

## ***The Brain Resolution***

*Are you tired of making the usual ‘weight loss’ resolution that you never stick to? Read on to find out how you can make a new resolution for better health in the new year...*

Research shows that ‘weight loss resolutions’ are the most common new year resolutions, but it has also been found that the majority of people do not stick to that resolution and find that they have to renew it by the end of the year.

### **What’s going on?**

When asked why they wanted to lose weight in the new year, people almost always answered “because I want to be happy”. So does losing weight bring happiness?

Often, the biggest mistake people make when deciding on a resolution is believing myths such as “once I lose weight, I’ll be happy”, or “once I stop eating, I’ll have a better life.”

If you are unhappy, it is very unlikely that losing weight will resolve that. It may just help a little, but the reasons for unhappiness are usually a lot deeper.

If you’re looking for a new year’s resolution that will make you happy, why not make a resolution to ‘*be happy*’ in the true sense of the word?

Have you ever heard the saying ‘happiness is a state of mind’? Well, in actual fact, our minds (or brains) have a lot to do with controlling mood and happiness. So why not take measures to give your brain the things that will make it happy?

### **The Brain Resolution**

The aim of this resolution is to balance mood by balancing the brain chemicals that are responsible for various feelings such as anxiety, depression, fear, happiness, mood swings, and even appetite. Once these brain chemicals are in balance, the benefits are endless!

Balancing brain chemicals is another way of getting a ‘brain make-over’. Our brain, just like all the other parts in our body, gets tired from years of stress, worry, and problems. And although many of us try to improve the external body parts that have been exposed to wear-and-tear, very few of us actually take time to nurture our most important organs. For example, many people would treat themselves to a pedicure, a massage, or a gym session, but very few people would invest in a healthy meal and some supplements to treat their brain!

Once your brain is happy, you’ll be happy, and all the positive results will follow. You’ll start seeing subtle changes such as less mood swings, less headaches, better productivity, enhanced memory, longer concentration, and flowing creativity. Also, since the brain is what controls appetite, you will get better at controlling your own weight without the torture of diets, cravings, and food deprivation.

### **What can you do?**

To start, make a resolution to *be happy* and plan to stick to it. Very often, the most difficult step in changing your life is the *decision* to do so. Once you've done that, the rest should follow easily, with a few nutrition tips of course.

First and foremost, cut out all the wrong food associations. If you have any food that you are emotionally attached to, cut the attachment. Notice I didn't say cut out the food; just cut out the connection of the food to the emotion. For example, research has found that many overweight people have a habit of comfort eating, and most comfort eating is connected to their relationship with their mother (or a loving figure). So, for example, when they are feeling depressed they eat apple pie, which makes them feel loved. That food association builds bad habits and does not add value to our emotional health. If you have any similar food associations, cut them out now. Remember that food cannot replace people or emotions.

Second, listen to your body. Many of us learn how to stop listening to our hunger and satiety mechanisms. When it comes to food, especially delicious food, we learn to ignore the little voice in our heads that is saying 'I'm full' and we just keep on eating. Over time, that voice dies, and so does our inborn ability to control eating. If you tend to do that, then you must re-learn how to listen to your body's messages. You must remind yourself that it is not necessary to finish your plate, and that the last piece of chocolate cake is not the last one on earth. You must realise that your emotions are there for a reason and if you find that you start feeling sad and frustrated after a meal, it's because you've ignored your body's own messages of control and caused an imbalance.

### **What should you feed your brain?**

The human brain works on glucose (which is sugar), so no wonder everybody has a natural sweet tooth; it's a survival mechanism. Problems occur, however, when the sugar gets imbalanced. The sugar in our blood has to be maintained at a very tight range in order to maintain health. Too much or too little sugar in the blood can cause many brain-related symptoms including mood swings, headaches, anxiety, anger, fatigue, weight gain, or even insomnia.

The key is to have the right type and amount of **sugar** in order to maintain balance. For example, opt for natural desserts such as fresh or dried fruits; have some protein with your snacks such as nuts and seeds; and have frequent small meals throughout the day. Chocolates and sweets do not act as brain fuel as they imbalance blood sugar and cause an eventual sugar slump that leads to a brain and energy slump as well.

Other foods that our brain likes are **essential fats**. These are 'good' fats that are often referred to as omega 3 and omega 6 oils. Because our brain is made of fat, a lack of fat can disrupt brain communication and give us symptoms such as low concentration and memory. These fats come mostly from nuts, seeds, and their oils such as flax seed oil. Some of these oils can be found in health stores and can be added to salad dressings or juices. It is very important, however, not to expose these fats to heat and to store them in the fridge at all times.

**Protein** is another food group that is good for our brain. Protein acts as a building block for all body processes. Protein is what is used by the body to create the brain chemicals that balance mood and appetite. So if your meals revolve around bread, rice, or pasta

with very little protein, think again. Try to include protein foods in all your meals and snacks. Protein-rich foods include chicken, turkey, fish, meat, beans, pulses, eggs, nuts, seeds, and many more.

And don't forget the **fibre**. Fibre helps remove all the toxins from the body that would otherwise lodge in your brain. Fibre comes from complex carbohydrates such as brown rice, brown pastas, oats, rye bread, etc.

I also strongly recommend a **multi vitamin/mineral supplement** taken daily. Make sure you buy a reputed brand that includes B vitamins, vitamin C and zinc.

<b>What our brain likes</b>	<b>What our brain does NOT like</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Wholegrains (e.g. brown rice, oats, etc.)</li><li>- Fruits</li><li>- Vegetables</li><li>- Essential fats (e.g. raw nuts/seeds)</li><li>- Quality protein (e.g. grilled fish, beans, lentils, etc.)</li><li>- Water</li><li>- Exercise</li><li>- Multi vitamin/mineral supplement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Coffee/tea</li><li>- Fizzy drinks</li><li>- Alcohol</li><li>- Cigarettes and pollution</li><li>- Excess sugar</li><li>- Fried foods</li><li>- Preserved meats (e.g. sausages, pepperoni, etc.)</li><li>- Stress</li><li>- Medications</li></ul>

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