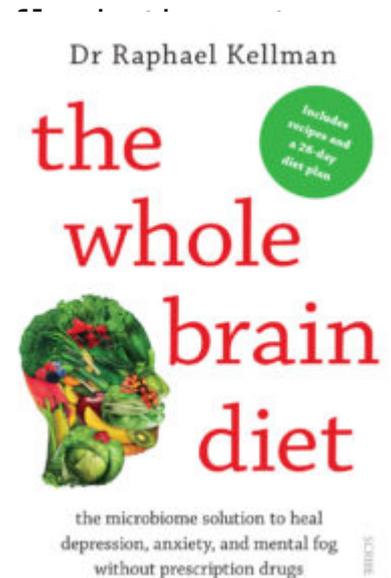


# FLUSHING THE GUT FOR OPTIMAL BRAIN FUNCTION

Occasionally, I have wondered why film-producers are making so many movies about zombies. Who exactly are these zombies? Then one day it dawned on me that we are the zombies. By we, I mean the common people. It is apparent that a growing number of people are living on unhealthy junk diets, intellectually and otherwise; eating non-organic junk foods, reading or watching junk information through the media and on the social media. This has a detrimental effect on the mind, body and spirit's health. As a result, many people are suffering from anxiety, depression and mental fog. This epidemic in mental health is spreading fast globally.

When I was a child, we lived in a small village in [Pakistan](#), we always had home-grown organic foods. However, fruits and vegetables were available seasonally only. Most people used to cleanse their guts during the springtime. Flushing the gut by means of diarrhea was an annual ritual that most rural people practiced. It was considered beneficial for health. When I was diagnosed with SMA many years later and told by the Western doctors that there is no treatment available for me here. I decided to go abroad to try herbal medicines. Strangely, the very first thing I was told to do by the herbal practitioner

before starting any form of treatment was to



Herbalists in Asia have known for centuries that most of our problems (including some mental problems) start off in the gut. When I read Raphael Kellman's book [\*The Whole Brain Diet: the microbiome solution to heal depression, anxiety, and mental fog without prescription drugs\*](#) (Scribe, 2017) discussing the very same subject, it captured my interest. Kellman explains that we experience problems when there is an imbalance of microbiome in the gut.

Microbiomes are composed mainly of bacterial cells, which not only help digest the foods but also help protect us against germs. This means that not all the bacteria in our gut is bad, in fact, much of it is good; and is required for our mental and physical health. It is no coincidence then that;

*"Most of our bacteria are found in the gut—and most of the immune system is found there, too. With trillions of bacteria and 70 percent of our immune system in such close quarters, the microbiome is inextricably intertwined with immune function. Bacteria help our immune system differentiate between friend and foe while promoting the integrity of the gut wall. Both of these tasks help prevent inflammation, whose side effects include anxiety, [depression](#), and brain fog."* The key point to remember is that *"Inflammation disrupts function in the gut, unbalances*

*the microbiome, and undermines the thyroid."*

The book discusses not only the biological aspects but also focuses on the importance of social interaction as well as how healthy foods influence the human body and mental health. Although there is lots of useful information in the book, the book also contains a lot of repetition. Similar phrases are repeated over and over, at times page after page.

On the good side, Kellman touches on an important matter, the will to receive and the will to give. The 'will' as I understood it is a decision, your desire to heal, by choosing to heal your life. "Activating your will – tapping into your ability to choose health and healing at your deepest level – is the "X-factor that can make the difference between getting only a little bit better and becoming truly well."

Just simply desiring or choosing to heal is not enough; we are social beings, we also need to feel connected with others, we are feeling connected with other, we want to give and receive. In fact, *"giving support to others is what helps keep people alive"*. Whereas, *"feeling disconnected from others cues our body toward a profound state of ill health, making us vulnerable to anxiety and depression. And when we feel disconnected, that's when our desire atrophies, and we lose our will both to receive for ourselves and to give to others."* This means we derive our energy by regularly giving or sharing the goodness with others. By giving and receiving we are actually boosting our own wellbeing. As the old adage goes, we should always be charitable, even if all we give is a smile.

The book is not intended to offer a panacea for all types of illnesses but is specific for boosting the health of the gut and thereby the brains function. The final chapter contains a 28 days recipe plan to help with balancing microbiome in the gut. There is a list of healthy foods included but finding fresh organic vegetables at local stores is a task and half. I agree with Kellman that we need to avoid unhealthy fats.

*“Because your brain is composed primarily of fat, you need healthy fats to support your brain. Healthy fats are first and foremost those found in nature. Thus trans fats, which are made only in factories, are not healthy – your cells don’t know what to do with them, and these fats can actually damage your cells and, therefore, your brain.”*

It seems we are not paying enough attention to the health of our gut. The gut plays a central part in our mental health. An unhealthy gut is only beneficial to the pharmaceutical industry. Maybe this is the reason why Muslims are told to fast for one month to give their gut an opportunity to regain optimum health. We, in the West, take our gut for granted and we consume processed foods on a regular basis. Perhaps, this is one of the reasons why our brains struggle to perform at optimum levels because our guts are neglected.

But to achieve a healthy brain function, we require more than just the ‘will’, or just feeling connected or just organic foods. We also need to have a purpose in life. Probably, this is the foundation as, without a purpose, all other attempts will sooner or later falter and not deliver the desired results. Even if you perceive that you are happy, “being happy doesn’t actually contribute to our health. What does contribute to our health is the purpose.”

Hence our purpose in life should be bigger than being a zombie. Striving to help others contributes to [restoring the mind](#) and body. We have a huge potential, but somehow we seldom perform at optimum levels due to various so-called life’s obstacles and deficiencies. Perhaps we don’t service or flush our gut and this leads us into a vicious circle, always fighting an uphill battle. However, the human [resilience](#) is a powerful tool at our disposal, which can help us recover and restore ourselves. We need to begin the recovery process by looking after our mind, body and the gut.