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# DEPRESSION: Causes & Solutions



It is estimated that almost 19 million (1 in 10) Americans suffer from some form of depression. Of these 19 million, nearly two-thirds are women. Anxiety and substance abuse are commonly reported

by those who experience depression. Clearly depressive disorders have a major impact on health and society. What can be done?

Foremost, by understanding the complex nature of mood and mood disorders, medical science can develop ways to better manage these health concerns. Scientists now recognize that mood is primarily controlled by the brain in specific regions that communicate using chemical messengers called neurotransmitters. Feelings of happiness or sadness are ultimately the function of chemical messages sent back and forth within the brain.

Through this understanding, the “monoamine hypothesis” was developed as an explanation why someone may feel depressed. In essence, the hypothesis states that depression is due to a deficiency in one or more of the monoamine neurotransmitters, including serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. Deficiencies in these messengers mean that the brain regions controlling mood are unable to communicate effectively. The breakdown in communication can then lead to feelings of depression.

Deficiencies in neurotransmitters are not without cause. Stress, poor diet, genetic predisposition, and other factors have significant impact on brain health. Over time, stressors deplete the reservoirs of key neurotransmitters, resulting in mental health concerns. Since everyone is unique, it is hard to predict who might experience depression, even if two individuals experience the same type of stressors. And if someone is experiencing depression, it is equally hard to know exactly what neurotransmitters might be deficient, since more than one neurotransmitter plays a role in mood regulation.

Thankfully, there are non-invasive lab tests that can measure neurotransmitter levels. These lab tests can identify which neurotransmitters might be imbalanced and how severe those deficiencies might be. With lab data, more targeted treatment decisions can be made that focus on the individual.

Following the development of the monoamine hypothesis, pharmaceutical companies created drugs that specifically act on the monoamine transmitters. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are the most widely prescribed class of drugs used to treat depression. They act by enhancing levels of serotonin in the areas of the brain that control mood. While they are very effective for many experiencing depression, there are a number of other options available as well.

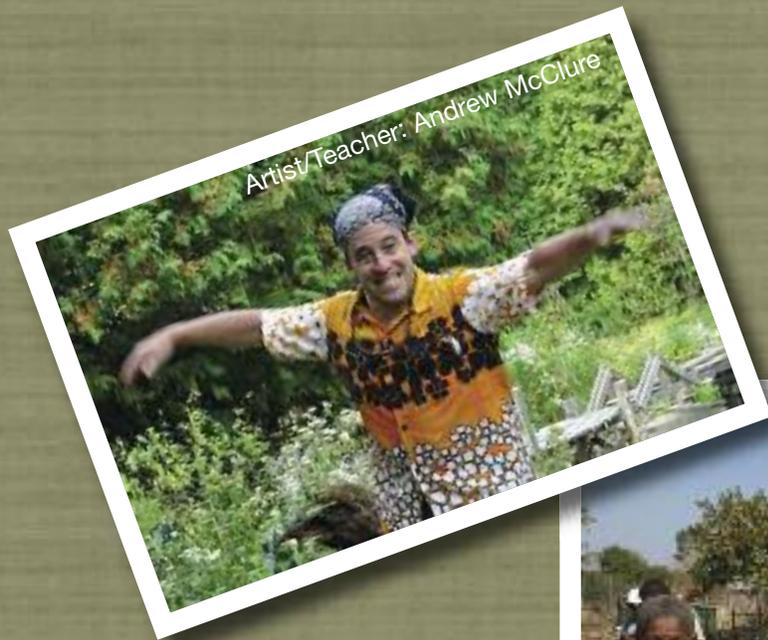
The brain is responsible for making its own neurotransmitters. For example, serotonin is created from one of the building blocks of protein, an amino acid called tryptophan. Dopamine and norepinephrine are created from another amino acid called tyrosine. Both tryptophan and tyrosine can be obtained through protein-containing foods in our diet. However, if the demand for neurotransmitters is increased by stress, there may not be enough of these important amino acids in the diet to keep up.

Tryptophan and tyrosine can be used supplementally to support healthy neurotransmitter levels. Many scientific studies have documented their ability to improve mood in depressed individuals. However, their use should be guided through neurotransmitter testing and the oversight of a licensed professional.

