

# the VOICE



Volume 15, Issue 2

There seems to be just 3 possible scenarios when you are building your business.

1. You have a steady flow of interested clients who see the value in what you are offering.

2. You have clients who are enthused but only come to see you one time and then you rarely hear from them again.

3. You have opened your doors, hung your shingle and the bell is just not ringing.

We at CANNP have heard it all!

Number 1 — the busy practitioner — is the easiest to handle and of course, the most desirable. But ask any busy nutritionist and they will tell you it took time and hard work. You can't just sit back and hope that people will don your door. These folks have learned hard lessons and pivoted and planned. You can too!

Number 2 — the one timer visitor. There can be a number of reasons that this happens. The most common reason is that you were super enthused in that first meeting and spilled your guts. You offered all the information you had stored up and you asked a whole slew of things from the client, and the resulting overwhelm caused his/her head to spin!

The truth is that many people are used to the allopathic way of 'give me a pill and I will be better.' They don't understand that

this is a process and it is your job to explain that and get the buy-in. You are a team making a health journey together. A package of sessions would work very well in this instance so have several available with a discount to prepay.

Did you send a follow-up summary of your meeting? Did you book the next appointment before they left your building? These small steps help to ensure commitment. Be clear at the end of your sessions what the on-going plan will be and how long it will take.

Ask the client what is holding them back. Learn about your process and adjust accordingly.

Number 3 — no one is coming through your door. This feels challenging. You think you've done it all right but still your practice is quiet. Be sure you have narrowed down your niche. Some folks tell us what their niche is yet their website says something different. While you are welcome to deviate from your chosen path of course, you need to start somewhere tangible. Reach out on-line and in-person, networking whenever and whenever you can. Your most faithful clients will be those who you have forged a personal connection with.

Stick with it — pivot, try new things.

## Value or Insurance

There is no guarantee in the insurance game. There is huge turnover and changing markets and offerings. One day it's there and the next it is gone. So insurance coverage, though nice, is not something a budding business can count on. Instead, develop a practice that people will pay for because you are good at what you do and you get results! Period.

If someone has insurance coverage, great, but even at that, it will only buy 2-3 visits to your office. Is that enough for real health change? Become a valuable resource.



2

Association  
News

4

Mel Robbins &  
Dr. Chatterjee —  
A Unique  
Approach to  
Nutrition

5

Business Buzz:  
Spring is in  
the Air

7

AI is Comming Like  
It or Not  
Answer to question:  
Are you covered by  
insurance?

8

Optimal  
Digestion's  
Missing Link

## New Power Hour Regs

1. Many of our Members are requesting to attend our amazing Power Hours right before they happen .... some even day of. We are finding this difficult to manage. On a go forward, we ask that you hold your spot at least 3 days prior (ie. sign up by Friday for a Tuesday or Wednesday Power Hour.)
2. If you have signed up, and are missing the zoom link, please let us know by the morning of the event. Often the link is distributed the week before. Be sure to check your junk folder, though that just should not be (lol)!
3. Please be sure to put your name in the chat box when you arrive so that we can properly process your \$10 refunds.
4. Please **do not** share the Power Hour link with others as it is a Member-only benefit.
5. We do attempt to record the Power Hours, with permission of the presenter, but sometimes technology is not our friend. We cannot count on a recorded session.

If you have a Power Hour idea or know of someone who would be a wonderful speaker guest, please let us know at [info@cannp.ca](mailto:info@cannp.ca)

## Tax Receipts

Now CANNP sends an electronic version of the insurance receipt that we urge you to share with your clients. Doing so will be the only way that human resource departments will know that there is a desire for coverage.

The proof of payment for your membership fees and any products that you purchase will be found in your Welcome/Renewal packages. We urge you to look for them there and to file them for future reference.

We do sometimes make errors, or neglect to send them — that does happen from time to time — but in general it would be helpful if you could locate and save the ones that you receive by mail.

## Power Hours

We are beyond pleased that our Power Hours are so popular! They provide us all with a great opportunity to connect with one another and to learn. We are now booked into the coming year!

February brought author and television personality, and long-time Member, Julie Daniluk who shared insights into how to break the cycle of inflammation. As always we were honoured to have this inspirational speaker join us.

In March Cordelia McFadyen, Dean of Pacific Rim College and long-time Member spoke to us about the very important topic of Business Ethics. Cordelia broke through all the rhetoric and gave us the straight talk!

In early April long time Member Joanne Mulhall spoke to us about Hair analysis and how we can use this tool to get a better picture of what is going on with our clients.

Later in the month, Aaron Goldman from DNA Labs introduced us to the use of testing in our practice and what insights that might give to practitioners.

