

Here Are Some Natural Ways to Elevate Your Mood

Many health experts, as well as lay people, believe doctors over prescribe antidepressants. In just the last 20 years, the number of people taking antidepressants has exploded. One out of every 10 Americans takes one, and that number jumps to one out of every four middle-aged women.

Recently I interviewed Dr. Sara Gottfried, a California gynecologist and author of the fabulous *Hormone Reset Diet*. She told me she discovered her successful weight-loss program after a frustrating experience with her own doctor, who, when told she was moody, lacking energy and clearly overweight, prescribed an antidepressant.

Gottfried was skeptical that an antidepressant was the answer to her problem. She was right. She suspected it was hormonal in nature, and tested her hormones (something her general practitioner failed to do), which were wildly out of whack. After balancing her hormones, she lost the weight and regained her joy ... all without any pills.

One of my friends complained to her doctor about experiencing brain fog and lethargy. He prescribed an antidepressant. Like Dr. Gottfried, my friend was skeptical and felt an antidepressant was not the answer.

She was right. She got second and third opinions until one physician hit upon the correct diagnosis: Lyme Disease. She was treated with an antibiotic, not an antidepressant, and her symptoms dissipated.

A woman in my aerobics class mentioned she ditched her antidepressants when she started doing strenuous cardiovascular exercise combined with weight lifting. She said the doctor who prescribed her antidepressants never even told

her there was a natural alternative to the medication.

A brain researcher has written a fascinating book about other natural ways to mitigate feelings of depression. It's called *The Upward Spiral*, by Dr. Alex Korb.

Korb uses his knowledge of the way the brain works to teach people how to rewire their brain's circuitry, focusing on two primary areas: the prefrontal cortex, which is the thinking part, and the limbic system, the feeling part.

He bases his theories on scientific studies that have proven to increase happiness.

One of the most interesting tips in his book is when you are feeling depressed, ask yourself, "What am I grateful for?"

As it turns out, gratitude stimulates the production of dopamine. This is what the antidepressant Wellbutrin is said to do. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that deals with the brain's reward and pleasure centers and regulates emotions.

Additionally, gratitude boosts levels of serotonin, which is the claim of the popular antidepressant Prozac. Like dopamine, serotonin is a neurotransmitter that is considered a contributor to feelings of happiness. Gratitude is enormously valuable in boosting well-being.

If it seems difficult focusing on the things and people for which you are grateful, take heart. Dr. Korb says the more we practice gratitude, the easier it becomes, kind of like building a "gratitude muscle."

Nancy Lee DeMoss penned the highly successful *Choosing Gratitude*, which is a comprehensive tutorial about how to increase gratitude. I interviewed her last year for a piece that aired on *The 700 Club* on Thanksgiving. It changed my life. Gratitude not only improves our mood, but also our relationships and overall health.

Another tip Dr. Korb recommends to stymie the blues is to label negative feelings. The simple act of identifying the emotion you are feeling helps alleviate it. We need to recognize and name our feelings, not bury them. All you need to do is describe the emotion you are feeling in just one or two words.

Here's another great tip: touch. Human contact makes us happy. It can be something as slight as a handshake or a hug. If you don't have a lot of physical contact in your life, getting massages on a regular basis will do the trick.

Finally, we become happier when we make decisions. It gives us a feeling of completion, closure and accomplishment. Try not to fret about making the perfect decision, sometimes that's not realistic. Instead, try focusing on making a decision that's "good enough," and move on. {eoa}

For the original article, visit .