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**The Role of Nutrition in Mental Health: How to Action the Growing Body of Evidence**

**Abstract**

Cognition occurs across a vast network of sensitive and sophisticated neurons that rely on specific lifestyle choices, including diets that contain specific nutrients, to function optimally. Lifestyle diseases, including type 2 diabetes, are also linked to cognitive challenges. Furthermore, specific genes play a role in whether specific nutrients are bio-available, while chronic stress further depletes nutrient status, and negatively impacts higher order thinking via other mechanisms. Gender also has a role to play in the development of affective disorders due to the impact of reproductive hormones on neurotransmitter synthesis, and specific nutrients have a role to play in addressing these disorders among women. Finally, gut health also plays an important role in mental health via a few mechanisms. These six factors, either alone or in various combinations, impact brain development and function directly, which is evidenced by a growing body of research. Addressing nutrient status alongside therapeutic interventions can positively impact the therapeutic outcome for people experiencing mental health challenges due to the role nutrients play in optimising neuronal connectivity, energy availability and neurotransmitter synthesis. These neuronal mechanisms underpin the formation of new neural pathways which are required when suggesting shifts in perspective to introduce new habits of mind.

The primary goal of the workshop will be to provide a clear understanding of how nutrition impacts brain function, using these six factors as the framework, via the presentation slides. The objective and learning outcome of the workshop is to provide practitioners with the resources required to enable them to address nutrient status and improve nutrient intake among their clients, which will be provided as a checklist, also via the presentation slides. A Q and A session at the end of the presentation will allow for clarification of concepts.

**Biography**

Delia McCabe (PhD) shifted her research focus from clinical psychology to nutritional neuroscience upon discovering nutrition’s critical role in mental wellbeing while completing her Masters. Delia’s research into female stress has been published in several peer-reviewed journals, she is a regular featured expert in the media and her two internationally available books are available in four languages. Using her background in psychology, combined with evidence-based nutritional neuroscience and lifestyle neurological perspectives, Delia supports behaviour change and cognitive resiliency within corporates, and for individuals who want to optimize their brain health, via online courses, workshops, and tailored events internationally.