

# Helping Yourself



**F**or some of us, the idea of visiting a shrink's office and pouring out our innermost thoughts, worries, fears, and hidden stories to a complete stranger has all the appeal of a hike through a minefield.

We'd rather confide in our best friend, our mother, our pastor, the dog. Anyone who is willing to listen, except for a therapist. This could be for financial or cultural reasons or because of fears associated with a past experience, inconvenience, or believing that only "crazy people" need counseling.

That's okay, as long as your issues are not so debilitating that you can't function or are having thoughts about hurting yourself or someone else. That's when you need professional help. But if you're grappling with a career change, problems in a relationship, or struggling with wondering why happiness always seems to elude you, you may be able to address those issues yourself.

There's one requirement you'll have to meet first, though: You can't be afraid to dig deep within yourself and explore the inner depths of your soul.

## Digging Beneath the Surface

The key to emotional health is knowing what makes us tick. We have to stay in close touch with our emotions and examine our feelings if we're going to find solutions to our daily problems. To do this, we need to set aside quiet time for ourselves—time away from the office, our kids, our partners, and our friends. This allows us to think clearly and bring order to our lives. It's a four-step process.

1. Grab a pen and notepad and find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Write in three-word sentences what you're feeling at the moment. "I feel lonely. I feel sad. I feel angry." Focusing on your feelings will help you identify the situations in your life that are giving you trouble. "Our emotions are like keys that unlock the door to important thoughts," says Susan Heitler, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Denver and author of *The Power of Two: Secrets to a Strong and Loving Marriage* and of the audiotape *Depression: A Disorder of Power*.

2. Jot down the situation causing the feeling. Why are you lonely? Is it because you have few

## THE ART OF THE JOURNAL

Writing in a journal is better than confiding in a best friend. We can divulge our best-kept secrets, knowing that those pages won't talk. It also slows us down, forces us to relax, and helps us zero in on who we are and what we desire.

"Putting your thoughts on paper helps you make sense of your life, sort out problems, and come up with solutions," says Linda Cameron, Ph.D., a senior lecturer in psychology and a journaling researcher at the University of Auckland in New Zealand.

It's also an incredible outlet to express our creativity. "Journaling is an art form," says Susan Heitler, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Denver and author of the audiobook *Depression: A Disorder of Power*. "It's like writing poetry, painting, or playing a musical instrument, which all contribute to our emotional health."

There are other bonuses as well. Studies show that writing about our stress boosts our immunity, reduces visits to the doctor, and even relieves asthma and rheumatoid arthritis symptoms.

So what are you waiting for? Whip out that journal and start writing. Here are some hints to help you get started.

**Buy a notebook.** This may seem obvious, but journals come in a wide array of beautiful colors, designs, textures, and sizes. You can even have your name engraved on one that's bound in leather. Pick one that you think is attractive, is convenient to carry, and fits your personality. That way, you'll be more likely to write in it.

**Be creative.** Instead of just jotting down what you did today in chronological order, write your thoughts and feelings about what happened to you. Sort out your problems and come up with solutions by writing poems or short stories. If you're an artist, draw the events in your life and how you feel about them. Make your journal fun and interesting.

**Take five.** You don't have to write for hours to keep a journal. Carve 5 minutes (or less) out of your day to write a sentence or two. If you have more time, write for 20 minutes, or 2 hours. Just be flexible. Journaling is something you should look forward to, without any added pressure.

friends or family members in your life? Because you're working too hard to have a social life? Listen to your inner voices, "the voices of your values and principles, your wishes, your dreams, and your preferences," says Dr. Heitler. "And really be honest."

3. Write what you'd like to change about the situation. Maybe you would like a more active social life, or closer relationships with the people already in your life.

4. Create solutions to the situation causing your feelings. For instance, join a church, start a women's book club, invite the few friends you do know over for dinner. You can reduce your work hours, get home earlier, and spend more quality time with your family and friends. "The sky's the limit when it comes to problem solving," says Dr. Heitler.

## The Mind-Body Connection

Another way to identify your emotions is to listen to your body. Very often, our feelings manifest themselves in physical problems. Lower-back pain may indicate that we're carrying too heavy a load. Pain in our reproductive area may symbolize our sadness at our inability to conceive. Muscle tension and frequent headaches may be signs that we're internalizing our pressure-filled lives.

Of course, any physical pain may

also be a sign of disease or other problems, so check with your doctor. If she rules out any serious health concerns, then you can begin to trace those body aches from their physical locations to their emotional origins.

