The theory that food influences our health and well-being is certainly nothing new. But can food influence our mood? You bet! Says who? Clinical researchers from here, there and everywhere. Several studies have linked poor diet quality with increased symptoms of depression, anxiety and other mood disorders.

Not only can our food choices influence our mood, but also our mood can impact our food choices. Many people tend to eat more or less when they experience different emotions. According to a survey conducted by National Public Radio, over one third of participants reported that they change their diets during stressful times.

Here are a few tips to improve your food-mood connection:

1. **Don’t skip meals:** eating consistently throughout the day will keep your body fueled and your blood sugar levels on an even keel.

2. **Avoid high-sugar foods/beverages and refined grains** such as soda, energy drinks, sugar-filled coffee drinks, bagels, doughnuts, and sugary cereals. These foods can raise your blood sugar levels quickly, resulting in a spike and crash that can leave you feeling cranky and low in energy.

3. **Choose healthy fats:** Omega 3 fats from foods like salmon, tuna, ground flax seeds, chia seeds, avocado and walnuts have been shown to improve mood and brain function.

4. **Include high quality protein consistently throughout the day:** Some examples include fish, chicken, beans, eggs, nuts, quinoa, yogurt, cottage cheese, and milk. Protein consists of amino acids, which are the building blocks of chemical messengers in the brain. Protein raises levels of the amino acid tyrosine, which prompts the brain to produce chemicals responsible for keeping us alert and energized.

Food isn’t the only thing that can influence our mood. There are many layers to our “mood” onion. If your mood feels out of control and you don’t know where to turn, call or visit UA Counseling and Psych Services (CAPS) located on the third floor of UA Campus Health (520-621-3334).

Food and nutrition services (including healthy eating, cooking skills, weight management, digestive problems, hormonal and cardiovascular diseases, and eating disorders) are offered year-round at Campus Health. Call (520) 621-6483 to make an appointment.