

**Suppers Book Review: The Mood Cure by Julia Ross
Reviewed by Dorothy Mullen**

This review focuses particularly on the issues that can be addressed in the context of the Suppers program. For details on nutritional protocols, go to <http://www.moodcure.com/>.

Real v. False Emotions

What is the difference between “real” emotions and the false emotions that beset many of us because of changes in the modern world? Julia Ross addresses this question in **The Mood Cure**, arguing that the increase in bad mood in our population is the result of easily correctable malfunctions in our brain and body chemistry. These malfunctions occur primarily from unmet nutritional needs. Real emotions come in response to our life situations. False moods happen when the brain does not produce enough good mood chemicals because of either some genetic reason, too much stress, or because of inadequate amounts of the food your particular body needs.

How can you tell which emotions are normal and which are due to a hungry brain? You need to ask yourself the right questions such as:

Was there a clear trigger?

A clear trigger might be: your boss cancels your vacation and you feel angry. An unclear trigger would be: you just snap and don't know what got into you.

Am I excessively emotional?

If recalling a recently deceased loved one brings on tears and real pain, you would be experiencing a normal emotion. Getting teary eyed at every sentimental TV commercial indicates you may be suffering from false pain. (The pain is real, but your problem chemistry causes you to overreact).

Do my hormones explain my moods?

If you become nasty with PMS, it's a false mood brought on by hormones, not an interaction (though the consequences in relationships can cause lots of trouble in your emotional life, even if the original agitation was nutritional).

Am I *always* finding fault with myself, rather than just beating myself up in response to something specific?

Chances are good your self-esteem is linked to something going on in your body.

The brain stops producing normal emotions for a number of reasons including genetic miscues, too much stress, and/or improper nutrition through not eating the foods necessary for optimal brain function.

Julia Ross has been doing “nutritional mood repair “for over 30 years. By combining nutritional therapies with psychological therapies, her clinic has been getting much better results treating people with addictions and mood disorders than conventional treatment alone. The centerpiece of her nutritional treatment plan is amino acid therapy. Brain chemicals are proteins, and amino acids are the building blocks of proteins. Therapy is tailored to the individual, by determining which brain chemicals may be lacking.

The four brain chemicals under consideration for mood are:

1. Serotonin, the chemical your body is making when you feel positive, confident, flexible, and easygoing. Signs of not having enough serotonin include feeling negative or worried, acting obsessive or irritable, and sleeplessness.

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2. Catecholamines, chemicals that make you feel energized, upbeat, and alert. Signs of inadequate amounts of catecholamines may include sinking into a flat, lethargic funk.
3. GABA, which helps you feel relaxed and stress free. If you don't have enough, you'll feel wired, stressed and overwhelmed.
4. Endorphins, these provide feelings of comfort, pleasure and euphoria. Not having enough may leave you crying easily and being overly sensitive to hurt.

Ross provides very simple inventories to help you determine if your brain is producing enough chemicals of good mood.

The following is a mood questionnaire taken directly from the book. It will help you to pinpoint which of your brain chemicals may be inadequate. Using this knowledge, you can begin supplementation with the necessary amino acids. This questionnaire will lead you to the appropriate chapter and page of the book, to begin your journey of better mood and brain chemistry.

Mood Questionnaire from <http://www.moodcure.com/>

The Four Part Mood-Type Questionnaire

Write down the number next to each symptom that you identify with. Total your score in each section and compare it to the cut-off score. If your score is over the cut-off, or if you have only a few of the symptoms described in a section, but they bother you (or those close to you) on a regular basis, turn to the chapter indicated.

Part 1. Are You Under a Dark Cloud?