**Question yourself.** Close your eyes and take deep, relaxing breaths. Think about the part of your body that's hurting and ask yourself, "What does this feel like?" Your headache may feel as if someone is jabbing you, or your stomach may feel as if it's tied in knots. Then ask, "At what other times in my life have I felt like this?" and "What is different about my current circumstances compared with the past?" Given the differences, "What new options do I have for handling my present situation?" Write down your answers, and a pattern will emerge.

**Snap a picture.** Visualize your physical pain as an image. For instance, your stomach is a bunch of ropes tied in knots. Then ask yourself, "How can I turn those knots into a smooth silken cord?" Now picture that cord. Is it in the dark, or in bright sunshine? Look for the reason you see your solution in a particular setting. If it's in sunshine, it might mean that you've been very much on edge lately and now you need some bright moments in your life, says Dr. Heitler.

## Living the Spiritual Life

As women, we are composed of body, mind, and spirit. Each part



## WOMEN ASK WHY

**Is it true that physical activity can actually prevent stress and depression from happening in the first place?**

Exercise can blast away fat, shave years off your figure, boost your energy, and fight disease, but to say that it can prevent stress and depression altogether is a bit of a stretch. Research shows that regular aerobic activity can relieve symptoms of depression and significantly reduce stress to the point where it's barely noticeable. When we're stressed out, our bodies release large amounts of the hormones cortisol and adrenaline, which tense our muscles and speed our heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. Exercise keeps these hormone levels down and protects us from irritability, panic attacks, throbbing headaches, stomachaches, ulcers, and heart disease.

Research also shows that regular aerobic exercise produces mood-enhancing chemicals called endorphins that keep us cheerful, bolster self-esteem, and restore feelings of hopefulness in depressed women. So moving our bodies definitely helps. There's even evidence showing that exercise can reduce the amount of antidepressant medication you take, depending on the severity of your depression.

But with depression, exercise alone isn't enough. Prescription medications are usually taken to raise low levels of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, those precious brain chemicals that regulate our moods. Weekly therapy sessions may also be necessary.

To control stress and depression symptoms, exercise aerobically 3 or 4 days a week for at least 20 to 30 minutes. Jogging, vigorous walking, cycling, stair climbing, and step aerobics are great choices.

### Expert consulted

Ellen McGrath, Ph.D.

Chair

American Psychological Association task force

on women and depression

Washington, D.C.

## RELAX WITH HERBAL TEAS

While they don't compare to basking in the sun on a pink-sand beach, teas made with herbs called nervines, can help send your tension and anxiety packing, according to Jennifer Brett, N.D., a naturopathic doctor at the Wilton Naturopathic Center in Stratford, Connecticut. Here are some of the best-tasting blends. Drink up to four 1-cup servings of these teas throughout the day as needed to reduce anxiety, tension, and stress.

**Chamomile tea.** A member of the daisy family, chamomile is used to treat insomnia, tummy troubles, and jittery nerves. Buy it in tea bags or make your own infusion. Put 2 to 3 ounces of dried chamomile flowers in a jar and cover with freshly boiled water. Let it steep overnight. Strain and drink. (Because of the strength of this infusion, drink only one-quarter cup, or add hot water to make a tea.) If you're allergic to ragweed, asters, or chrysanthemums, use caution with chamomile.

**Kava kava.** Native to the tropical forests of South Sea islands, kava relaxes your body while keeping your mind alert. Buy the prepared tea, or make your own from kava root, which is available at some health food stores. Place 2 tablespoons of fresh (or 1 tablespoon of dried) kava root and 1 cup of spring or filtered water in a pot. Cover and boil for 20 minutes. Let it remain in the covered pot for another 10 minutes. Strain and drink. Don't take kava with alcohol or barbiturates, and use caution if you have to drive or operate machinery.

**Skullcap.** Also known as mad-dog weed and helmet flower, skullcap relieves anxiety, stress, exhaustion, and depression. You can buy the tea in health food stores, or make it yourself. Pour 1 cup of boiling water over 2 teaspoons of dried (or 1½ tablespoons of fresh) skullcap leaves. Let it steep for 15 minutes in a covered pot. Strain and drink.

**Passionflower.** This herb eases stress, tension headaches, anxiety, insomnia, and PMS. Additionally, it increases levels of serotonin, a brain chemical that regulates mood. Buy it in tea bags or use the dried leaves to make your own. Pour 1 cup of boiling water over 1½ teaspoons of the dried herb. Steep for 15 minutes. Strain and drink.

interacts with the others to help us achieve overall physical and spiritual health.

