



Advanced Clinical Focus: Mental Health and Neurology Transcript – Class 1 Part 1

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Hi there, and welcome to the class. I'm so glad that you can join me for the Advanced Clinical Focus in Mental Health and Neurology. Our brain really is the central processing unit for our whole body. It runs our thoughts in our life with the decisions we make, and it really is a key factor in our mental health, and that's what we're going to be covering in great detail here. I'm so excited to be sharing this information because learning how to support and have an optimally working brain and nervous system really sets you up for an amazing foundation of just enjoying life and being able to do the work you were put on this planet to do. So I'm so glad that you can join me.

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For those of you who have never taken a course with me before, I'll just like to take a second to introduce myself. I'm Josh Gitalis. I'm a clinical Nutritionist and Functional Medicine Practitioner. Part of my time I spend in my clinic working with clients one on one for various health issues, and the other part of my time is spent putting courses like this together and teaching them. I have this one on mental health and a variety of others on digestion, detoxification, hormones, therapeutic supplementation, and how to put protocols together for people who are practitioners actually working with people. One of my passions is combining what we learn in the textbooks, the studies, webinars and seminars in the literature, and taking that and bringing that together with what I learned working with actual humans. And then bringing that information to you in an easy to understand format, so that you can use this information yourself, or use it if you are working with other clients. So once again, thank you for so much for joining me.

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Now let's get right into the information. I always like to start by talking about just some of the tools you're going to end up with in your toolbox by the end of this course; what are the topics that we're going to cover. The first is anatomy and physiology. If we truly want to understand the way the brain works, the way the nervous system works, the way this this key processing unit works in the body, we have to understand the parts that make up the system. Also, throughout the course we'll be discussing these different parts, so it's important that we understand what they actually mean.

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We will be talking about neuronal health; we'll be diving into specific parts of that nervous system, and what's involved in actually supporting the health of that piece of the nervous system. Because if all the pieces are supported appropriately, as a whole, it functions in the best way possible. We'll be talking about brain food; what do we need to eat to feed our brain the best nutrients



possible. What does our brain actually need in order to function optimally? We'll be looking at these key messengers within our nervous system called neurotransmitters. And what you'll be surprised to learn and what we will dive in a lot deeper, is that these neurotransmitters aren't just in our nervous system, but they're actually throughout the whole body. It's a bit of a misnomer that we call them neurotransmitters.

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We'll be then diving into specific conditions, like depression, to understand how to address specific imbalances. We'll also be using a number of these conditions or diseases or diagnoses as a framework to understand various concepts along the way. We'll also be looking at anxiety, anorexia nervosa, insomnia, ADD and ADHD, attention deficit disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, and neuro degeneration.

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We'll talk about testing and, of course, various therapeutics along the way. Therapeutics involving dietary recommendations, therapeutic foods, so the foods within that whole world of what you can eat; what are the key foods that are going to have the biggest bang for their buck? We're going to look of course at lifestyle modification, and nutraceuticals; supplements vitamins, minerals, herbs, different things that can actually help to bring the body back into balance. So you'll walk away with a pretty comprehensive toolkit to be able to address some of these conditions, and most importantly, to address mental health as a whole. Whether you're working on improving that within yourself, or you're working with others to help them improve that, you'll be able to really dive down deep into the root causes and figure out why these things are happening. It's all about the why. 'Why' is always what I ask, so we can get as far upstream as possible and figure out why these imbalances are happening.

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What you will not learn are protocols. Over the years that I've been doing this, I've come across so many different protocols. And the fact of the matter is, is that there are approximately 7 billion people on this planet, and we need 7 billion different protocols. I've never given two protocols that are the same, because every person's an individual, and every person needs a specific recipe of recommendations to best suit them. So we will not be learning protocols. but we will be learning a lot of different therapeutics that we can put together to make protocols. There is no one size fits all. I believe that, again, everyone's biochemically different, so we need different protocols for those people.

