



How to use amino acids like GABA and tryptophan to end sugar cravings and ease anxiety

By Trudy Scott

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Food like sugar and carbs can be as addicting as drugs and you often experience mood changes - like increased anxiety or stress - when you have an addiction or out of control sugar cravings. By using the amazing amino acids to address neurotransmitter deficiencies you can end out-of-control sugar cravings/carb addictions, and at the same time help to eliminate or reduce anxiety and stress, mood issues and insomnia - all very quickly.

Using the amino acids GABA and tryptophan (and others like tyrosine, glutamine and DPA) can really help you end the sugar and carb cravings with no willpower required and no feelings of deprivation.

Many women with PMS experience increased sugar cravings and hormonal changes during perimenopause and menopause (as progesterone and estrogen levels shift) can also be triggers for sugar cravings and an increased need to self-medicate with alcohol in order to feel calm. The amino acids are a powerful tool to help you get off sugar, quit the wine (and other alcoholic drinks) and end your addictions and emotional eating.

Low GABA: physical tension and self-medication to calm down

Let's take GABA as an example: low GABA leads to physical-tension and stiff-and-tense-muscles type of anxiety.

The other symptoms we see with low GABA are panic attacks, physical tension in certain settings like public speaking or driving, and the need to self-medicate to calm down, often with alcohol (like needing a glass or two of wine at the end of the day) but often with carbs and sugary foods too. Insomnia can also be caused by low GABA and you'll experience physical tension when lying awake in bed rather than the ruminating thoughts which is the low serotonin type of insomnia. It's not uncommon to experience both. GABA also helps with muscle spasms and pain relief when muscles are tight.

The biggest take-aways with GABA:

- Sublingual is best. I find that GABA works best when used sublingually and this is one reason I like Source Naturals GABA Calm so much. If this is not an option (it does contain sugar alcohols that some clients can't or won't use and does contain tyrosine which has some contraindications) then opening a capsule of a GABA-only or a GABA-theanine combination are my next choices when working with clients.
- I have clients start very low and increase as needed. I have found 125mg to be a good starting dose but some pixie dust clients do well on a dab or pinch
- I have clients do a trial to determine if the anxiety is in fact due to low GABA. I always do this with clients before starting any amino acid.

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GABA reduced cravings and helped with stressful holidays

Melissa started taking Source Naturals GABA Calm in anticipation of stressful holiday travel and holiday gatherings. She felt much calmer when she used GABA Calm and discovered that a wonderful side-benefit (we like side-benefits vs side-effects!) was reduced cravings as well as improved sleep:

I'm glad I saw the post about GABA on your FB page a couple weeks ago. I bought Source Naturals GABA Calm and have been taking 1-3 per day for two weeks. I'm glad I bought it before traveling home for Christmas – I was cool as a cucumber at the airport and was much calmer when visiting family and friends compared to last year! The true test of its efficacy will be in two weeks when the semester starts. For now, I notice a general calmness and am sleeping well.

An unexpected result was that I stopped craving sweets after about a week of taking it! I didn't even realize this until I was grocery shopping and out of habit walked towards the ice cream – I stopped and realized I didn't want ice cream. So I walked toward the chocolate – same reaction. For once in my life, I was not craving sweets. I made truffles for a NYE party and only ate two. But what is really shocking is that the leftovers are still in my refrigerator two days later and I haven't touched them. I don't understand what is going on! Can this be the GABA Calm?

Yes, it was the GABA Calm! She was pleasantly surprised as many of my clients are – she felt calmer, she had better sleep and saw an end to her cravings!

Low serotonin: worry anxiety and afternoon/evening sugar cravings

Tryptophan and 5-HTP are other amino acids which help with sugar cravings. They do this by helping to address the low serotonin type of cravings for carbs and sugar which tend to occur mid-afternoon and evening, and can be more severe with hormonal swings.

When you address the low serotonin with tryptophan or 5-HTP (some do better on one vs the other), mood symptoms such the worry-type of anxiety, ruminations, sadness, negative self-talk, irritability, insomnia and pain are also eased and sometimes resolved.

Here is the case of an 11-year-old girl I worked with. She had huge rage/anger issues, suffered from terrible anxiety, had crazy sugar cravings (for bread and colored candies) and had dreadful insomnia. Because of the insomnia she was also very fatigued and this likely drove some of her cravings and irritability too. She was adopted and had been diagnosed with RAD (reactive attachment disorder). During our first session, chewable tryptophan turned things around quickly.

She was referred to me by a friend. The family didn't have much money. And so, we had to really try and figure out a few simple interventions that we could use that were going to be effective.

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This young girl had been adopted. She was diagnosed with reactive attachment disorder and her anger issues were just phenomenal. The mom had to physically put her body around her and hold her down when she was having one of her fits because she was worried that she was going to hurt herself and hurt other people.

