

Book Reviews

The Food-Mood Solution: All-Natural Ways to Banish Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Stress, Overeating, and Alcohol and Drug Problems and Feel Good Again
by Jack Challem
Wiley Publishing, 2007
Paperback, 288 pages.

Lime sherbet makes me crazy. That is not a figure of speech, merely implying that I really like eating it. Rather, it means that eating it literally makes me nuts. I still recall, as a young man, having a double cone of the chartreuse-green stuff. About 30 minutes later, I was, to use my grandmother's expression, fit to be tied: I was agitated, irritable, angry. I could barely control my behavior, and certainly could not control how I felt. When the haze cleared, I wondered what the heck happened.

It finally dawned on me that it might be my reaction to the load of sugar and artificial color that I had just ingested. As Dr. Lendon Smith said, if you crave a food, it is probably bad for you. To this day, I am cautious about consuming sugar, and I do not eat artificially colored foods of any kind.

It isn't just me, and it isn't just anecdotal. Long dismissed by medical authorities, sugar, food colorings, and other all-too-common food additives do indeed adversely affect mood. In June 2004, *Archives of Disease in Childhood* reported a study, involving 277 preschool children conducted by the UK's Southampton General Hospital. The findings? Artificial food colorings and other additives increased hyperactive behavior. Said commentator Will Boggs, M.D., "Children's hyperactivity fell after withdrawal of food additives from the children's diets (and) there was an increase in hyperactivity when food additives were re-introduced." If you have ever taught school the day after Halloween, as I have, you already know this.

There is not a teacher, a parent, or for that matter, a human being that would not benefit from reading Jack Challem's *The Food-Mood Solution*. As the title promises, the book explains exactly how moods go so swiftly south when sugar intake is high, and nutrient intake is low. With personal-use checklists, succinct case stories, plain language, clear organization, and an exceptionally reader-friendly writing style, Challem presents a plan that anyone can follow, and perhaps everyone should. "The world is a meaner, angrier, and more anxious place than it was just a few years ago," he writes. And without blaming all societal ills on malnutrition, Challem offers real help for real people: keep your blood sugar from crashing by avoiding simple carbs, taking your vitamins, and eating whole foods.

By Chapter Three, Challem is discussing neurotransmitters and the "neuronutrients" that make them work, and in Chapter Four he presents and lists nutritional supplements as the "first step" to improved mood. Orthomolecular quantities are recommended, along with the author's welcome candor about prevailing anti-vitamin mythology: "Ignore statements warning that the body cannot use more than 200 mg of vitamin C a daily," he writes, correctly terming that a "paltry recommendation."

Then, Challem says, there are three further steps: Eat good-mood foods; exercise; and make tactical lifestyle changes to reduce stress. Good, practical, worth-the-cost-of-the-book-and-then-some advice. And there is still more to follow. Chapter Eight addresses anger, aggressiveness and violence, and Chapter Nine is on anxiety, panic attacks and obsessive compulsive behavior. The next chapters discuss ADHD, overweight, depression, bipolar disorder, and alcohol and drug abuse. To bring all these topics in at under 300 pages requires expert writing, something we have come to expect from this author.

This book does not disappoint. *The Food-Mood Solution* contains numerous “Quick Tip” boxes and some helpful diagrams. Additional visuals would be a welcome addition, particularly the inclusion of main-point summary tables. Meal plans, recipes, supporting references, a list of available resources, and a thorough index are provided.

Lendon Smith often said that if your children are cranky, give them something to eat. Extending this point, comedian and natural health advocate Dick Gregory asked, “Are you going to have food, or just something to eat?” Big difference. *The Food-Mood Solution* proves the point brilliantly.

—Reviewed by Andrew W. Saul

Obesity: Why Are Men Getting Pregnant?

by Alexander G. Schauss

Basic Health Publications, 2006

Paperback, 254 pages.

As a boy, my vision of the year 2008 was of personal jets, light-speed rocket ships and Star-Trek transporters. Surely the new millennium would be a magically mobile world evolved far, far beyond the rubber-footed, gasoline-slurping automotive dinosaurs which still dominate our paved landscape. I also remember wondering if, like the intergalactic astronauts of my daydreams, we would do away with eating altogether and live entirely on efficient supplement tablets: a diet of just the best, the essential nutrients. Predictably, my parents chuckled at that, while giving my brothers and me a multivitamin every day.

So here we are today, doing exactly the opposite. As a population, we are eating pretty much everything except nutrients. But who would want to give up eating junk food? Problem is, eating fats and carbs is so enjoyable on so

many levels that it is sure to be with us long after all petrol has perished. Eating right remains our civilization’s great unattainable health goal. Should we eat right? Certainly. Do we know what that means? Of course we do. We know which foods are healthy as well as we know the names of our children.

But we aren’t doing it. People are fatter than ever, and, as Alexander Schauss’ book says, “That potbelly can kill you.” It’s true, and right out the door in his introductory chapter, Schauss shows you why fat men are in real trouble. Chapters One and Two discuss the causes and risks of obesity. The good news begins in Chapter Three, a practical guide to dietary change, which includes a comparison of popular weight-loss approaches. The more technical Chapter Four discusses fat distribution, hormones, neuropeptides, lipogenesis and insulin resistance. Various drug and surgical interventions are summarized in Chapter Five.

Perhaps it is in Chapters Six and Seven, on the safety and effectiveness of dietary supplements for weight loss, that the author makes some of his most intriguing points. “Not a single medical school teaches a course on dietary supplements,” Schauss writes. “I am dismayed by how many practitioners base what they know on what they have read in a newspaper, saw on television, or heard on the radio.” After first discussing safety (a good idea), he highlights seven weight-loss supplements as particularly beneficial: chitosan, chromium, DHEA, digestive enzymes, *Garcinia cambogia*, green tea, and melatonin. Chapter Eight presents many more, including vitamins, that may probably or possibly be useful. Chapter Nine covers supplements for depression.

Lest people presume that pill-popping prevents potbellies, Chapter Ten is a really fine exercise guide. Did you know that hiking downhill lowers blood sugar, and hiking uphill lowers cholesterol?

That people who fidget a lot weigh less than those who don't? Strengthening the *transversus abdominus* muscles, the author writes, "can serve as a natural corset to hold in your gut." Odd the way words work sometimes: you can get rid of a beer-gut with a six-pack.

Chapters 11 and 12 offer steps to reduce stress, and how to get started losing weight right away. The book's graphic illustrations are well done, and still more visuals would be a welcome addition. There is a very good index, and over 25 pages of scientific references.

Almost all of *Obesity: Why Are Men Getting Pregnant?* is applicable to both

sexes, yet I value its premise that men need to get their body-shape act together. Truth to be told, I watch my weight at least as much due to vanity as I do for health. Hardly a surprise. After all, women, it has been said, are in a beauty contest from the day they are born. But the stakes are considerably higher for us guys: men die sooner than women do from cardiovascular disease. In fact, men die sooner than women. Overweight is not the only reason, but it is a major one. And, it is a factor we have the power to do something about starting today. Now I am going for a walk.

–Reviewed by Andrew W. Saul