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Fueling Resilience: How Nutrition Shapes Mental Health and Builds Stronger Communities

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Nutrition plays a pivotal role in mental health, yet it remains underutilized in strategies aimed at enhancing emotional resilience and cognitive well-being. Emerging research supports that specific nutrients—including complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, omega-3 fatty acids, prebiotics, probiotics, iron, folate, and antioxidants—can positively influence the gut-brain axis, neurotransmitter production, and inflammatory pathways that affect mood and behaviour. This presentation explores the bi-directional communication between the gut and the brain, highlighting how microbial changes in the gastrointestinal tract can impact mental function, stress response, and emotional regulation. For example, approximately 90% of the body's serotonin is produced in the gut, directly linking digestive health to emotional stability. Nutrients that support neurotransmitter synthesis—such as tryptophan-rich proteins, fermentable fiber, and omega-3s—demonstrate strong potential in reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress-related disorders. This session provides a synthesis of current scientific literature and real-world applications that underscore how targeted nutrition can be used to empower individuals and improve population-level mental wellness.

Biography

Kelly Springer is a Registered Dietitian and owner of Kelly's Choice, the world's largest dietitian-owned nutrition company. She is author of the book, *The New Weight Loss Era: Navigating Nutrition with a Dietitian's Expertise in the Age of Medications*. She has been featured on Good Morning America and in The Washington Post, among dozens of other media outlets. She is a proud board member of the American Heart Association, advocating for heart health and wellness on a national level. She holds a bachelor's degree in nutrition from West Virginia University and a master's degree in health education from SUNY Cortland.

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