

## ***Omega-3s: Your Natural Anti-Depressant***

By Ryan Harrison

*Ryan N. Harrison is a Holistic & Integrative Health Practitioner in private practice (<http://www.BeWholeBeWell.com>). He has taught holistic nutrition, therapeutic herbalism and natural health for many years in both online and traditional settings.*

Depression is nothing new – it’s the stuff that keeps some companies (and practically an entire industry) in business. Some even speculate that such companies don’t actually intend to “cure” depression, for then it becomes less lucrative. Small comfort for you, if you are among the millions of people who often feel down, sad, lethargic, hopeless, lackadaisical...the symptoms go on and on.

The fact that depression affects the entire person – body, mind, and spirit – certainly makes it both a holistic concern and something worth looking at a bit more closely.

The good news is that there is much you can do for yourself to ease depression. In fact, depending on the source of your depression, you may be able to turn things around entirely on your own. Did you know that depression can be linked to nutrition? And not only that – recent research suggests that it may be caused by inflammation in the brain as a direct result of an imbalanced diet.

Enter one French psychiatrist.

David Servan-Schreiber, M.D., Ph.D., Cofounder of the Center for Complementary Medicine at the University of Pittsburg Medical Center and author of *The Instinct to Heal: Curing Stress, Anxiety, and Depression Without Drugs and Without Talk Therapy*, has taken depression and other mood disorders head on. And his approach doesn’t seem to string you along (like, say, a pharmaceutical company’s might). Rather, Servan-Schreiber suggests you can treat depression successfully with something as remarkably unremarkable as Omega-3 Fatty Acids.

Time for a short lesson in nutrition.

Essential Fatty Acids (also called “EFAs”) are “essential” because your body cannot manufacture them, yet you require them to live. There are two related types of EFAs: Omega-3s (Alpha-linolenic acid) and Omega-6s (Linoleic acid). In general, Omega-6s come primarily from grains and can be found in most vegetable oils and in animal fat. Though you can get Omega-3s in some seeds or nuts, the highest concentrations are available in algae, plankton, and other sea sources that usually find their way to us via fish and other seafood that eat these sea-plants and accumulate the fatty acids in their flesh. Servan-Schreiber maintains that one of the results of our modern Western diet is that we consume far more Omega-6s and than -3s, and this has significant deleterious results, especially on our brains.

*The Instinct to Heal* points to persuasive research indicating that depression may actually be an inflammatory disease. If this is the case, then supplementing with Omega-3s may be incredibly beneficial in the treatment of depression. Why? Because one of the well-known effects of Omega-3s in the body is its ability to decrease inflammation and “feed” the brain (two-thirds of

which is composed of fatty acids). Relatively high doses of Omega-3s (1-3 grams/day) are required to benefit from their anti-inflammatory and -depressive effects; a Nutritional Consultant will be able to help you choose and use a good Omega-3 supplement.

Studies have shown that an entire range of depressive symptoms improves with adequate supplementation of Omega-3s. So if you're feeling bluer than blue but don't want to be hooked on prescription medications for life, explore this EFA. It may be just what the (holistic) doctor ordered!