

NEELY EAP NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026



WELLNESS SEMINAR

Join us for our monthly seminar on

Nutrition for a Productive Brain: Eating to Improve Mood, Focus & Stress Tolerance

JAN. 22, 2026
@2PM CENTRAL

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MARCH 27, 2026
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LETTER FOR LEADERS

Helpful resources from your EAP

WELCOME

The leadership newsletter is designed to provide EAP support to supervisors and managers. Making an informal referral (friendly referral) or formal referral can be challenging without training. In addition, the content will educate and promote program features that help leaders focus on the well-being of their employees. EAP services are free and readily accessible to the entire company and their family members.

Toll-Free, 24/7 Helpline:
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The logo for Neely Employee Assistance Program (EAP). It features the word "neely" in a lowercase, orange, cursive font, followed by "EAP" in a smaller, uppercase, orange, sans-serif font. A small orange starburst graphic is positioned to the right of the text. Below the main text, the words "Neely Employee Assistance Program" are written in a smaller, dark grey, sans-serif font.

Neely Employee Assistance Program

Nutrition for a Productive Brain: Eating to Improve Mood, Focus & Stress Tolerance

By: Rosalinda Rodriguez, LPCA

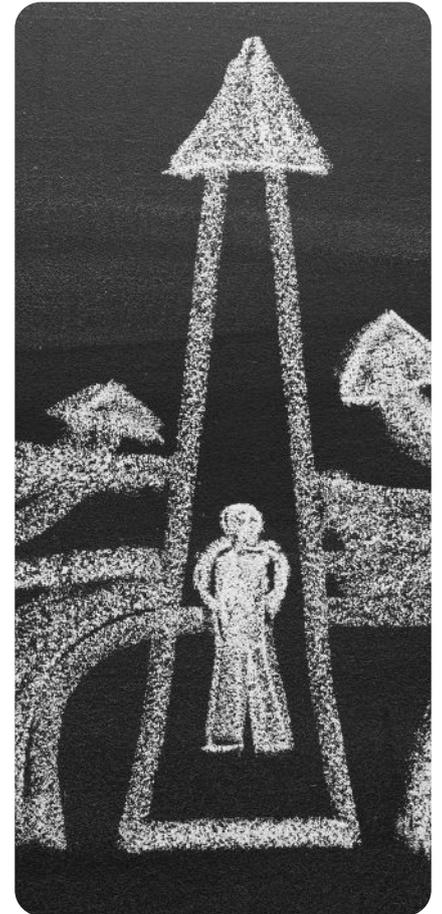
With all the talk of new habits this time of year, I'm not here to ask you to overhaul your diet or give up foods you enjoy. Instead, I want to highlight one often-overlooked performance factor: how nutrition supports brain health and leadership effectiveness.

Your brain drives decision-making, emotional regulation, focus, and stress tolerance. To do this work, it relies on NTs (neurotransmitters) chemical messengers such as serotonin, dopamine, acetylcholine, and GABA. Think of them as the internal communication system that helps your brain manage mood, motivation, learning, and staying calm under pressure.

Food as Fuel for Leadership Performance

NTs are influenced by the nutrients we consume. When the brain has access to the right building blocks, leaders may experience clearer thinking, better emotional regulation, and improved resilience, especially during high-demand periods. A few key NTs tied to leadership performance include:

- **Serotonin** is the mood NT which impacts our social behavior, overall mood, appetite, and learning. Some foods to support serotonin production include: kiwi, oranges, turkey, walnuts, bananas, cherries, and other fruits or vegetables.
- **Dopamine** is the pleasure NT which impacts our memory recall, cognitive awareness, and sleep control. Foods to support dopamine production include: animal products like meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk products, chocolate, fruits (apples, bananas, watermelon), and vegetables (tomato, spinach, peas).
- **Acetylcholine** (ACh) is the learning NT which helps to improve our attention, memory, and understanding. Foods to support ACh production include: egg yolks, salmon, lentils, mung beans, or soybeans.
- **GABA** (gamma-aminobutyric acid) is the calming neurotransmitter that helps quiet the nervous system, reduce stress, and support relaxation and emotional balance. Some foods that support GABA activity include: spinach, broccoli, sweet potatoes, brown rice, oats, almonds, walnuts, and fermented foods like yogurt or kimchi.



Practical Takeaway

This isn't about perfection or restriction, and it's not about following a rigid nutrition plan. Instead, think in terms of small, sustainable additions you can build into your day over time. Prioritizing balanced meals, consistent protein intake, a variety of fruits and vegetables, and adequate hydration helps provide the brain with the nutrients it needs to function optimally. These everyday choices may seem simple, but their impact adds up. When the brain is well fueled, leaders are better equipped to maintain focus, regulate emotions, and manage stress—especially during high-demand or high-pressure periods. Over time, supporting brain health through nutrition can enhance resilience, decision-making, and overall leadership effectiveness.

For leaders, brain health isn't just personal, it's organizational. **A well-fueled brain supports** clearer thinking, steadier emotions, and more effective leadership overall, creating a positive ripple effect for teams and workplaces alike.

To learn more about this topic, please join our upcoming webinar, [Nutrition for a Productive Brain: Eating to Improve Mood, Focus & Stress Tolerance](#) on Thursday January 22nd, at 2:00PM CST.

References

Gasmi et al. (2022). Neurotransmitters Regulation and Food Intake. *Molecules*, 28(1), 210.

Insights: Leveraging EAP for Leadership Success

Here are some answers to common questions supervisors and managers have regarding employee issues and making EAP referrals. If you need more assistance, feel free to email us at admin@neelyeap.com.



Q: How can leaders support brain health during busy or stressful workdays?

A: Prioritizing regular meals, hydration, and avoiding long gaps without food can help stabilize energy, focus, and mood. Even small snacks with protein and fiber support stress regulation throughout the day. For teams, this may look like balancing treats with more sustaining options—such as pairing a morning box of donuts with a protein snack. It's not about giving up favorite foods, but about creating balance so people can enjoy the donut while still supporting optimal brain function.

Q: Can nutrition help with decision fatigue and burnout?

A: Nutrition supports the brain system involved in attention, motivation, and stress response. While it won't eliminate burnout on its own, consistent fueling can reduce cognitive strain and support resilience when paired with rest and workload management.

Q: Is this something leaders should model for their teams?

A: Absolutely. Leaders who normalize breaks, balanced meals, and self-care help create cultures where employees feel supported to sustain performance. Not just push through exhaustion.



WHAT CAN MY EAP DO FOR ME?



About Our Logo

For decades, enslaved African Americans looked to the North Star for hope, inspiration, and freedom. Neely EAP (NEAP) provides the **hope** that your situation will improve, the **inspiration** to move you in the right direction, and the **freedom** to live your best life.

Being in a leadership role can be challenging. Having the correct tools and resources can make a difference. The **Manager Assistance Program** offers support to resolve personal or professional issues that can negatively impact the workplace. We also offer:

- 24/7 Hotline, Access to Confidential Services
- Free Short-Term Counseling and Couch Time Check-In (preventive annual counseling session)
- Legal and Financial Assistance
- Work-life referrals for adult care, childcare, pet care and more
- Wellness Trainings & Online Employee Training Vault
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

