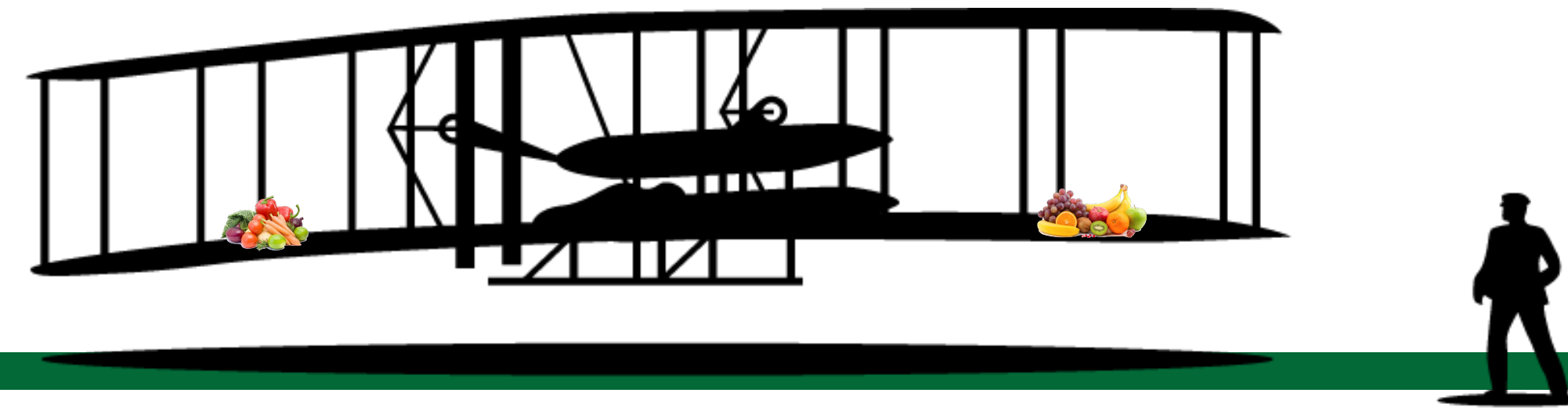


# Positive Psychiatry and Healthy Lifestyle Interventions Augmenting Psychotherapy for Mood Disorders

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## Abstract

Healthy lifestyle and positive psychiatry interventions can complement the treatment of mood disorders and help individuals who are not experiencing as much happiness and satisfaction in their lives as they desire. This poster gives examples of an optimal psychiatric treatment plan that would potentially include psychotherapy, psychotropic medications, and/or individualized and targeted healthy lifestyle and positive psychiatry interventions to not only treat mental illness, but also enhance overall well-being.

## Introduction

Positive psychiatry is closely related to positive psychology which emphasizes the use of evidence-based techniques such as gratitude, mindfulness, and learned optimism, and is a branch of psychiatry that focuses on improving overall well-being and mental health rather than solely alleviating mental illness and misery. Lifestyle medicine is a new paradigm that shifts much of the responsibility to the patient and can be defined as “the use of evidence-based lifestyle therapeutic approaches, such as a predominately whole food, plant-based diet, physical activity, sleep, stress management, tobacco cessation, and other nondrug modalities to prevent, treat, and, oftentimes, reverse the lifestyle-related chronic disease that’s all too prevalent.”

## Clinical Case Vignette #1

54-year-old woman, D, presents with a weight gain of 19 pounds, sleeping on average 11 hours a night, lack of enjoyment in normally pleasurable activities, low energy, feelings of being discounted by others, heavy and immobile limbs at least weekly upon awakening & associated psychomotor slowing.



Fictional Patient #1 (AI-generated)

- 15.3% of those diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder have atypical symptoms
- A healthy lifestyle intervention to suggest might be eating two more servings of fruits and/or vegetables a day which may enhance feelings of well-being

## Clinical Pearl

- If a patient enjoys a particular healthy food or practice, it may be wise to capitalize on that and encourage any small victories

- SMILES trial 12 wks of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and legumes reduced MADRS (Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale) depression scores (n=67)
- A Mediterranean-like diet for 3 weeks (n=101) reduced depression scores, and effects persisted at least 3 months after the study
- A meta-analysis of 16 randomized controlled trials of a variety of healthy diets found a beneficial effect (g=0.275) on depression more than anxiety
- A meta-analysis of 24 prospective cohort studies found those with a healthy diet including fish, fruit, legumes, pulses, nuts, seeds, vegetables, and whole grains had a decreased risk of depression in a dose response fashion
- Depressed individuals have increased inflammation, and processed foods and meat cause more inflammation than do fruits and vegetables
- There are anti-inflammatory flavonoids and polyphenols in colorful fruits and vegetables like oranges, strawberries, and broccoli
- A review found polyphenols from colorful fruits & vegetables had the strongest association with increased BDNF levels among different food patterns
- BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor) protective effects on depression and anxiety

## Clinical Pearl

- Flavor intensity tends to be higher in those with healthier diets
- Help patients discover new, flavorful ways to mix whole grains, fruits, and vegetables into their diet by suggesting recipes or pairing less savory foods (plain oatmeal) with other tastier ingredients (berries, nuts, or cinnamon)

## Clinical Case Vignette #2

A 34-year-old male, H, with Persistent Depressive Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder seeks further ways to enhance happiness during a follow-up appt. for sertraline management.



Fictional Patient #2 (AI-generated)

- Persistent Depressive Disorder 0.5-1.5% in the general population, twice as common in females as males
- Borderline Personality Disorder is a significant risk factor for Persistent Depressive Disorder
- Discursion during psychotherapy could suggest gratitude journaling
- Gratitude interventions, involving expressions of thankfulness, can modestly alleviate depression and anxiety. Useful as initial or adjunct treatments, they show rapid effects within two weeks, faster than antidepressants.

- Gratitude restructuring around optimistic thinking a central goal of psychotherapy
- Study with 54 participants had one group write down all aspects of their future ideal self (Best Possible Self) and visualize this concept at home five minutes a day. After two weeks, optimism scores were significantly increased as compared to a control group.

- In psychotherapy, H later mentions he wants to be happier and is considering working more to pay for toys for his kids
- Experiences tend to lead to more satisfaction than possessions and a materialistic mindset is negatively correlated with happiness
- Choosing between toys or time with his kids, H might work on improving his relationships with his family, as relationships are strongly positively associated with happiness
- Money may “buy” happiness moreso at lower income levels, but not as much beyond a level of basic sufficiency, and overall the correlation between money and happiness is remarkably weak
- In psychotherapy, H later mentions he enjoys volunteering at his Temple
- Numerous studies have shown that volunteering is correlated with increased life satisfaction, greater happiness, and reduced symptoms of depression. Regular volunteering has a positive association on well-being that increases with continued volunteering.

## Clinical Pearl

- If a patient enjoys humor, try judicious use of humor yourself during sessions. This used to be discouraged for psychotherapy, but has since been explored more, and recent data suggests humor can be associated with improved outcomes when utilized appropriately.
- Humor and lightheartedness can serve as a barometer of the patient's overall well-being, as humor is considered to be one of our most mature and healthy defense mechanisms
- Bibliotherapy (reading helpful books) has evidence it is helpful in anxiety and depression and can provide good psychotherapy discussion points

## Conclusions

Positive psychiatry strategies used wisely in combination with healthy lifestyle interventions (lifestyle psychiatry) can provide important augmentation to traditional psychiatric treatments to optimize the treatment plan

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