6:33

Now, because we are working with mental health as a whole, there's just one caveat I want to establish here right from the start. And, of course, the Hippocratic oath is above all, do no harm, right? If you're ever unsure, go for the safer route. Medicine is based on the Hippocratic oath. I mean, we hope it is. We might discover in this course, in a couple places that the medical system has gone



slightly astray, but will hopefully help to bring that back online. But if an individual is at risk of doing harm to themselves, or others, we need to advise them or refer them or notify the appropriate qualified parties to help this individual in the most appropriate way. This is very important, and if you're ever stepping into territory that you think, is sort of out of your comfort zone, you need to refer those people to the most appropriate parties. When I'm ever working with someone who maybe has pretty severe mental health issues, I'm always asking if, first of all, they're suicidal, or if there's any risk that they're going to do harm to anyone else or themselves. If that's the case, I usually do not work with them unless they are also working with someone who can I address that appropriately. So let's get into the material here.

8:07

First, I'd like to establish some statistics to see where we're at on the spectrum of mental health here. 1 in 5 Canadians experience mental health problems. That's a staggering number. And one of the issues with mental health is that it's such a taboo topic, right? People don't really want to bring that up in a conversation. They don't want to say, 'Oh, hey, buddy, how's it going today?' And they say, 'Not so good. I feel a little depressed. I was a little anxious today at my meeting; my insomnia is out of control. My bulimia is acting up again.' So it's a very taboo topic. But it's great, the fact that you are watching me right now, doing this course, tells us that there is a growing awareness here. And we can bring more awareness to it by learning about it and opening up the discussion. It is quite prevalent, about 20% of people will experience a mental health issue this year.

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Mental illness is the leading cause of disability worldwide. So although you can't really see it, and you can't really feel it, it's still quite prevalent and debilitating for many people. When someone goes in for a surgery, you can see the wound, you can see the bandage. If someone breaks their arm, you could see the sling hanging off their body, they clearly cannot really type on their computer screen. But when someone has a mental health issue, it's a little bit hidden. It's kind of under the radar. You can't really see the nervous system. You really can't see people's thoughts. So, it is a real problem and we have to acknowledge that it is a real problem.

10:01

Mental illness can decrease life expectancy. So here, we see that it actually has an effect on how long we live by about 10 to 20 years. I mean, that's a pretty significant health risk. If someone said that a certain disease decreased your risk by 10 to 20 years, people would be talking about it all the time. Again, mental health is very taboo; it's not as prevalent in terms of people talking about it. Now looking at our youngsters, 1 in 8 children are diagnosed with brain developmental disorders. And we will see later on in the course, how this has skyrocketed over the years. So 1 in 8 children, I mean those are staggering numbers. In the average classroom, we can expect about four kids with developmental disorders. The global prevalence of dementia is 24 million. And



the top prescription in the US is antidepressants. So we've got this global problem having huge tolls on our medical system, on our quality of life, on our relationships, on so many aspects of our life. We need to bring some more awareness to this and really address some serious root causes here because whatever system is in place right now clearly is not working for millions and millions of people suffering from mental health issues.

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Now here we are today, we are standing on the shoulders of giants. Trailblazers that really discovered how nutrition, diet, and lifestyle interventions can really be helpful in addressing people with mental health disorders. One of the key Trailblazers here was Dr. Abram Hoffer. He's published 30 books and 600 articles. He was a very well respected practitioner, and he helped many people. One of his claims to fame and how he got started is that he cured the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. His name's Bill Wilson, and he had depression and he went to Hoffer and said can you help me, and Hoffer said absolutely, I can help you. And actually the way he helped him was using a very high dose nutrient, vitamin B3, also known as niacin. And this was sort of a key moment in his ability to help people with addictions. But his therapeutics didn't stop there. He helped over 5000 schizophrenics. Schizophrenia is obviously a pretty serious disease. It basically takes someone out of normal life, puts them in an institution and most of the time they're just drugged. But Dr. Abram Hoffer treated many of these schizophrenics with nutrients, and nutrients only. High dose nutrients using orthomolecular doses; the right nutrient, in the right dosage, for the right person, at the right time, to essentially cure many of these schizophrenics. Many of his patients actually still live today and have quite the accolades for Dr. Abram Hoffer. One of his first experiences was with a 12 year old in 1960. So this information isn't that new. It just hasn't been blown up and spread to our modern medical system. This stuff has been around for ages, and as we go through this course, you're going to see a ton of studies backing up the information we're talking about. And if you really look at the fine print, you'll see that a lot of these studies didn't happen within 5 or 10 years, even. A lot of these studies date back 20 to 30 years. So it's amazing. We've known this for a very, very long time.