In addition to the neurotransmitter aspect of depression, it has been linked to disruptions in various hormones. During stress, the body releases the hormone cortisol, which serves to help the body respond to various stressful stimuli. Recurrent stressors can lead to chronically high cortisol levels, which, among other things, can have a significant effect on mood. In circumstances where depression may be due to a chronically activated stress-response system, treatments geared to reduce stress and support good hormone balance have been quite effective.

Again, laboratory tests exist that measure the levels of stress hormones. Treatment options for balancing stress hormones include various relaxation techniques, massage, yoga, and meditation. Supplementally, herbal adaptogens such as rhodiola and adrenal-supporting B-vitamins have proven effective.

While depression is a major health concern, we can feel confident that a number of solutions exist for its treatment. With the advent of lab testing and targeted treatment strategies, the likelihood of positive outcomes continues to improve. ▲



Artist/Teacher: Andrew McClure



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**Where:** Kimberton Waldorf School, Kimberton PA

**Fee:** \$275. (includes lunch and dinner Aug.28<sup>th</sup>)

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# Healthy Meals Create Healthy Kids



**T**his past Mother's Day four out of my five children visited, and as always, we started to talk about their younger days, growing up with their crazy, macro-neurotic mom. So much of raising 5 kids as a single parent was intense, insane, riotous and funny. Well then again, a lot of it wasn't funny but I always tried to find a way to inject some humor into the day-to-day stresses of parenting.

My children now range in ages of 24 – 35. They are the most amazingly wonderful adults, each with their own quirks, but generally successful and happy. With this in mind, I can now look back and see what I would do differently, but I am also able to pat myself on the back for persevering through and sticking to my guns on certain issues like healthy eating.

I firmly believe it is the parent's job to set the standards for behavior and health in the home. I took this job quite seriously. I am proud to say that I insisted on family meals and healthy food at the table, every meal, every day. There were no options. Processed food and cane sugar was not permitted in the house. Yes, sometimes the kids would sneak it in and hide it and I would throw it out upon discovery - a bit of an irritating, but necessary game.

I might upset a whole bunch of people here, but I don't believe in the concept of hiding healthy foods in other foods to get kids to eat it. We are still just catering to the whims of the kids and allowing them to eat a whole bunch of processed foods (even if we are making it), often with some sort of sugar. Muffins, cakes and cookies with beans and veggies are really not the same as eating a plate of steamed broccoli or squash. Vegetables are one of the most important foods that we all need to be eating and we should be getting our kids to enjoy them from the very beginning. This also means that the parents will be eating them as well – a good thing all around.

Marian Nestle, in her book *What to Eat* mentions that there is a direct correlation with the practice of parents allowing children to choose what they want to eat and the rise of childhood diabetes, childhood obesity and many other, never before existent, childhood maladies. The

worst thing for children's health is the invention of "child-friendly" food. The kid friendly peanut butter is the one loaded with sugars, oils and a whole bunch of other not too good for you ingredients. Doesn't sound too friendly to me. Studies are also showing that many food additives have been linked to behavioral problems with children.

My rule of thumb is this: Prepare something that you know your child loves. This shows the child that you care about them and want them to be happy and satisfied. Prepare something that the child can choose not to eat. This acknowledges of the importance of control and choice. Lastly, have something for which there is no choice. This is often a vegetable dish. Sweetie, you're eating it, like it or not. If it were up to me I'd eat chocolate all day, preceded by pasta. Or I might eat tofu with noodles and broth, or just yogurt. Actually if it was up to me, I'd never cook again as long as I lived. But then I know I'd also be sick and I don't want that, so I cook, like it or not.

Now, I don't want it to sound like I didn't cater to my children at all. I did by making sure there were always foods on the table that they would enjoy. But these were healthy dishes that the entire family would enjoy. For some reason around the age of two many children who ate vegetables when younger get a bit picky. I don't know if this is just a part of those well-known "terrible twos". That wonderful time that our children are testing boundaries and seeing how far they can push before they get their way. But I had always found that this was the critical time to make sure the children continued to eat what is presented to them. To get my children to eat their veggies at a young age I would make special sauces and dips, put the veggies on skewers or somehow or other make the vegetables more interesting to them.

