

Natural Supplements

AND PRACTICES
FOR MENTAL HEALTH





It may feel as though our minds and our bodies are separate entities; and many consider mental health as something unrelated to the state of our physical health. Just because we cannot visually assess mental health in the same way as we can sometimes observe problems in other parts of the body, does not mean that mental health challenges are not incredibly real, nor that they don't often appear in tandem with other dysfunction in the body, nor that there aren't steps we can take to improve symptoms with diet, lifestyle and natural medicines.

I love working closely with people who are struggling with mental health problems. Often people come to see me just as they're contemplating trying pharmaceutical medications and they want to see if there are natural alternatives first. Other times people are quite appropriately on medications such as antipsychotics and they want to see if there are natural steps they can take to improve their results, minimise their side effects, and support any other conditions they may be tackling.

Below are a few safe ideas for you to try from the world of natural medicines to improve your mental health. Please discuss any supplementation or herbal medicine use with your primary healthcare provider before commencing. Please do not cease any medication use without consulting the prescribing physician.



Camilla Clare

NATUROPATHY

DIETARY CHANGE FOR IMPROVED MOOD

We are what we eat in SO many ways. Nutrition doesn't just affect our weight and our chances of developing chronic disease as we age; it drastically effects how we feel on a daily basis.

Here are a few of the things to focus on in improving mental health:

Choose plant-based protein and ensure you are getting sufficient quantities.

Plant-based protein is anti-inflammatory which is crucial when it comes to optimum mental health. Good sources of plant-based protein include organic tofu or tempeh, quinoa, legumes, whole grains (such as brown rice, millet, steel cut preferably or rolled oats). Ensuring you are getting adequate protein for your stage of life and activity level is important, as is ensuring you get a good intake of all essential amino acids through including both beans and wholegrain in your diet.

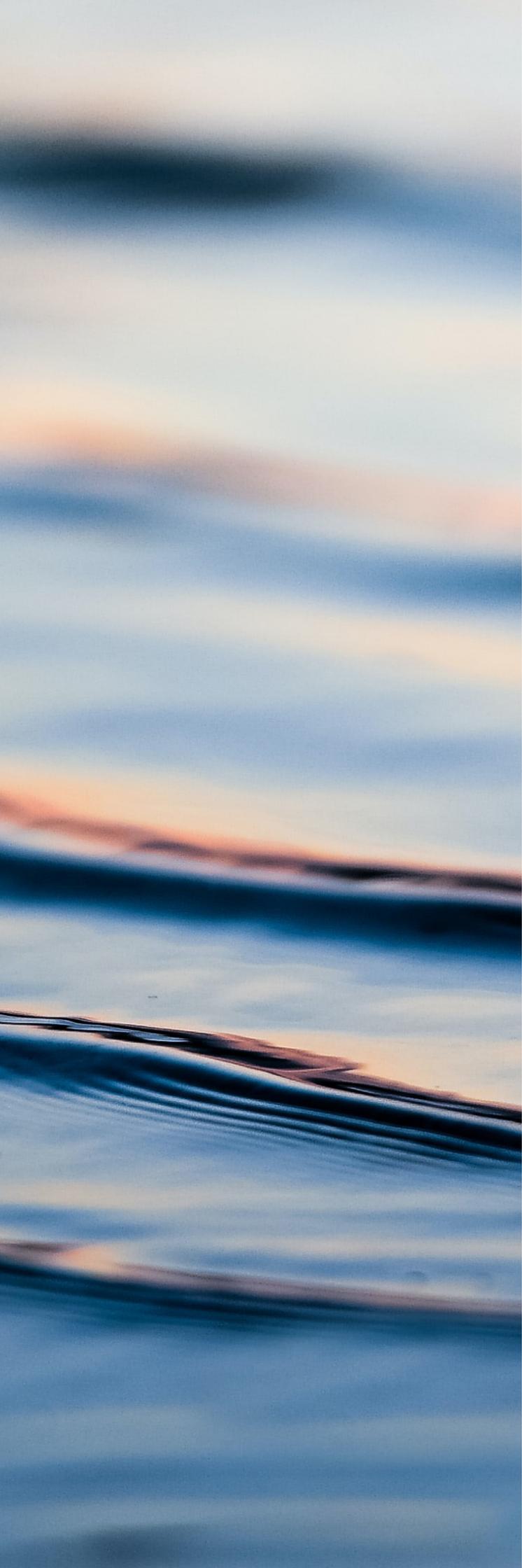
Check your iron; insufficient iron levels have a strong impact on mental health. Improve iron absorption through including vitamin C sources, garlic or onion with your high iron foods. Legumes again are a fantastic source of iron, as are dark green leafy vegetables (if eaten in sufficient quantity), dried apricots and prunes, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Keep coffee and tea away from meals by at least an hour to minimise iron absorption disruption. For further information on enhancing your iron levels, check out my blog on iron.