Just as we nourish our bodies to survive and stimulate our minds to stay sharp, we have to nurture our spirits to be truly complete. If we don't, we'll feel a void, says Elizabeth J. Canham, founder and director of Stillpoint Ministries in Black Mountain, North Carolina, and author of *Heart Whispers: Benedictine Wisdom for Today*.

Numerous studies show that people who practice their faith are healthier than those who do not and are less likely to die prematurely from any cause. A spiritual life can also speed recovery from physical and mental illness, surgery, and addiction.

"We're less likely to be anxious, depressed, and pessimistic when we lead a spiritual life," says Canham.

Spirituality isn't just about religion. It's about getting connected with a higher power, whether that is God or some other life force. By bringing your concerns and joys to this higher power, knowing that you have spiritual support as you walk this journey, you're able to come to a deeper appreciation of your emotions, your feelings, and yourself. These emotions and feelings are gifts to help us stay in tune with ourselves and our higher power.

You're also activating your inner voice, your intuition. Doing this helps you become more attuned to your own feelings. Once you're in

touch with your spiritual side, your inner healing power is unleashed.

You can't, however, suddenly become spiritual simply to prolong your life or help you recover from an illness. Your desire for spirituality has to come from the heart. But if you are sincerely searching for it, or would like to develop your own faith, here are some ways to make it a part of your daily life.

### Become one with nature.

Stop and smell the roses—literally. Go for a walk and really notice the beauty around you. Watch the clouds move. Listen to the birds chirp. Nature helps us relax and restores our spirit. "It's similar to taking a nap, or getting a massage," says Lucy Papillon, Ph.D., a clinical and media psychologist, founder and director of the Center of Light in Beverly Hills, California, and author of *When Hope Can Kill: Reclaiming Your Soul in a Romantic Relationship*. "You've moved out of one space and into another."

**Schedule prayer time.** Prayer is a conversation with your own higher power. And it involves both talking and listening, says Ann Bauwens, director of program development at Christian Healing Ministries in Jacksonville, Florida.

Prayer can provide a connection to the Divine in your life, and help you develop a relationship with this higher power.

Not sure how to pray? "You can begin by sharing your thoughts and feelings in conversation. It can be either verbally or in writing," suggests Carol Schoenecker, R.N., a certified healing touch practitioner and spiritual director

## THE MERITS AND DANGERS OF KAVA KAVA

Stressed? Anxious? Can't sleep? Pop a kava capsule. It's considered one of nature's best chill pills.

Kava is a native perennial shrub of the South Pacific islands that dates back thousands of years. It's known for its powerful abilities to calm jangled nerves, relax tense muscles, and provide a sense of well-being. And it's fast acting, so you'll feel calmer and even a little euphoric in as little as 30 to 60 minutes. It can also prevent stress if you take it prior to a situation you know will be nerve-racking.

The secret behind kava is a group of chemicals called kavalactones that have a mild tranquilizing effect similar to that of Valium, but without its side effects, says Jennifer Brett, N.D., a naturopathic doctor at the Wilton Naturopathic Center in Stratford, Connecticut. Animal studies show that these ingredients act on the limbic system, the part of the brain that is the center of emotions. Dr. Brett says kava is not addictive and will remain effective for insomnia over time. It doesn't leave you feeling spaced out or groggy the next morning, as many prescription drugs do.

Kava is considered very safe if you follow the dosage instructions on the label. At very high doses or with prolonged use, it may cause stomach upset or a dry, scaly skin rash, says Dr. Brett. On rare occasions, it can cause intoxication or drowsiness, so use caution if you have to drive or operate any machinery. An overdose may impair vision, cause liver damage, or lead to spinal cord injury. Don't take kava with alcohol or barbiturates. And don't use the herb if you're pregnant, trying to conceive, or breastfeeding.

at the Mind Body Spirit Clinic at Fairview University Medical Center in Minneapolis. "Prayer is empowering because you realize that you are not alone," she says.

**Read from a good book.** Pick a passage from the Bible, inspirational writing, or even a poem that speaks to your emotions or current situation. "I've found that reflecting on scripture

## ADAPTOGENIC HERBS AND STRESS

These particular herbs, also called tonics, can improve how we react to stress and protect us from the negative effects it can have on our physical and emotional health.

