

THE ATTACK OF FOOD AND FOOD ADDITIVES ON CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM PROCESSING

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Waking up one morning about two years ago, everything appeared quite different. For the first time in my life I was able to see the world with different eyes. My headaches, blurriness, and abdominal bloating were gone. I was able to stand tall and erect on two feet without feeling like I was going to lose my balance (later being told I had been experiencing gluten ataxia). I had such clear thoughts that I no longer felt that I was walking around in a blank stupor. Ten years ago, I had been told by doctors that I had Irritable Bowel Syndrome, the “all inclusive diagnosis given to the group of symptoms with no notable cause.” The truth, however, was that I felt like a majority of my clients who were diagnosed with Autism, ADD, or ADHD. Recognizing the feelings that my clients were experiencing too well, I knew I wasn’t operating in complete wellness. I was masked behind the medications and foods that were poisoning me. How could I show the world who I really was when I couldn’t connect with anyone? My medical doctors were giving me the drugs that I was most allergic too. I cried all the time and was in so much pain in my abdomen that it was difficult to have any type of life at all. My mother, a very kind hearted and gentle woman, often recalls how happy and vibrant I was as a young child. I watched my mother as she also struggled along side of me in pain, helplessness, and frustration during my many years and bout with this illness. She witnessed me deteriorating and just was unable to understand how she could help. During the majority of those years, I was motionless within my body and expressionless. My face showed signs of aging, and my once lean and athletic body appeared stout with boating near the abdomen area.

Many spiritual and religious people believe that there is duality in life. There is duality in the words positive and negative, life and death, failure and success. I

was always told as a child that I should enjoy the peaks when they come and while they lasted, and I should also enjoy the valleys as well. I never really understood that last part until I was willing to accept the challenges in my life. I was told to welcome the journey and the wonderful ride of life, to truly enjoy it and share it with others. All great days would have a beginning and an end. It was the challenges or misfortunes in life, where I was informed, were where an abundance of the greatest messages or meanings in life evolved. The lows of life, I was told existed to awaken us, our inner beings, and to aid us in breaking our patterns in life that were no longer beneficial or serving. These rough times in life existed to help shift/ transform us, to move us forward in a new, rewarding direction in life. As children, we move through this thing we call life by how we are taught or by the experiences we see, feel, touch, etc. We create paradigms, ways we see the world or ways we are conditioned to see it, and it is by way of these paradigms where we create our belief systems. Often we are stuck in these belief systems for the majority of our lives, unless we can shift them. For my pain, depression, and sickness no longer was serving me, and yet, these symptoms were the main ingredients in helping me manifest a better life for me.

I remember, the time when this shift occurred. I had an appointment with my gastrointestinal doctor. At my third visit, I confronted my doctor and asked him if my nutrition was playing a role in my illness. He replied by saying, “You are depressed and need to go on anti- depressants.” I looked at him with big eyes and said, “I am a professional just like you, I need you to spend time with me to find out the cause of my problem without immediately making an assumption based on some symptoms. I need you to look at the cause of my problem using a systems model approach (a problem could result as an interaction among many systems each contributing to different aspects of control)”. I realized that his refusal to step out of his paradigm gave us no room to collaborate; I stormed out of his office. Since this doctor and the majority of the doctors I had been seeing over the course of ten years weren’t trying to find the cause of my problem, I was going to have to be the one to do my own research. In fact, I found an interesting piece of information when I was reading Dr. Mark Hyman’s book, Ultra Prevention. On page thirty- six in this book, he reports that according to a study

in the “Journal of the American Medical Association” (January 20, 1999), that “the average interaction between a doctor and patient lasts twenty-three seconds before an interruption. Doctors tend to be distracted, they don’t ask about your medical history, and they don’t pay attention to all your symptoms because those symptoms don’t always fit into their preconceived definition of a disease (14). The system today through education and day to day practice doesn’t give doctors the space to practice holism.