I know from my own experience, and that of like-minded parents, that when healthy eating standards are set at home, long-term health is often the result. Compare this to the fate of children who are pampered at mealtime and allowed to set their own food agenda. The national statistics on childhood obesity and disease say more than I ever could.

*continued on page 39*

## THE YOGALIFE INSTITUTE PRESENTS



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Every parent I know who set vegetable based meals on the table starting when their children were young, kept the junk food out of the house and had family meals, found their kids were a pleasure with which to share a meal. Their children ate most everything on their plate with a smile and asked for more.

Sometimes what is easier in the short run is difficult in the long run. Setting these standards at home, when the majority is not having family dinners and is eating instant food is not easy. Honestly, is processed food which lasts for years on a shelf, consisting of who knows what, really good to give to your kid for lunch or dinner? This is incomprehensible. Parenting isn't easy; a lot of it is hard, very hard. Going against the grain is hard. But the fact that my kids had very few illnesses and were only in the doctor's office to get their annual exams to play sports, paid off. Now, as adults, my children value eating a healthy diet and recognize that their current health is attributed to how they grew up. Hey, if I could do it raising five as a single working mom, so can you. Get creative and you can do it. Their long-term health and well-being makes all the hard stuff worthwhile.

Here are some sauces, dips and spreads that my children enjoyed with veggies. I made my own, controlling the salt content and eliminating sugars found in most sauces available in markets. Most of these sauces will keep in the fridge for a week or so.

## WHITE BEAN DIP

1 (15 oz) can organic white beans such as cannellini, navy or great northern, drained OR 1½ cups cooked dried white beans  
 1 – 2 cloves minced garlic (optional for young children)  
 2 tablespoons lemon juice (or more to taste)  
 ½ cup organic olive oil  
 Small handful up to ¼ cup fresh basil  
 Salt to taste

*Optional ingredients:* a little freshly ground organic black pepper, 1 teaspoon dried oregano

Put the ingredients into a food processor. Pulse until all ingredients are well blended. Serve with steamed or lightly boiled veggies. What could be easier?

## PEANUT SAUCE

1 c Organic Peanut Butter  
 ¼ c Organic Chickpea or White Miso  
 2 T Organic Brown Rice Vinegar  
 2 T Organic Shoyu or Wheat Free Tamari  
 ¼ c Organic Brown Rice Syrup  
 3 T Toasted Sesame oil

Juice of 1 large Orange  
 Lemon/Lime juice to taste

*Optional ingredients:* 2 cloves garlic, minced, 2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger, 1 tablespoon or more if you like: chopped cilantro and or scallion.

Put the ingredients into a food processor. Pulse until all ingredients are well blended. Serve with steamed or lightly boiled veggies. Easy again. Stores for at least a week or more.

*Note:* If you are avoiding soy use the chickpea miso and replace the shoyu or tamari with a small amount of sea salt. If your child has peanut allergies, try cashew butter or sunflower butter as a substitute for the peanut butter.

## MOWENNA SAUCE

This is a lovely sauce created by my friend's daughter Mowenna when she was 10. It's great on tempeh, tofu, pasta and diluted more as a dip for veggies! Make a lot and keep it on hand in the fridge.

½ cup organic shoyu or wheat free tamari  
 ½ cup Suzannes organic brown rice syrup  
 ½ cup organic balsamic vinegar  
 ½ cup water  
 1 T fresh grated ginger  
 1 - 5 cloves garlic, minced

You might find that the proportion of the ingredients needs some tweaking depending on the brand of ingredients that you use. Each brand has a different flavor.

Mix all the ingredients. That's it! Add more water for younger children.

## BROWN RICE CRISPY TREATS

It's nice to be able to give kids a snack they love and that is really not very bad for them. We all need a little treat sometimes.

4 cups Erewhon Organic Brown Rice Crispies  
 2 cups Suzanne's Ricemellow Cream – made from rice syrup and pretty amazing  
 ¼ cup any Nut Butter

Put the Brown Rice Crispies into a bowl. Heat the Ricemellow Cream and the nut butter in a saucepan until it becomes hot and creamy. Stir constantly while you are heating it. Mix with the rice crispies.