- 3) Do you have a tendency to be negative, to see the glass as half-empty rather than half-full? Do you have dark, pessimistic thoughts?
- 3) Are you often worried and anxious?
- 3) Do you have feelings of low self-esteem and lack confidence? Do you easily get to feeling self-critical and guilty?
- 3) Does your behavior often get a bit, or a lot, obsessive? Is it hard for you to make transitions, to be flexible? Are you a perfectionist, a neatnik, or a control freak? A computer, TV, or work addict?
- 3) Do you really dislike the dark weather or have a clear-cut fall/winter depression (SAD)?
- 2) Are you apt to be irritable, impatient, edgy, or angry?
- 3) Do you tend to be shy or fearful? Do you get nervous or panicky about heights, flying, enclosed spaces, public performance, spiders, snakes, bridges, crowds, leaving the house, or anything else?
- 2) Have you had anxiety attacks or panic attacks (your heart races, it's hard to breathe)?

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- 2) Do you get PMS or menopausal moodiness (tears, anger, depression)?
 - 3) Do you hate hot weather?
 - 2) Are you a night owl, or do you often find it hard to get to sleep, even though you want to?
 - 2) Do you wake up in the night, have restless or light sleep, or wake up too early in the morning?
 - 3) Do you routinely like to have sweet or starchy snacks, wine, or marijuana in the afternoons, evenings, or in the middle of the night (but not earlier in the day)?
 - 2) Do you find relief from any of the above symptoms through exercise?
 - 3) Have you had fibromyalgia (unexplained muscle pain) or TMJ (pain, tension, and grinding associated with your jaw)?
 - 2) Have you had suicidal thoughts or plans?
- Total Score _____ If your score is more than 12 in Part 1, turn to Chapter 3, page 25.
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Part 2. Are You Suffering from the Blahs?

- 3) Do you often feel depressed - the flat, bored, apathetic kind?
 - 2) Are you low on physical or mental energy? Do you feel tired a lot, have to push yourself to exercise?
 - 2) Is your drive, enthusiasm, and motivation quota on the low side?
 - 2) Do you have difficulty focusing or concentrating?
 - 3) Are you easily chilled? Do you have cold hands or feet?
 - 2) Do you tend to put on weight too easily?
 - 3) Do you feel the need to get more alert and motivated by consuming a lot of coffee or other "uppers" like sugar, diet soda, ephedra, or cocaine?
- Total Score _____ If your score is more than 6 in Part 2, turn to Chapter 4, page 53.
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Part 3. Is Stress Your Problem?

- 3) Do you often feel overworked, pressured, or deadlined?
- 1) Do you have trouble relaxing or loosening up?

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- 1) Does your body tend to be stiff, uptight, tense?
 - 2) Are you easily upset, frustrated, or snappy under stress?
 - 3) Are you easily chilled? Do you have cold hands or feet?
 - 2) Do you tend to put on weight too easily?
 - 3) Do you often feel overwhelmed or as though you just can't get it all done?
 - 2) Do you feel weak or shaky at times?
 - 3) Are you sensitive to bright light, noise, or chemical fumes? Do you need to wear dark glasses a lot?
 - 3) Do you feel significantly worse if you skip meals or go too long without eating?
 - 2) Do you use tobacco, alcohol, food, or drugs to relax and calm down?
- Total Score _____ If your score is more than 8 in Part 3, turn to Chapter 5, page 77.
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Part 4. Are You Too Sensitive to Life's Pain?

- 3) Do you consider yourself or do others consider you to be very sensitive? Does emotional pain, or perhaps physical pain, really get to you?
 - 2) Do you tear up or cry easily - for instance, even during TV commercials?
 - 2) Do you tend to avoid dealing with painful issues?
 - 3) Do you find it hard to get over losses or get through grieving?
 - 2) Have you been through a great deal of physical or emotional pain?
 - 3) Do you crave pleasure, comfort, reward, enjoyment, or numbing from treats like chocolate, bread, wine, romance novels, marijuana, tobacco, or lattes?
- Total Score _____ If your score is more than 6 in Part 4, turn to Chapter 6, page 100.