Ensure sufficient zinc; again, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds are strong choices when it comes to zinc. Using onion and garlic with these foods may enhance the absorption of zinc.

Keep your blood sugar levels stable through choosing whole plant foods eaten at regular meal times. Again, beans are fantastic at stabilising blood sugar. Choosing complex carbohydrates such as steel cut oats for breakfast is a great way to start the day.

Address any underlying gut problems; given 90% of serotonin is made in the gut, if there is dysbiosis in the gastrointestinal tract, this can translate hugely both to increased inflammation, and to mental health issues. For more information on tackling gut health, check out the blog section of my site.

Ensure you are getting sufficient B12. If you're on a plant-based diet, B12 should be supplemented or ingested through fortified foods eaten regularly. For further information on B12, check out my blog on B12.



LIFESTYLE CHANGES FOR IMPROVE MOOD

Stress can be extremely taxing to our mental health; pretty certain you already know that. Exposure to trauma and ongoing periods of stress can have long-lasting effects on our mental and physical health, which can be helped with talking therapy and other healing modalities.

Some of my top picks for stress reduction include:

- Dance - this could be at a class or by yourself in your bedroom with your favourite 90s songs playing (maybe that's just me)
- Spend time with people who really make you feel uplifted and joyful
- Spend time with yourself if it's quiet you're craving; have a you date
- Introduce a meditation practice daily; it doesn't have to be for long, and it doesn't have to be what people typically consider "meditation". It can just be you, with your eyes closed in silence, taking some deep breaths and feeling the stillness
- Go for a walk, preferably in nature
- Move your body in whichever way feels good to you. Exercise has been scientifically proven to be extraordinarily beneficial when it comes to mental health
- Cuddle an animal if you're lucky enough to have access to one
- Journal - writing your thoughts on paper can have so much power in helping us feel less overwhelmed by them

Cultivating gratitude is a wonderful way to reframe what's going on for you; sometimes though, the time at which we most need it are the times it is most difficult to do. That's why we start small; you can start with closing your eyes and either internally or verbally expressing gratitude for five things. They can be as small as that you have a bed to sleep in, that you have access to hot water to bathe yourself, or that you have a friend or a family member that you know loves you deeply. Start small and build up. You can write these down or just express these to yourself, but it can be such a powerful practice. Often the more gratitude we express for what we have, the more things we receive to be grateful for.





HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Saffron: You probably think of saffron as a prized culinary spice, but it is SO much more than that. Saffron has been shown to be extremely beneficial in preserving neurological and ocular health as we age, as well as being a powerful natural antidepressant, with clinically trialled use in OCD and depression, showing it to rival commonly prescribed SSRIs.

N-acetyl cysteine (NAC): NAC is a powerhouse. Imperative to the generation of glutathione, the master antioxidant in the body, NAC has systemic benefits throughout the body, in areas such as cardiovascular health, detoxification, addictions, immune health and reproductive health. NAC has modulatory effects on the serotonergic, glutamatergic and dopaminergic pathways, meaning it brings things more into balance, as well as lowering overall inflammation in the body. NAC has been shown to be effective in OCD, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. What's really exciting is that it has been shown to be safe to be used alongside prescribed pharmaceutical medications for these conditions.

N.B. It is always imperative to discuss adding any new herbs or supplements with your primary healthcare provider.

I hope these recommendations have been helpful for you; there are so many more herbs and supplements that can be used to help restore quality of life, but these are best discussed on a case-by-case basis. If you'd like one on one help, check out my services at www.camillaclare.com