showed the world my smile, my soul was screaming in agony, for I was living a life not of my choosing. In an effort to be a good girl and dutiful wife, I let my husband decide what was best for me, and he saw to it that my life was in his full control. I had sold out. I allowed by own hopes and dreams to die in the ill-fated attempt to please someone else. It never works to do that. When we do not stay in integrity, when we allow our soul's longings to be squelched, some part of us dies. It can be cell tissue and we develop cancer or another deadly illness; or it can be, as in my case, the death of my soul, which carried with it a far more virulent, and possibly fatal outcome. The hand of God has always tweaked me, and this time was no exception. Struggling out from the depths of this nightmare, I mobilized myself with profound, healing anger and rallied to free myself from the bondage to which I had so willingly conspired".

Dr Leonetti did recover from her depression. After the realization she had buried her own true feelings and began to express these feelings, was her first step in getting well. One major reason for depression is that we give our power away to another and bury our own wants and desires. Expressing feelings in a journal format is a place to start. Engaging conversation with a psychotherapist, clergy member or trusted friend can also begin the journey to wholeness and health. Other success keys are regular exercise, healthy nutrition, good sleep and stress management strategies. If all these measures fail, seek the assistance of an alternative health care provider to discuss neurotransmitter testing and treatment.