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Serotonin

Things that many of us do in our daily lives can reduce our levels of serotonin, the brain chemical of calm good feelings and sleep.

The first enemy of serotonin is stimulants, especially caffeine (diet pills, ma huang, cocaine, etc). If you feel hooked on any of these, Ross provides a protocol of food and nutrients that can help you feel rested, alert and energized naturally.

The second enemy is aspartame or NutraSweet. NutraSweet is composed of the amino acids phenylalanine and aspartic acid. The body converts phenylalanine into stimulating substances like tyrosine, dopamine, norepinephrine (think brain adrenaline) and adrenaline. Both aspartic acid and phenylalanine compete with and overwhelm tryptophan and serotonin. You can tell when aspartame is not working well in your body if you have trouble relaxing in the evening, and going to sleep.

Fast foods, junk foods, and skipped meals inhibit the production of serotonin. They deprive of us of the building blocks for good mood chemistry, while forcing the body to use up its stored nutrients trying to deal with the consequences of the junk. A recurring theme throughout the **Mood Cure** concerns menu. This menu is essentially the same, regardless of your moods, labels and diagnoses: a whole food diet (no gluten or sugar, dairy only if tolerated, no soy) featuring adequate protein, low starch but high fiber vegetables, plenty of mood-stabilizing beneficial fats and oils, and nuts, seeds, grains and legumes as tolerated by each individual.

Catecholamines

With ADD, catecholamines are likely to be the problem. According to Ross, brain images of people with ADD show decreased activity in the areas of the brain that are normally rich in catecholamines. Her recommendation is a diet free of flour (gluten) and sugar, as well as anything the individual is allergic to. If natural means are not sufficient, tyrosine supplements and medications may be necessary. For those people who rely on caffeine as a pick me up, it is particularly important to eat enough protein rich food at breakfast time.

Allergy symptoms and poor concentration can also result from eating soy, chocolate, peanuts, eggs, corn and the nightshades: potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant.

GABA

For those who feel "all stressed out", it is important to remember that all stressors trigger the same cascade of powerful biochemical events. (At Suppers, we talk about the similarity between a 32 oz coke on an empty stomach and a saber toothed tiger: the stress chemistry is the same). It all starts with the adrenal glands, which produce dozens of hormones. In times of stress, they first increase production of adrenaline (for immediate reaction) and then cortisol (for long term stamina). Cortisol breaks down muscle, bone, and fat. Their nutrients are then used to meet long-term challenges like serious infections and starvation. It is necessary for challenges requiring endurance, and for handling high intakes of refined carbohydrates.

In instances of persistent stress – for any reason – these life-saving hormones can ultimately lead to heart disease, osteoporosis, obesity, lowered immune function and Alzheimers. They also affect the part of the brain that stores and transfers memory!

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What does it feel like to be out of adrenal capacity? You feel like you're used up, can't handle any more, have no shock absorbers. You may be sensitive to light or get alarmed easily at sounds.

This is a partial list:

- Sensitivity to fumes and smells
- Depression, mood swings
- Fatigue
- Dizziness on standing
- Lack of mental alertness
- Catch colds easily
- Salt cravings
- Sweet cravings
- Low blood sugar symptoms
- Allergies
- Low tolerance for caffeine, alcohol and drugs
- Low blood pressure
- Confusion/inability to concentrate

At Ross' facility, she finds hardly anyone with high or normal cortisol levels. By the time people seek help, the vast majority are low, having used up their adrenal capacity to generate stress-fighting hormones. One of the most critical functions of the adrenal hormones is to help keep blood sugar levels in the normal range. Since we deal a lot with the relationship between stress and refined carbohydrate consumption at Suppers, this is a really important point. Ross says that low blood sugar is our most common blood sugar problem and, of course, over time low blood sugar leads to high blood sugar or diabetes.