The beauty of adaptogens is that they adapt to our bodies' needs. If our adrenal glands pump out too much adrenaline in response to stress, the herbs help reduce the supply. If the glands aren't releasing enough hormones, the herbs help them produce more. So the adaptogen goes where it's needed, bringing our body back into a more balanced state, says Jennifer Brett, N.D., a naturopathic doctor at the Wilton Naturopathic Center in Stratford, Connecticut.

These herbs can act as stimulants by increasing alertness, reaction time, respiratory output, and motor coordination. Or they can have a milder tonic effect, lowering blood pressure, regulating blood sugar, and maintaining the immune system.

Ginseng is one of the best adaptogens around to restore vitality and boost energy. It's been used for thousands of years as a tonic to elevate mood and reduce fatigue.

There are different varieties of the herb, including Siberian ginseng, Asian ginseng, and American ginseng. They all have similar properties, although Asian ginseng is more of a stimulant than the Siberian variety. So if you're acutely stressed or recovering from a long illness, Asian ginseng is the way to go, says Dr. Brett. She recommends up to three 500-milligram capsules daily. She cautions, however, that overuse could cause sleeplessness and jitters.

Oats are also a supreme tonic for the nervous system. They help you make slow, sustained progress against stress-related disorders such as shingles, herpes flare-ups, and chronic depression. Your daily bowl of quick oats won't cut it, however. Only whole oats, the kind you cook for 30 to 40 minutes, provide this benefit.

Other adaptogens include astragalus, schisandra, codonopsis, and gotu kola, all of which are safe to take on a regular basis and are available in capsule form from your health food store. Follow the package instructions for recommended dosages.

early in the morning before I start my day is very calming. It puts me in a better frame of mind," says Canham.

**Join a spiritual community.** Connect with friends who meet once or twice a month to discuss spiritual topics. Meet with a spiritual director or mentor. You can become part of a scripture-study group in your neighborhood, or work in a ministry at your church or synagogue. Yoga classes or prayer and meditation workshops are other good ways to get in touch with your inner spirit, says Schoenecker.

## A Calming Ritual

Meditation, a form of contemplation that is thousands of years old, is rooted in the traditions of the world's greatest religions. Today, nearly all religious groups practice it in one form or another. At its core, meditation involves being quiet and still, clearing your mind, and focusing on a word or phrase, or on the rhythm of your breathing. All of these things seem about as possible as winning the lottery in our hurry-up lives.

But it's worth a try; meditation provides the time and space to tend to your emotional needs and nurture yourself. For that reason, it's a great stress buster. Research shows that daily meditation can reduce anxiety, panic attacks, depression, anger, and other emotional health problems, says Joan Borysenko, Ph.D., presi-

dent of Mind/Body Health Sciences in Boulder, Colorado, and author of *A Woman's Journey to God: Finding the Feminine Path*.

Moreover, meditation can ease tension headaches and symptoms of PMS when practiced on a regular basis.

"Meditation reduces your heart rate, your breathing, and your blood pressure. And the more you do it, the longer you'll remain in that state throughout the day," says Dr. Borysenko. Here are some tips to help you get started.

**Get comfy.** Sit on the floor with your back against a wall, or in a chair with your feet on the ground and your hands resting on your knees or thighs.

**Breathe.** Breathe in slowly and deeply for five counts, then exhale slowly for five counts.

**Take a mental vacation.** Close your eyes and visualize yourself in a tranquil place where you feel safe and calm. A quiet beach is an ideal place to start. Picture yourself resting on the sand. Feel the warmth of the sun on your skin, hear the water rushing against the shore, listen for the sounds of seagulls, or picture the ships passing by. You can use the same technique for any serene place that brings you peace.

**Do it again.** While you don't need to spend long hours meditating—20 minutes is enough—you should do it twice a day, in the morning and evening. A peaceful meditative journey upon awakening can set the tone for your entire day.

## ST. JOHN'S WORT

True depression is not just the blues. It's a deficiency in the brain's mood-altering chemicals that maintain our emotional equilibrium. These "feel-good" neurotransmitters include serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine.

That's why medication is often a first-line treatment for depression. And while recent years have seen an explosion in new drugs to treat depression, including fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil), and bupropion (Wellbutrin), there are also natural supplements that may be just as effective. One of the most popular is St. John's wort.

**What is it?** An herb used for mild-to-moderate depression. One of the most widely studied herbs for depression, it is prescribed regularly in Germany.

**How does it work?** Researchers speculate that St. John's wort inhibits an enzyme that breaks down serotonin molecules and other brain chemicals, enabling the serotonin to circulate longer in the brain. It may also increase the uptake of serotonin in the brain.

