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AMBASSADOR EVENT

The Celebratory Finale Of  
National Fruits & Veggies Month

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**PBH reveals the key to being happy**

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By

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Is healthy food really the secret to a better mood? Produce for Better Health thinks so, and it backed up its theory with plenty of research and a presentation by Dr. Taylor Wallace during the “Fruits & Veggies: Food Rooted in a Better Mood” general session on the second day of the virtual Have A Plant Nation Ambassador Event, Sept. 28-29.

“Fruits and vegetables really do influence cognition and mood state quite extensively,” Wallace told attendees.

Especially in this day and age, psychological stress brought on by the pandemic has had a negative impact on whole body health. An altered mental status has been reported as a post-COVID-19 side effect, and research shows the disease may also exacerbate pre-existing mental illnesses.

So what can be done to counteract the high-stress environments so many of us find ourselves in today? Eating a well-balanced, healthy, produce-packed diet, of course.

Nutrients present in plant foods and fruits and vegetables are a prime way to counter the imbalance of oxidative stress and promote normal brain function, according to Wallace.

Your digestion system and gut microbiome also play a big role when it comes to improving your mood. “GI track produces 95 percent of the body’s serotonin,” Wallace said. “Your digestion system literally helps guide your mood.”

Another important component: good, quality sleep.

“Sleep supports the clearance of waste products across the blood-brain barrier,” Wallace stated. “Poor sleep can lead to restless leg syndrome, fatigue and many other brain disorders. And poor nutrition can lead to sleep disturbances.”

Wallace went on to list many nutrients and vitamins that are vital to our health and well-being, but made it a point to note that, “it’s not just one single nutrient that is important, but rather multiple nutrients delivered through a well-balanced meal.”

Following the MIND Diet, which is a hybrid of two existing diets with decades of research — the DASH diet and the Mediterranean diet — has been shown to impact brain health. The MIND diet emphasizes foods such as greens, vegetables, nuts, berries, beans, whole grains, fish, poultry and olive oil.

There are even certain foods that have been shown to have a superior effect on cognition, such as avocados, blueberries, Concord grape juice, strawberries, Brazil nuts and fresh, lean pork.

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Overall, Produce for Better Health suggests diversifying your plate with lots of different fresh produce to optimize your well-being and mental health.

For more information, health and wellness tips and recipe ideas, visit [www.fruitsandveggies.org](http://www.fruitsandveggies.org).

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