Dampen your hands and press into a square Pyrex pan. Let it cool.

*Note:* Raisins, currants and nuts are a nice addition to this. Or of course there are always chocolate chips. To keep it sugar free use the Sunspire grain sweetened chocolate chips. If your child has wheat allergies then leave the chips out.

# Holistic Resource Directory

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**Acupuncture with Lance** LanceIsakov.com (610) 203-3747 Wayne, PA

**Ananda Acupuncture & Herbs**, John Stamps, M.A.C., L.O.M. 610-526-2689  
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**Lourdes Institute** of Wholistic Studies (856) 869-3134  
900 Haddon Ave. Collingswood, NJ [www.lourdeswellnesscenter.org](http://www.lourdeswellnesscenter.org)  
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# SURPRISINGLY UNHEALTHY FOODS: What to Choose Instead!

**W**hat to eat? Seems like a simple question, but it's one that can vex even the most savvy eater, especially when trying to make sense of food packaging. How many times do you browse the grocery aisles trying to discern the "best" pasta, cereal or bread? Most concerned healthy eaters know the obvious, like there is no fruit in "Froot Loops." But what about "grown up foods"? You know, those labeled as "whole grain," "all natural" or "healthy"?

## Food Label Foolishness

There is much confusion for consumers who rely on the front of food packages to make their choices. Although "natural" *should* mean no artificial colors or ingredients, the term "natural" isn't a guarantee that the product contains whole wheat—or any fruits or vegetables at all.

Cut through the confusion and read the package from back to front - read the ingredient label first! Heed these tips to shop smart:

**Natural:** In your quest to find foods that nourish, do you purchase foods labeled "100% Natural," "Healthy," or "No Artificial Ingredients" without actually reading the ingredients? We're at a disadvantage compared with countries such as Canada where labeling laws are more stringent and specific. The USDA says that the "natural" claim means that the food does not contain any *artificial* ingredients, coloring ingredients, or chemical preservatives, and, in the case of meat and poultry, is minimally processed. However, the meat may be full of "natural flavors" and "naturally raised" doesn't mean the animal isn't raised on a factory farm. It also doesn't mean that the animal has access to the outdoors. A can of iced tea can read "100% Natural Tea," however the ingredients include filtered water, high fructose corn syrup and lemon flavoring. That's not natural to me.

**Multi-grain:** From breads to crackers to hot and cold cereals, "multi-grain" does not mean whole grain—it means just about nothing at all, except that the product contains an undefined amount of different types of grains. What you really want to look for is "100% whole grain," so you're assured that you're getting all of the good nutrition from that grain's kernel—the nutrients, including vitamin E and magnesium, and fiber. Some packages distract the consumer by touting impressive amounts of vitamins and minerals, even fiber. But, be a savvy consumer and look at the ingredients first, if you're interested in buying products without artificial

colorings, flavors, excessive sugar and salt. Be sure the first ingredient is "100% whole," either wheat or other grain, and remember, a teaspoon of sugar equals 4 grams. To know what you're eating, read the serving size first, then the calories per serving, how much fiber and then how much sugar per serving (for example, a serving of shredded wheat and bran mini wheats is 1¼ cup, has 200 calories, 7 grams of fiber and less than 1 gram of sugar!).

**Low Glycemic Index:** Where "low carb" left off, the "low glycemic index" has taken over. The glycemic index ranks foods based on the how quickly they elevate blood sugar levels compared to the same quantity of a reference food (pure glucose or white bread). In addition to not considering the amount of food usually eaten, the GI doesn't include the amount of fiber in the food. A medium baked potato has a higher GI (85)

than a Snickers bar (55), and who'd say a candy bar is better than a baked potato? The quantity of food represented by that ranking is always 50 grams, regardless of how much food (volume) it takes to eat 50 grams; it's real easy to eat 50 carbohydrate grams of cookies (7 small cookies) but much tougher to eat 50 carbohydrate grams of carrots (5 cups of carrots) in one sitting! In the context of "healthy" ignore the glycemic index and focus on whole foods, with fiber, in portions that are right for you.

