

Module 7 Resources

Caffeine

- Caffeine is the most widely used psychoactive “drug” on the planet. It can boost mood and focus, which can be helpful to some people with depression. BUT if you’re feeling anxious it’s worth experimenting with cutting back on caffeine or eliminating it entirely to see how you feel.
- Most people should stop caffeine consumption at, or before, noon to 2pm so that it doesn’t impact sleep. Don’t use caffeine to mask deficits in sleep. If you’re not getting enough good quality sleep then caffeine is likely counterproductive for you.
- If you’re anxious, my best recommendation is to try eliminating caffeine consumption for 1 to 2 weeks to see if your symptoms improve. If you feel calmer, and your sleep and energy improve, that could be a sign that caffeine is contributing to your symptoms.
- Some good alternatives to high caffeine beverages include matcha, tea, decaf coffee, kombucha and even plain water.
- If you’re curious about how much caffeine is in the beverages you’re consuming, you can use a resource like [Caffeine Informer](#) to find out.
- To learn more about Caffeine Use Disorder, see:
Meredith SE, Juliano LM, Hughes JR, Griffiths RR. Caffeine Use Disorder: A Comprehensive Review and Research Agenda. *J Caffeine Res.* 2013;3(3):114-130.
doi:10.1089/jcr.2013.0016
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3777290/>

Alcohol

- If you’re anxious or depressed, alcohol may feel like it’s helping in the short run but you may find that avoiding alcohol will improve mood in the medium to long term.
- My best recommendation is to cut out alcohol until your mood has improved to the point that you are no longer experiencing symptoms.
- Try going alcohol free for a week or two and see how you feel. If your mood improves noticeably, that could be a sign that alcohol is contributing to your symptoms.
- Notice places where you are more inclined to drink or drink in excess, then make an effort to reduce or avoid putting yourself in these situations.
- Make sure you eat before drinking and pace yourself with water between drinks, especially if limiting consumption isn’t a possibility for you right now.
- To replace alcohol is important, especially if you enjoy the social aspect of drinking. Choose low-calorie options like tea, non-alcoholic kombucha, or seltzer and consider getting creative with mocktails. There are lots of non-alcoholic mixer alternatives now available on the market like Seedlip, Curious Elixirs and Kin. Here are 25 great Mocktail Recipes that minimize juice: <https://www.bonappetit.com/gallery/best-mocktail-recipes>
- Find sober activities and friends. Use Meetup or Facebook groups to find communities where drinking isn’t the focus of social time.

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- If you feel you need extra support to cut down or stop drinking, Alcoholics Anonymous is a popular option. Find a meeting near you: https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/find-aa-resources
- If you worry about how others in your family are drinking or have loved ones who struggle with alcohol abuse, Al-Anon Family Groups at <https://al-anon.org> is an amazing resource to learn, connect, and heal.
- Learn more about Alcohol and your mental health with NIMH <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/substance-use-and-mental-health>
- Remember that changing habits with any substance requires transition periods - cravings don't last forever. There are many evidence-based options for decreasing cravings and managing alcohol use such as Motivational Interviewing and the medications naltrexone and Antabuse. There may be options to explore with a mental health professional.

Sugar

- Sugar is terrible for your brain and mental health. In fact, at least one study has shown that drinking sugary beverages increases the risk of depression by 31percent.
- When you're anxious or depressed you may feel like reaching for a sweet treat to help soothe your mood. This is because sugar increases feel good neurotransmitters temporarily.
- However, if you're anxious or depressed my best advice is to start identifying and removing added sugars from your diet entirely. A first place to look is in processed foods you regularly consume.
- Avoiding added sugars and processed foods is one of the foundational steps in long term improving mood with nutrition.
- Generally, the worst culprits in people's diets are commercial baked goods such as muffins, breads, scones, fruit juice or fruit smoothies, energy drinks, candy, cookies and pastries, salad dressings, dips, fried foods and dairy products.
- Be vigilant! Read nutrition labels and identify the different sources of sugar in your diet.
- Sugar comes in many different forms and it's in more than desserts and sweets. Learning the various names of sugars really helps you spot them.