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He also showed that back in 1954, that cholesterol-lowering effects of niacin were quite powerful. Niacin is actually, again, vitamin B3 and it has a tremendous ability to lower cholesterol. Now, that's not for our discussion today. In fact, we will be talking about cholesterol. And we're actually going to be talking about how beneficial cholesterol is, how important it is for the nervous system and the brain, and why you may not want to lower your cholesterol. But that's for a little bit later in the course.

15:17

Now another pioneer in the field of mental health goes by the name of Candace Pert, she wrote the book *Molecules of Emotion*. And she says that as our feelings



change, this mixture of peptides travels throughout your body and your brain, and they're literally changing the chemistry of every cell in your body. So she's talking about how our feelings, our perceptions of what's happening outside in the world, can actually change the chemicals within our body. And this is what she called the Molecules of Emotion. So essentially, when we see something, it actually has a corresponding chemical effect in the body. And those chemicals in the body, whether they're stress hormones, or neurotransmitters, or blood sugar changes, are going to affect every cell in the body as well. And this becomes very important. So understanding that we have these molecules of emotion, and that they have profound impacts on the body, we're going to be thinking about this, we're going to be discussing it and keeping it in the back of our mind throughout the whole course. Now, looking at the brain, and the nervous system, as we just spoke about, we have these molecules of emotion. And these molecules of emotion, we could say, are governed or dictated by our mental, emotional, and spiritual perceptions that come into our nervous system. So we see the world through a lens, through our own personal lens. 7 billion people on the planet, not everyone sees the world the same. I'm sure you all have had the experience, where you've had an argument with someone, both parties think they're 100% right, but they can't come to an agreement. Usually, the case is that each party is 100%, right, because they're seeing the world through their lens. And of course, we've built a whole judicial system around this to try to figure out who's the 'rightest'. So we've got mental, emotional, and spiritual inputs into our brain, into our nervous system, and that creates a corresponding biochemical effect in the body. Now, I don't want you guys to be freaked out by the word biochemical. That just means the chemicals that we're making in our body. So we have this mental, emotional, spiritual experience, it goes into our nervous system, it could be something we see, something we hear, or could be something we think about, that creates a biochemical reaction in the body. And interesting that that biochemical reaction can actually then have an effect on the way we feel. So it's bi-directional.

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We're going to look at this in another way, talking more about what I call the two pillars of mental health. And this is how I describe it to my clients. We have to consider both of these pillars always and for every condition. And we have to consider these two pillars of mental health, just for general, good mental health as well. You can't have one without the other. So what are these two pillars? Well, we've already alluded to what they are, we've already discussed a little bit about what they are. And the first pillar is that emotional, spiritual, mental aspect, like, what's coming into the nervous system? What's the lens that we actually see this world through? And here are some examples on what might influence that lens. Coping skills; how are you actually dealing with a situation? These are some things that we've learned in the playground, right? You're you're in the playground, someone comes and steals your toy, you cry, you go to the teacher and you say, 'they stole my toy, they stole my toy', and then the teacher maybe explains it to you, or maybe they don't. And we all have a different set of coping skills. Some have a really good set of coping skills. Some have not such a