**What are its benefits?** In studies, St. John's wort has been shown to be just as effective at treating mild-to-moderate depression as prescription drugs such as Prozac.

**Does it have any drawbacks?** In rare cases, some people experience insomnia, loose bowels, and sun sensitivity. St. John's wort isn't strong enough to treat severe depression or other disorders characterized by hallucinations and suicidal thoughts. Do not use St. John's wort if you are already taking a selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitor, otherwise known as an SSRI (such as Prozac, Paxil, or Zoloft), or if you are taking digitalis for an irregular heartbeat. St. John's wort may cause photosensitivity; avoid overexposure to direct sunlight.

## Eating for Emotional Health

Remember the "body" in the mind-body-spirit trio? Just as we nourish our souls with spirituality and our minds with meditation, we must nourish our body with healthy foods.



## INNER-SPACE EXPLORERS

## Who was Ida Rolf?

New York native Ida Rolf founded the holistic philosophy and hands-on therapy known as Rolfing. Rolf, a biochemist, first presented the system, which she called structural integration, to osteopaths and chiropractors in the 1950s. It wasn't until a decade later, however, that Rolfing really became popular.

Rolf began with the idea that a person's physiological function and anatomical structure are related. From there, she developed a system to change a person's structure by manipulating their myofascia, the thin web of elastic tissue that covers organs and blood vessels and attaches muscles to bones and other muscles. A person's myofascia is greatly influenced by gravity and can become distorted from injury, emotional trauma, or poor posture. Rolfing is designed to "fix" the distorted myofascia and bring the body's structure back into balance within gravity.

While Rolfing resembles massage therapy, it does much more than release muscular tension; it improves a person's overall well-being. The therapy makes you feel light and fluid; improves your posture; eases pain, stiffness, and chronic stress; and even promotes emotional release.

Rolf's work not only led to her system of Rolfing, but also has influenced most of the "deep tissue" therapies and many other types of soft-tissue manipulation that have been developed in this country.

During times of stress, your brain runs through its supply of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine (neurotransmitters that stabilize your moods and promote emotional well-being) the way a marathoner guzzles liquids. When levels of these chemicals drop, we can get depressed, anxious, irritable, and stressed, says Joan Mathews Larson, Ph.D., founder and executive director of the Health Recovery Center in Minneapolis and author of *7 Weeks to Emotional*

rich foods. Good snacks include low-fat oatmeal cookies, bananas, popcorn, and whole wheat crackers.

**Turn to comfort foods.** After studying women who craved sweets and fats, Adam Drewnowski, Ph.D., director of the nutritional sciences program at the University of Washington in Seattle, concluded that comfort foods serve only one basic function: stress relief. Certain foods stimulate the brain's opiate receptors,

*Healing.* But modifying your diet with specific foods and supplements may help.

**Chow down on fish.** Just another example of how Mom was always right: Fish is brain food. Cold-water, fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel, trout, and canned white tuna, is loaded with omega-3 fatty acids, which may help fend off depression. Some research suggests that adequate amounts of omega-3 fatty acids, particularly DHA, may reduce the development of depression in some people. Other research has shown that worldwide, the more fish people eat, the lower the incidence of major depression. Although research evidence is preliminary, it is promising. So try to eat 2 to 3 playing-card-size servings of fatty fish a week for the omega-3s your brain needs.

**Chomp on carbos.** Eating foods high in carbohydrates such as pasta, whole wheat bread, brown rice, and whole grain cereals triggers the release of insulin, which allows the amino acid tryptophan to enter your brain freely, causing serotonin levels to rise. So make sure every meal contains some carbohydrate-

areas that trigger pleasant feelings. When Dr. Drewnowski gave the women an opiate-blocking drug, he found that their cravings melted like a candy bar on a hot sidewalk.

There are four main comfort food categories, says psychologist Doreen Virtue, Ph.D., author of *Constant Craving*. Women who crave ice cream, for instance, are very different from women who crave popcorn. See if you recognize yourself in the following categories.

✦ **The chocoholic.** Problem: You need more love. Chocolate contains chemicals that make you feel as though you're in love. To lift your spirits, take a whiff of fresh coffee; pleasant scents stimulate nerves in the body that trigger wakefulness.

✦ **The ice cream fiend.** Problem: You're depressed. Dairy foods contain chemicals that pull you out of the dumps. Try low-fat yogurts, skim milk smoothies, and cubes of cheese.