**Organic:** The truth is, if it's sugar, it's sugar—organic or not, high fructose corn syrup, honey, cane or white, maple syrup, or agave nectar—all nutritive sweeteners have approximately 16-20 calories per teaspoon, and negligible nutrition—said differently, they are empty calories. I took a cruise through the breakfast aisle, and found "organic toaster pastries" but compared to conventional toaster pastries, there's just as much sugar, and making it "organic" doesn't make it lower in calories or higher in fiber. If you're looking for a healthy breakfast that's convenient and portable, choose a toaster waffle with whole grains.

**"Free" foods:** Yes, we want to be free to eat what we like, and for many, that means fake foods that imitate sweets and desserts. However, foods labeled "low fat" or "fat free" does not make it calorie free - manufacturers add sugar to add texture and bulk lost from removing fat. A "sugar free" cookie may have a similar calorie count compared to the regular too. So, the most important thing to look at when you're reading a label is *not* the calories, fat or sugar, but always, it's the *servings size* that must be read first.



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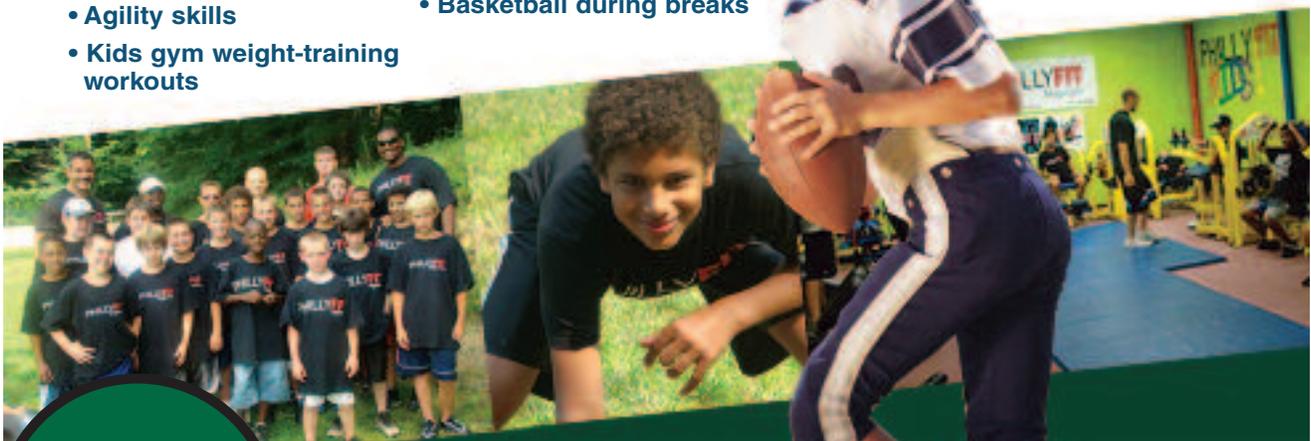
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**Note:** “Fat Free” means less than a half a gram of fat per serving, “low fat” or “light” means less than 3 grams of fat per serving, and “reduced fat” means 25% less than the reference food. For example, Mayonnaise illustrates this perfectly. The “reference” or original mayo has 10 grams of fat per one tablespoon serving. The reduced fat version has 25% less fat, or 7.5 grams of fat per serving...still not a low fat food. But choose a “low fat” or “light” version, and you know it has 3 grams or less of fat per serving, a better choice.

Buyer beware! Seemingly healthy foods such as yogurt and oatmeal may contain copious amount of added sugars; breads and crackers are often made with heart-unhealthy hydrogenated oils (trans fat). “Miracle” juices and “energy” bars, touted as healthful, are usually just vehicles for added sugars and excessive calories. Consider this representative list of some surprisingly unhealthy foods:

**Yogurt:** Plain, low fat or nonfat yogurt is such a healthy food, because it’s a delicious low fat source of calcium, vitamin D and magnesium and protein, but many manufacturers have taken liberties with yogurt! They’ve loaded it up with excess unwanted calories. Consumers are distracted by words like “organic” and “natural” but even these words can’t undo nutritional damage from added sugars, “granola” and nuts - and more. Yogurt should have but two ingredients: milk and live cultures. Stay wholesome by staying simple, and that goes for kids’ yogurts too.