In simplest terms, this is how sweets can make a person all stressed out:

- You eat too much sweet or starch
- Your body perceives this as a stressor and makes adrenaline
- Your body also makes endorphins (natural pain killers) so you feel better
- Insulin is produced to scoop up the alarming excess sugar and store it as fat (which is much safer than having it in the blood)
- Blood sugar goes down (and with it, energy)
- If it goes too low (as with pre-diabetes, insulin resistance, syndrome X, metabolic syndrome), the adrenal gland pumps out cortisol to salvage the sugar from emergency stores in your liver and muscle.
- Your adrenal glands, over time, have less capacity to deal with real life stressors because they are getting used up dealing with dietary stressors. They also have less capacity to produce progesterone, increasing the likelihood that women will experience stress with PMS.

The diet for combating stress is essentially the same as for all mood diets. It includes protein at breakfast with some carb, fat, and fiber (like a veggie omelet), a lunch of mostly vegetables and protein, and a dinner with lots of vegetables, meat and starch. Snacks include fresh fruit, nuts, and yoghurt (for dairy-tolerant people).

Supplements will include GABA and – when there is strong craving for sugar and starches – glutamine and chromium. See page 97.

Endorphins

Too sensitive? Enjoyment, contentment and euphoria are indicators that your brain has enough endorphin. Feeling love, getting a massage, thinking of chocolate, hugs, these all raise endorphin levels, our natural opiate. When your body can't produce enough, you're likely to want chocolate, alcohol or pain killing drugs.

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There are a number of reasons why a person might not produce enough endorphin: You might have a genetic deficiency. Prolonged physical or emotional pain or abuse could deplete your capacity. When adrenaline goes up, endorphin also goes up. The body is preparing itself to deal with the injury and pain that might come with the threat or stressor for which the adrenalin is preparing your body. Raised endorphin levels can calm you down after a big upset and make your cortisol level drop. It's the hormone of denial, the chemical that makes self-deception work as a form of stress management.

Endorphins can be restored with amino acid therapy, particularly D and L phenylalanine. The diet is the same as for all the other troubling mood states: Eat regularly. Remove refined and allergenic foods. Get protein in at the front of the day. Ross does NOT recommend hard exercise to get the endorphin high, reasoning that if you worked hard enough to get the high, you exercised too long, past the wall of exertion. The foods that produce endorphins for you (often sweets, breads, cheese) may be very difficult to give up because they really work to make you more comfortable in your own skin; they act more like drugs than foods in your particular body.

After describing the four most common nutrition related bad mood states, Ross turns to the confounding problem of allergies and sensitivities that can also mask as mood and mental health problems. She delves into the nutritional therapies, foods and menus, and special "tool kits" that can help with each specific deficiency.

Symptoms of Food Sensitivity and Allergies

Suppers – and particularly families with ADHD -- may be interested in the list of indications that bad reactions to specific foods can cause havoc. Look at the list:

- Irritability
- Angry Outbursts
- Glum Lethargy
- Teariness
- Hyperactivity
- Stress
- Depression
- Respiratory Problems
- Sore Throats
- Earaches
- Stuffy Nose
- Constipation
- Digestive Problems
- Bloat
- Gas
- Low Energy
- Sleeplessness
- Joint Pain
- Aches
- Poor Concentration
- Addictive cravings for foods, sweets

The cheapest, most accurate way to find out if food is causing the problem is to do a food/mood journal and track the experiences around first eliminating and then re-introducing suspected foods, often the foods we are most insistent on eating (wheat, sugar, dairy, other white food, coffee).

As if she hadn't said it enough in each previous section, Ross reiterates in a chapter on good mood foods that – regardless of the problem-- brain friendly foods include:

- Protein, especially important at the front of the day
- High quality fats (fresh, not processed, mostly avoiding vegetable fats save extra virgin olive oil and her favorite: coconut oil)
- Lots of vegetables
- Carb sources; fruits, vegetables, legumes and whole grains

The Mood Cure is the most highly recommended book for those people who have the issues we deal with at Suppers.