✦ **The chip head.** Problem: You're stressed, possibly because of a high-pressure job. Eating popcorn, pretzels, chips, and other salty, crunchy snacks is calming because you're gnawing out of anger, anxiety, and frustration. Gnaw on carrots, celery, broccoli, or cauliflower dipped in low-calorie, fat-free salad dressing.

✦ **The sweet tooth.** Problem: You're bored, so you gobble candy and other sugary snacks to make you feel more alive. Find a neighborhood fruit stand that sells fresh apples, peaches, and watermelon. The sugars in candy and in fruit are similar in that they are both nutritive sweeteners, and they provide similar amounts of energy. "At first, women think that fruit won't satisfy them, but that's because they've been eating poor-quality, store-bought fruit," Dr. Virtue says. "If they spend the extra money to get high-quality fruit, they won't consider it a compromise."

**Pop some Bs.** If you're feeling down, tense, and anxious, you may be deficient in the B-

complex vitamins. These vitamins, which include thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, pantothenic acid, and vitamins B<sub>6</sub> and B<sub>12</sub>, help us relax and lift our mood by raising levels of several of those all-important neurotransmitters. "Without them, we'd be nervous, irritable, and moody," says Dr. Larson. Vitamins B<sub>2</sub> (riboflavin) and B<sub>6</sub> (pyridoxine) in particular have been linked to higher spirits.

Boost your intake of vitamin B<sub>6</sub> by eating several servings daily of low-fat, protein-rich foods such as chicken, nuts, legumes, and fish. Other good sources include bananas, avocados, and dark green leafy vegetables. Eat whole grain breads and cereals, and brown or enriched rice. Look for a multivitamin supplement containing at least 2 milligrams of B<sub>6</sub>. The safe upper limit is 100 milligrams, unless your doctor advises you to take more. Large doses of B<sub>6</sub> supplements can cause nerve damage, including numbness and tingling in your hands and feet.

**Slurp some citrus.** Vitamin C also increases levels of serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, says Dr. Larson. What's more, vitamin C relieves stress by suppressing surges of adrenaline, the hormone our body pumps out when we face danger or a stressful situation. Too much adrenaline coursing through our veins leaves us feeling nervous and irritable. To get these benefits, however, you'd have to supplement with at least 2,000 milligrams of vitamin C a day in divided doses, says Dr. Larson. Excess vitamin C may cause diarrhea in some people; if that happens, cut back on your supplementation and try to get as much vitamin C as possible from food. Foods high in vitamin C include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, strawberries, oranges, cantaloupe, kiwifruit, papaya, sweet potatoes, watermelon, and red bell peppers. You're likely to get over 500 milligrams of vitamin C simply by eating five to nine half-cup servings of fruit and vegetables a day.



## INNER-SPACE EXPLORERS

### Who was Matina Horner?

Psychologist Matina Horner, who served a 17-year post as president of Radcliffe College in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is well-known for her research on how gender differences influence people's drive for success. Horner conducted a classic study in 1968 from which she concluded that some women shy away from striving for success because they are socialized to believe competition and achievement are masculine traits. These women fear that success will make others view them as less feminine. For that reason, they underachieve, especially when competing with men, and may avoid socializing with successful women, Horner said.

This female fear of success, known as the Horner Effect, may not be as prominent in today's society as it was some 20 years ago, but as psychologist Barbara Kerr notes in her book *Smart Girls: A New Psychology of Girls, Women, and Giftedness*, "The Horner Effect may still live on in girls' and women's tendencies to negotiate or avoid conflict or competition when friendship or intimacy is at stake."

**Pass on the refined sugar.** If you are depressed, sugary treats may enhance your mood in the short term, but in the end, the depression inevitably returns. Why sugar has this ef-

fect on some people isn't clear. Some experts speculate that sugar produces a temporary release of feel-good chemicals called endorphins, which is followed by a crash as the endorphins plummet to lower-than-normal levels. What's more, your blood sugar levels also take a nosedive shortly after you eat sweets, which can make you irritable, says Dr. Larson. If you're hungry and you crave something sweet, mixing fruit with a bit of protein, such as pineapple with cottage cheese or frozen blueberries with fat-free yogurt, is your best bet, she says. You'll still satisfy your sweet tooth, but the protein will help balance the rise in blood sugar caused by the fruit's natural glucose.

**Nix the caffeine.** Coffee, tea, and soda serve as quick pick-me-ups that can boost your energy and increase alertness. But in the long run, the caffeine can make you jittery, anxious, and more tense. So if you're under a lot of stress, go for decaffeinated coffee or soda, herbal tea, water, or juice, says Dr. Larson.