She also had anxiety, huge cravings for colored candies and insomnia. She was so fatigued because she wasn't sleeping well.

So sitting in my office with this young girl and her mom, we started to talk about the sweets and the candies and the need to give up the candies. She was fuming with me. She was sitting in a swivel chair. She turned her back on me and didn't want to talk about having to give up candy at all.

I said, "Look, let's not even talk about that, but would you take this chewable tryptophan here? And we'll talk about it in a second." I gave her 100 mg of the chewable tryptophan and continued discussing things with her mom. She had no idea what it was going to do or how it would make her feel.

Within five minutes she turned her chair back, looked at me and she said, smilingly, "Yes, let's do it. I can give up the candy." She was smiling and she was happy.

So long story short, with this young girl, we started her on chewable tryptophan and it turned things around quickly - anxiety, anger and cravings.

We also addressed her very low iron levels, and got her off gluten and with these few nutritional interventions this child's behavior improved dramatically.

PMS and perimenopausal symptoms ease with the amino acids

In women with PMS and perimenopausal symptoms these can often start to ease within 1 or 2 cycles when using tryptophan and GABA (together with liver and gallbladder support and addressing pyroluria).

In a study published in 1999, *A placebo-controlled clinical trial of L-tryptophan in premenstrual dysphoria*, tryptophan was found to reduce symptoms of PMS when used in the luteal phase or second half of the cycle (i.e. after ovulation).

They looked at dysphoria, which is defined as a state of unease or generalized dissatisfaction with life, plus mood swings, tension (and anxiety), and irritability and they found a 34.5% reduction of symptoms with tryptophan after 3 cycles.

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Low blood sugar drives cravings and causes anxiety

In my book, *The Antianxiety Food Solution*, I share the story of a client of mine who described her sugar cravings as an “*almost demonic urge to eat sugar and all things sweet.*”

Before working with me she had been trying to control her blood sugar levels by eating the right foods at the right times i.e. healthy fats and quality protein (especially at breakfast). But this wasn't enough to eliminate her sweet cravings. She would make and eat sweet treats all day long, using “healthier” sweeteners like monk fruit and maple syrup.

The solution was using 500mg of glutamine opened onto her tongue. I had the same conversation that I have with all my clients who would obviously rather eat something sweet than open a glutamine capsule onto their tongue: “If you have an intense craving for something sweet, tell yourself that you're going to indulge, but also humor your nutritionist and take the glutamine anyway. You may be surprised to find your urge completely disappears.”

She did that and it worked – it stopped her demonic urge to eat something sweet every time and very quickly!

Low endorphins and comfort/reward eating

A classic symptom of low endorphins is comfort/reward eating. You may relate to the term emotional eating. It often goes like this: “This is my reward. This is my treat. I absolutely deserve it.”

And when you consume those carbohydrates or fats – that bowl of ice cream, that bowl of cereal, that chocolate chip cookie, that chocolate cup-cake – you feel like “this is my reward, this comforts me.” When you use DPA (d-phenylalanine) you can literally take it or leave it. Really!

Nanner shares that opening a capsule of DPA into her mouth gets rid of the compulsive desire for food:

It really helps! Whenever I notice I am opening cupboards when I cannot possibly be really hungry, I open one capsule and pour it into my mouth, let it dissolve. I like the taste! The compulsive desire for food goes away, and I am able to re-focus my attention and get on with my day. Amazing! Now, I just need to form a new habit and remember to DO IT!!! Lol

Take note how quickly this works for her. She is actually opening cupboards and on the prowl for a treat or reward, recognizes this and has some DPA and viola, she no longer needs the sweet comfort she was seeking.

In an ideal world she would be taking DPA a few times a day (ideally opened onto her tongue) until she has good levels of endorphins. In this instance there would be no cupboard prowling. But as you can see, it can be used on-demand with excellent results.

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Which brain chemistry imbalance is driving your cravings?

I use a chart like this to help my clients figure out what may be driving their cravings and mood issues and hopefully it will help you too.

I have them think about something decadent they love to eat - like chocolate chip cookies or their favorite candies or a giant piece of chocolate cake or a bowl of ice-cream - and ask themselves this: How do I feel before I eat the cake? And how do I feel after I've eaten it? This can help them figure out which brain chemistry imbalance they may have and which amino acid is most likely to help, always keeping in mind that many of them need support in all areas. In this instance we trial one amino acid at a time, starting with the area that most resonates with them.