Nicotine

- Understanding that nicotine use by vaping, smoking, or chewing, is not a long term solution to mental health concerns is important. They are highly associated with depression and anxiety disorders.
- Nicotine can be a powerful antidepressant initially and often people use it to cope with mental health symptoms. While providing a mood boost and, at first, help coping with depression and/or anxiety, nicotine and tobacco products are not a solution, and come with significant health risks.
- My best advice is that if you're a nicotine user and experiencing poor mental health, you should learn about and start a harm reduction and cessation program. It might not be

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the first step you take, but ditching nicotine and/or tobacco is critical for your mental health. To have a plan, to develop tools and to have partnership and support are important. These are some evidence-based solutions and ideas I've found helpful to patients.

- In the short term, to develop other coping skills to replace smoking is important. In the long run this course will likely help you build a framework for good mental health where the drive to smoke is diminished and you feel more clarity in purpose in your efforts to protect your brain.
- Because nicotine is so highly addictive, strong cravings are a very difficult part of withdrawal and tapering. Withdrawal symptoms always improve over time, but initially people feel irritable, mentally foggy, tired, and have many thoughts of using.
- A quick first step is focusing on Triggers and Tools. Make a list of triggers and cues that prompt you to smoke. To be aware of these is important so you can make a plan to avoid some of these situations. To develop tools for cravings and other methods of self-regulation is important.
- Chewing gum, enjoying a lollipop or hard candy can be helpful as part of craving is often related to the oral stimulation of cigarettes, vaping, and chewing tobacco.
- What are the best ways to quit or reduce nicotine consumption?
 - Don't surround yourself with those that are participating in smoking.
 - The CDC offers [free resources](#) for quitting.
 - Get help from professionals. There are several FDA approved medications for nicotine cessation such as Varenicline (Chantix) or Bupropion (Zyban/Wellbutrin) as well as nicotine replacement therapies such as gums, lozenges or patches, all of which can help you quit. Be sure to review the risks and benefits of these options, including side effects and medication interactions with your healthcare provider.
 - Many states and cities provide free counseling and nicotine cessation therapies for free, so do a quick search or talk to your health care provider about local options.
- Beware of black and white thinking. While some people quit "cold turkey," many have setbacks and relapses. Being overly harsh with yourself in these moments can be counterproductive and prevent you from returning toward your path of nicotine cessation. This is also called "harm reduction." If you're smoking 10 cigarettes per day and you're able to cut down to 5, this is still progress!

Names for Sugar

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Dextrose	Ethyl maltol	Buttered
Fructose	Florida crystals	Sugar/buttercream
Galactose	Golden sugar	Caramel
Glucose	Glucose syrup solids	Carob syrup
Lactose	Grape sugar	Corn syrup
Maltose	Icing sugar	Evaporated cane juice
Sucrose	Maltodextrin	Fruit juice
Beet sugar	Muscovado sugar	Fruit juice concentrate
Brown sugar	Panela sugar	Golden syrup
Cane juice crystals	Raw sugar	High-Fructose Corn
Cane sugar	Sugar (granulated or table)	Syrup (HFCS)
Castor sugar	Sucanat	Honey
Coconut sugar	Turbinado sugar	Invert sugar
Confectioner's sugar (aka, powdered sugar)	Yellow sugar	Malt syrup
Corn syrup solids	Liquid or Syrup	Maple syrup
Crystalline fructose	Agave nectar/syrup	Molasses
Date sugar	Barley malt	Rice syrup
Demerara sugar	Blackstrap molasses	Refiner's syrup
Dextrin	Brown rice syrup	Sorghum syrup
Diastatic malt		Treacle