Today, I am in charge of my health which has given me the ability to research and to deliver this knowledge with vitality and passion. As a physical therapist, I give seminars on sensory integration and neurotherapeutic techniques for the special needs population. A prime piece of sensory integration is how food and food additives affect central nervous system processing. It is difficult to fully treat someone’s central nervous system without understanding one’s basic chemistry. When one’s chemistry is smothered with medications and foods that don’t react positively with one’s body or DNA, the results are tremendous. (16, 5, 11). Clients that are often labeled as having behaviors or ADHD may be really suffering from allergies to food additives and medications that may directly or indirectly alter their gene expression or structure. The study today of *Nutrigenomics*, according to Dr. Mark Hyman, “seeks to provide a molecular genetic understanding for how common dietary chemicals (i.e. Nutrition) affect health by altering the expression and / or structure of an individual’s genetic makeup. The fundamental concepts of the field are that the progression from a healthy phenotype must occur by changes in gene expression or by differences in activities of proteins and enzymes and that dietary chemicals directly or indirectly regulate the expression of genomic information” (20). Sensory integration looks at how our brain locates, sorts, and puts together all the sensory input from the environment and combines it into full brain functioning. Within a normal intact nervous system, our neurons send impulses to the correct area of the brain so that these impulses can be integrated into memories, perceptions, and relationships in order to produce adaptive responses. (32). For example, if after ten years of not riding a bicycle, we decide to get back on a bicycle and ride it again, our brain or sensory system will be able to remember or recall the feelings,

sensations, emotions, etc from our past experiences to allow us to perform this task with ease. According to Neorolink, research done by Allan Phillips, our brain has about 100 billion active neurons, each with about 20,000 different controlling and 300, 000 enzyme functions per minute with each cell containing DNA which represents the tiniest copy of us (24). Eighty percent of our nervous system is used for processing or organizing sensory input, especially visual input (17). This means that our peripheral nervous system, the system that transmits information to and from the brain and spinal chord (the central nervous system or the body's control center), is responsible for making sure that a signal speeding through the nervous system manages to find the exact region of the brain designed to handle it (32). When a nervous system isn't functioning as it should or is not intact, this input/ output relationship may be tangled and create sensory dysfunction. An adaptive response may have occurred differently than the norm, meaning the input may have gone to a different area of the brain and therefore, a different response might have occurred. For example, Daniel Tammet, one of the savants living today, who wrote the book, Born on a Blue Day, reported that when he suffered a seizure at age four, he began seeing the world through a landscape of numbers which had different colors to them (30). Furthermore, as mentioned above, there is more and more research reporting that food and food additives can have an effect on this input/ output relationship and therefore, can change how one sees the world and processes information.

Jean Carper, in her book, Your Miracle Brain, discusses how approximately 55% of the foods we eat today are industrialized or "new foods" (16). Our brain, she reports, is uniquely responsible to food chemicals. When brain cells are unable to get the correct amount of nutrients, neurotransmitter systems can become dysfunctional causing disastrous consequences. Some foods may be filled with chemical additives that affect this brain neurotransmission, causing chemical reactions, even food cravings. Perhaps, the bag of potato chips that you bought yesterday was so good that you wanted to buy another bag today. These chemical additives can cause cravings so the exact response by the product producers of these foods is that you want to buy more. Are food manufacturers really for our best interest? Children with sinus infections or ear aches may just

have a dairy allergy because they may lack the enzyme needed to digest milk (16, 14, 3). Remove the dairy from the diet and these symptoms may be gone and no medications or surgeries may be needed.

What are the main attackers? Gluten, for one, is a protein fraction that is found in wheat, rye, barley, and most oat products. It has been found in lunch meats, soy sauces, raisins, in over the counter medications and even medications prescribed by MD's. I know one thing is certain, I was given the drugs I was most allergic too. It is no wonder why I had cardiac and thyroid problems as time progressed. Researchers in England, Norway, and the University of Florida have previously found peptides (breakdown products of proteins) with opiate activity in the urine of a high percentage of autistic children (1). Opiates are drugs, like morphine, that affect brain functioning. To most autistic children, they are essentially being drugged on these products as if they were on a morphine drip (1). Moreover, Dermatitis herpetiformis, on the autistic spectrum, is a skin disorder often associated with celiac disease or sensitivity to gluten in the diet (7). Eliminate the gluten out of the diet, the rash will disappear and brain processing can occur again. As a personal trainer, I have found that my clients are really good at consistently following the exercise portion of the programs I design for them. However, I often am asked by my clients, "Why am I still not losing weight?" It is often the dietary component to the program that often is the problem. For some, the foods that most are eating are "new" foods that are interacting with the chemistry of the body. I am finding that the difficulty in losing weight may stem from the body having an inflammatory response in the gut to these new foods, meaning retention of toxins and water. Once, the focus on the diet shifts with healthy and good nutrients, the weight drops. Maybe Johnny, the student in the classroom, doesn't have a behavior problem after all as thought by his teacher; maybe it just is an allergy to the foods he is eating. Remove the thing that is the greatest destroyer, food and food additives, and maybe Johnny will then shine in class (11, 6). Correct the school menus by eliminating the industrialized foods, and perhaps, productivity will be enhanced as seen by many schools researched by Dr. Feingold's association (11, 6). Lastly, what does sugar and high carbohydrate foods do to a normal intact nervous system? With these

foods, we often can feel our bodies go from real highs to low lows, especially with regards to our blood sugar. Imagine those that have food allergies who are already having difficulties processing information and connecting with the world. They are in more danger because they are in constant turmoil in their bodies trying to get any input to the right area of the brain for an adaptive response.