How you feel before	How you feel after	Brain chemistry imbalance	Amino acid to supplement
Anxious or stressed AND stress eat	Anxious or stressed AND stress eat Calm or relaxed	Low GABA	GABA
Depressed or anxious AND eat for happiness	Happy or content	Low serotonin	Tryptophan or 5-HTP
Tired or unfocused AND eat for energy	Energetic, alert, or focused	Low catecholamines	Tyrosine
Wanting a reward or sad AND eat for comfort	Rewarded or comforted	Low endorphins	DPA (d-phenylalanine)
Irritable and shaky AND eat to feel grounded	Grounded or stable	Low blood sugar	Glutamine

Meme Grant, GAPS Practitioner, Nutritional Therapist, FNTF, participated in my Amazing Aminos for Ending Emotional Eating group program and this is what she said afterwards:

"I still am amazed at how quickly the panic attacks, binge eating, and mood swings disappeared. Tyrosine enabled me to focus and gave me energy to do things again, glutamine allowed me to walk past the gluten and dairy free junk foods, d-phenylalanine [DPA] stopped my comfort eating, tryptophan enabled me to stop my negative thoughts and helped me sleep but the best was when GABA was introduced, the panic attacks disappeared."

This is why I call them the amazing amino acids. And this is why addressing neurotransmitter deficiencies (also called brain chemistry imbalances) can end food addictions and out-of-control sugar cravings and at the same time they help to eliminate or reduce anxiety, mood issues and insomnia – and very quickly!

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I start trials of the amino acids on day 1 when I'm working with a client. They get relief from anxiety, low mood and cravings right away and feel hope. It also makes it SO much easier to make all the other dietary changes because there is no willpower and no feelings of deprivation.

Here is some further reading on these topics on my blog:

- GABA for ending sugar cravings (and anxiety and insomnia)
<https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/gaba-for-ending-sugar-cravings-and-anxiety-and-insomnia/>
- Tryptophan for the worry-in-your-head and ruminating type of anxiety
<https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/tryptophan-worry-head-ruminating-type-anxiety/>
- The Antianxiety Food Solution Amino Acid and Pyroluria Supplements (that I recommend)
<https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/amino-acids-pyroluria-supplements/>

If you are looking for guidance on how to use GABA for your anxiety:

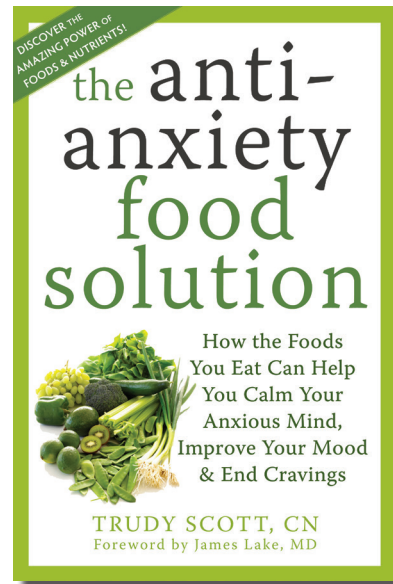
- GABA Quickstart program - Using GABA for Easing Physical Anxiety
<https://www.anxietynutritioninstitute.com/gabaquickstart/>
This is an online group program that includes a Facebook group and 2 Q&A calls so you can ask your questions and connect with others in similar situations
- My book, *The Antianxiety Food Solution: How the Foods You Eat Can Help You Calm Your Anxious Mind, Improve Your Mood and End Cravings*. You can find out more here
<https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/the-antianxiety-food-solution-by-trudy-scott/>

If you are a practitioner and would like to learn how to implement the amino acids in your practice:

- Balancing Neurotransmitters - the Fundamentals
<https://www.anxietynutritioninstitute.com/balancingneurotransmitters/>
This is an online group program that includes a Facebook group so you can ask your questions and collaborate with other practitioners
- My book, *The Antianxiety Food Solution: How the Foods You Eat Can Help You Calm Your Anxious Mind, Improve Your Mood and End Cravings*. You can find out more here
<https://www.everywomanover29.com/blog/the-antianxiety-food-solution-by-trudy-scott/>

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About Trudy



Food Mood Expert Trudy Scott is a certified nutritionist who educates anxious individuals about nutritional solutions for anxiety. She is known for her expertise in the use of targeted individual amino acids, nutritional solutions for the social anxiety condition called pyroluria, and the harmful effects of benzodiazepines.

Trudy is the author of *The Antianxiety Food Solution: How the Foods You Eat Can Help You Calm Your Anxious Mind, Improve Your Mood and End Cravings* and host of *The Anxiety Summit*, an online educational platform for both consumers and health professionals, and dubbed “a bouquet of hope”. Trudy also educates health professionals via the Anxiety Nutrition Institute, sharing research and practical how-to steps.

Trudy is passionate about sharing the powerful food mood connection because she experienced the results first-hand, finding complete resolution of her anxiety and panic attacks.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this document is for informational and educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for advice from your physician or other health care professional. You should consult with a healthcare professional before starting any diet, exercise, or supplementation program, before taking or stopping any medication, or if you have or suspect you may have a health problem.