great set of coping skills, and we're actually going to cover a little bit later in this course, the notion of how we respond to stress and how it could help people grow or could cause them to crumble. And that's a huge part of that is our coping skills. Our life experiences play a big role. What has happened that has shaped us? How has our environment shaped us? It's sort of the nature vs nurture discussion; how much is genetic and how much are we being shaped by our life experiences? And, of course, many people say that experience is the best teacher. What doesn't kill us makes us stronger. Our guardians also play a very specific role in the way our brain is shaped. There are accounts of, babies and infants that have lost their whole family and ended up in orphanages, and when they're not held, when they're not loved, and when they're not nurtured, they don't thrive and they can actually die. So our guardians, whoever's around us, whether it's our parents, or grandparents, or the people taking care of us are going to have a huge influence on our lens, on how we see the world, on our mental, emotional, spiritual processing of life. Our schooling is also going to play a big role. First of all, are we being schooled? Second, what type of schooling is that? Who are the teachers? So that's going to play a big role as well. The education, which is, again, along the same lines of the schooling, is someone going all the way through to university? Are they just being educated at a very basic level, like elementary school? So that could change the way we perceive the world as well, in a big way? The culture; different cultures have different traditions, and they process different situations in different ways. So that cultural influence is also going to have a big influence on how we process the world. Our family; are you the only child, do you have 15 siblings? Do you live with your cousins? Do you live in close quarters? Do you live by yourself? So family is going to have a very important aspect as well. Do you have older siblings or younger siblings? Are you the only child? Outlook is also going to play an important role? How do we perceive life? Do we perceive it as hopeful? Do we have less hope? Do we think we have control over our life? Things like this. And opportunity? So you know, what type of opportunities do we have?

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Here in Canada, the opportunities are tremendous. In a lot of other countries around the world, opportunities might be somewhat limited, they might be somewhat increased, it really depends on where you live. So this list really gives us an idea of some of the things that might influence those individuals' lenses and how they see the world; mental, emotional, spiritual. This is definitely not a comprehensive list, there could be lot more things, but it gives us a really good picture as to what might influence that lens. The other side is our biochemical influences. And this is where I really like to do most of my work and where I could really pack a huge punch with my clients, so we really focus on the biochemistry. We're going to be talking about pretty much every one of these in really a lot of detail.

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So blood sugar fluctuations, when you're on the roller coaster, when you're up here, and maybe have a lot of energy, but when you're down here, you've got



anxiety and dizziness, and you can't think straight, and maybe you're moody and that's really going to affect your emotional health. A lot of nutrients are really key to our biochemistry and to how we actually make neurotransmitters, and how we process them, and how we move them through the body, so nutrients are very important and what we're eating. Our genes; everyone's genetically different, and that's going to influence how certain reactions happen around our body, and that's the biochemistry. Allergies; if you're sensitive or allergic to certain food or substance that can create a variety of inflammatory compounds, which can actually affect our mental health. Drugs; we know that's pretty clear cut, that that could really affect someone's mental health very quickly. We know that alcohol decreases people's inhibitions. It also makes messes up their ability to balance properly, and their level of judgment, which is why alcohol and driving don't really mix to well. Various chemicals, not just drugs, but toxins can actually affect the way we think. Diseases can have residual effects on how our mental health is as well. And the microbiome, we're going to talk about how these little bacteria that actually outnumber ourselves can actually influence how we think and how we feel. I mean, that's a huge paradigm shift, these things have way more control than we think.

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So we've got these two pillars of mental health, and they have a bi-directional effect on each other. The biochemistry can affect the mental, emotional, and spiritual. So say I have a blood sugar dip that could change the way I feel and how I perceive the world. And if I am perceiving the world in a certain way, so, say I find something very threatening, like, someone always almost hits me with a car, then that can change my biochemistry, that can release a whole bunch of stress hormones, and that can have a bi-directional effect.

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So we're going to use this framework, these two pillars of mental health, as we go through the whole course. It's going to pop up a number of times. And I also want you to keep this in the back of your head, in the back of your mind, in the back of your brain and nervous system. Maybe even keep this diagram beside you throughout this course as a reminder, that we always have to consider the two pillars of mental health. This is why I think that dealing with the mental, emotional, spiritual aspect of our mental health, how we perceive the world and working with the biochemistry, when we combine those two, we have the greatest success.