Detoxing isn't easy; I have done two major detoxes, one in California and one in Thailand. Once I have eliminated gluten and other harmful chemicals from my body, I lost weight, my skin looked ten years younger, but the greatest thing was you got to see ME! According to the Autistic Network for Dietary Intervention, they highly recommend that parents try these gluten free diets for at least three months without cheating (1). It is important to remember everyone's nervous system is unique. It may take much longer or even a shorter time period for one to feel better.

Dr. Feingold's research and the Feingold Association have also been a blessing in my life. Dr. Feingold dedicated his life to the pursuit of the relationship between what we eat and how we feel and behave afterwards (11). His program is a form of the time honored elimination diet, focusing on the foods that are allowed. These foods are free of synthetic dyes, artificial flavors, preservatives, and "natural salicylates" (11). Dr. Feingold found in his research that most of the dyes in our foods are synthetic, petroleum based; these synthetic based dyes are chemicals that don't interact with our own DNA (11). I am so grateful to have this research because the Association researches foods to determine which brands are free of both the obvious and hidden additives. As part of the Association, I receive a monthly newsletter with the latest research, recipes, and much more (11).

Just a little side, the FDA or food and drug administration doesn't have enough agents at the borders to inspect the foods being imported into our country. In a July 14, 2007 article titled, "FOOD", it reports that the FDA normally inspects about 1 percent of all food and food ingredients at US borders. It does tests on about half of the 1 percent (19). Recently, our country witnessed the lead-contaminated multivitamins and lead contaminated toys showing up on the

shelves of U.S retailers (19). Four years ago, Congress passed a law requiring food to be labeled for its country of origin. But that didn't extend to individual food ingredients (19). The article even discusses how the Chinese would dry their tea leaves by laying the tea leaves on a huge warehouse floor and driving trucks over them, so the exhaust would more rapidly dry the leaves out. And the problem, the Chinese use leaded gasoline, so they were essentially spewing the lead over all these leaves and then shipping the packaged tea to the US (19). The FDA was also mentioned in another article from the Chicago Tribune in December of 2008, titled "How to Protect Kids from Unseen Allergens" (28). Parents are informed in this article to be aware of the fact that many product labels contain flaws that mask food allergens. It reports that at least one in seven recalls for undeclared allergens by the FDA and USDA involved imported food. Most product, again, were from China (28).

There are tests that exist to discover if one has food allergies. The IgG antibody blood test is one of these tests. It tests one's blood against about 130 different foods. If you're sensitive to any of these 130 foods, your blood will react. The idea is to remove the foods that interact negatively with one's body. This test, I highly recommend. I found through this test, the foods that were causing all my reactions. Once, I started eliminating these foods that posed a reaction, I stopped being sick (15). In addition, I cleaned up my diet and removed all the new foods and ate all natural fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and herbs. An important point to remember, that it isn't any more expensive eating natural and clean, as most assume it to be. During prehistoric times, people were able to survive off the earth by eating fruits, vegetables, and lean meats and herbs. They weren't flooding their bodies with new foods. Herbs were often grown or bought in the store and were used to add flavor to foods. Herbs were even discovered to have medicinal effects and were used as an adjunct to pharmaceutical drugs.

In conclusion, I struggled for ten years with an illness that was finally found to be food related. Things might have been different in my life if I had only known sooner that food had the effect it did on my nervous system. Today, my symptoms are gone, and I can see the world through new eyes. I am able to relate better to my clients and can recognize if they may be battling with food allergies. I

try to make sure they are referred to the proper professionals to be examined so I can work better with their central nervous system. The core of nervous system functioning is making sure that neurotransmitters are working properly. I attribute my challenge to my awakening and to my greater awareness of myself and others. I feel it is time for our society to step out of the box and to not fear change or looking at holism. If we change our paradigm, our belief system will change. It is time we extend ourselves beyond what we have been traditionally taught and really try and find the cause of one's problems. Then we may ask, do our clients that have been diagnosed with ADD, ADHD, AUTISM, etc. really have these disorders? Just a thought? Or should I say FOOD for thought.