**Tortilla and Taco Shells:** Generally low in fat, usually made from corn or wheat, or both...but read the ingredient label first, because many brands are quite high in fat, and are often made with hydrogenated fat, or trans fat (hydrogenated oils). Trans fat can raise bad cholesterol but also lower “good” HDL cholesterol. Search out better-for-you whole-wheat tortilla and taco shells made with canola or other vegetable oils.

**Instant oatmeal:** Looking for convenience and nutrition, we make the mistake of reading the front of the package for descriptors such as “wholesome” and “nutritious”. We know not to choose sugary cold cereals but convenience packages of instant oatmeal are no exception. Read the ingredient label first—one teaspoon of sugar equals four grams: some of the “maple” or other favors have more than 12 grams per serving. Buy whole oats, microwave for a minute in a glass dish, stir in a quarter-cup of raisins, cook one more minute, and Sweet!

**Granola:** Granola may be “natural” but it’s also a typically calorie-dense food, not nutritionally desirable if it’s full of oil and sugar. Do a little label reading in the grocery store - most flaked or “twig” cereals such as Kashi GoLean list the serving size as  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 cup, for about 150 calories per cup. There is no standardized serving size for cereals, and most packaged granolas’ list the serving size as a mere quarter-cup, with about 160 calories per serving. No one is satisfied with just a quarter-cup of cereal and usually will pour their usual cup - multiplied by four, that’s 640 calories, plus milk! Granolas typically features a good amount of oil plus a number of different

sweet ingredients, some which may sound healthful, but again, sugar is sugar, and all of it, maple syrup, brown sugar, cane sugar, agave nectar, honey - are recognized similarly by your body, and are all different ways to say more calories! Stick with a high fiber, lower sugar cereal, and if you like granola, use as a topping on a yogurt and fruit parfait (nonfat Greek yogurt and berries).

**“Miracle” Juices:** The front of the package appeals to your quest for good health with words like “immune promoting” and “antioxidants”. The front label shows appealing photos of fresh fruit, but like all juice, the proof is in the fiber - and reading the nutrition facts label shows that juice contains just about none. There are no studies that show that drinking juice will prevent disease, and people who are watching their weight need to remember that calories in fruit juice are equivalent to soda - no fiber here, and a very quick way to get excess calories. Eat whole fruit, for more energy and fiber, and save your calories for fullness.

**“Energy” bars:** Another name for “energy” is “calorie,” and most bars are more akin to candy bars than nutritious snacks. The first ingredient is usually refined flour (not whole grain), then sugar, sugar, and more sugar, in a myriad of guises, including corn syrup, molasses, honey and more. For sustainable energy, grab a cup of 100-calorie yogurt and stir a cup of crunchy low-sugar cereal into the yogurt; make a fresh-fruit smoothie with nonfat yogurt, milk and berries, or pack a tuna sandwich on whole wheat with an orange (Who says you have to have cereal for breakfast? Have lunch for breakfast and breakfast for lunch).

**Microwave popcorn:** Popcorn is a great snack, but not when it’s loaded with hydrogenated fat (trans fat), artificial flavors and preservatives. Additives make it high in fat calories relative to volume, and often the microwave popcorn is loaded with hydrogenated fat. Make it better! It’s so easy, with an air-popper: pop up a few cups and enjoy. For a heartier snack, toss the hot popcorn with some grated cheddar cheese.

**Rice cakes:** Although they’re somewhat lower in calories than potato or ‘Doritos’ chips, rice cakes offer little in nutritional value and certainly little fiber, and they’re often are high in sodium and sugar (if they’re flavored). Better: whole-wheat pita chips (make your own: slice into quarters, spray with cooking spray and toast) with some hummus or peanut butter.

Shop armed with information to help you read beyond the packaging and make weight-wise choices. And, of course, always shop with a list, never shop when you’re hungry, and read the ingredient label first. These three smart strategies help you keep the focus on healthy, good for you foods (that taste good, too). Making weight control second nature means shopping purposely, refusing to be swayed by advertising, and taking the time to enjoy the flavor of real food! Your payoff will be better taste, improved nutrition and good health. ▲