Marla Samuel once again joined us, this time discussing Hair Loss — why it happens and what we can do about it. As always, Marla provided an in-depth look at the research and options.

Looking ahead, the line up is very impressive.

If you are a regular, we hope to continue to see you but if you are new to Power Hours, be sure to sign up. The \$10 'hold your spot' fee is refundable if you show up. We can't wait to see you!

## Upcoming Webinars

**June 10, 11 am** - Kyle James will join us to discuss her program "Reclaim Your Happiness" and the relationship between depression and nutrition.

**June 24, TBD** - A rep from CanAlt Labs will discuss how we can use their testing to enhance our client knowledge.

**July 8, 11 am** - Sabra Way will return to talk about how to write a blog so that it is impactful and increases visits to your website.

**September 17, noon** - Dr. Nadine is going to discuss how to interpret blood work from your client. How you can gain information without diagnosing.

**October 8, 11 am** - Member Jen Vasey of Metabolic Balance will share what the program is all about and how it can enhance your practice.

**November 4, 10:30 am** - Krysten Ali will tell us what she did to cure her own hypothyroidism.

## Ready, Set, Chat

Ready, Set, Chat has settled into a Whats App group and it is open to professional Members who want to connect. Ask questions, get and offer advice and reach out to fellow NNCPers.

Log into the [cannp.ca](http://cannp.ca) site and go to Members and find Ready Set Chat. From there you can link to the group.

We need some real chatters on there so if you have something to offer, we are all ears!

See you there soon!

### Please Note

CANNP is pleased to bring you many discounts and opportunities; we encourage you to use your best judgement and discrimination when choosing to participate. We do not endorse programs; we simply make them available to you as a benefit of membership. We appreciate the generosity of all our supporters.

The content of this newsletter is for the purpose of sharing information only. Readers are encouraged to investigate all ideas, products and/or services before committing to them. CANNP will not be held responsible for any adverse consequences resulting from the use of any information in this newsletter.

© 2025 CANNP. May not be copied in whole or in part without permission.

### Challenge and Accountability

The Challenge and Accountability initiative may be one of our favourites. It not only gives us an opportunity to rub shoulders with Members in a more direct setting, it is really well-received and becoming very popular.

Folks that take part, that do the work, seem to really benefit. It provides participants with the little push needed to do what was at one time considered “the hard stuff.” But we make it fun and interactive and practical.

The program for March and April was intense for sure but so worthwhile! Attendee Lauren wrote, *“Thank you so much for your input! I am really enjoying the program. It has forced me to get on with things, and make some progress. I have learned so much already! I find the zoom meetings to be very helpful, and allow me to think outside the box.”*

For a 2 month period, a limited number of Members meet to tackle business tasks that you should be pursuing to either start your business on the right track or refresh your existing practice. But that's not all – you will be accountable to complete them! You will be paired with a partner for support and we all meet as a group every two weeks to hone the results. For details about how it works, log into the Members only area and under Members go to Business Tools.

The next session is still to be determine but more information will follow closer to the date.

Take advantage of what we have to offer!

### Cover to Cover

We have revived the Cover to Cover overview of publications completed by Members. We are quite an impressive bunch!

The books do count toward continuing education hours and are worth taking a look at.

If you want your book included, please send us the information required, using the present layout as a guide.

You can locate Cover to Cover in the Members only area of the [cannp.ca](http://cannp.ca) site at the bottom of For Your Use.

### We Have Free Stuff Too!

If you are a Member in good standing and you have not attended a free Power Hour or requested a free giveaway or taken part in the Challenge and Accountability or any of the other great offers and benefits from CANNP — you are definitely missing out. Those who are part of these initiatives tend to be those who are most successful.

Who doesn't want something for free, especially if it's super useful!

A quality product that you can share with your client does more than give them valuable information — it keeps your name around when you can't be. It makes a great marketing tool to remind them of you when they are not in immediate need of your services.

February was the perfect time to pull together something about how to boost immunity. It was just plain common sense advice but coming from you it holds great weight!

March was a giveaway featuring 12 ways supplements are not drugs. Though individual often think of them as drugs, cause they kind of look like pills, it is part of the practitioners job to communicate the differences. This was the perfect giveaway for that purpose.

April we featured Spring Cleaning. Makes perfect sense right? It featured simple ways for clients to stay on track with the notion that every little change is a great step.

### Trueview — Vagal Tone Add-On

We have an enhancement to the Trueview and we are super excited about it.

The Vagal Tone add-on works exactly like Trueview. It comes with a list of questions for the client to complete and a workbook into which you can copy and paste the client answers. It also comes with a FOCUS and a special page of exercises to enhance Vagal Tone.

We know from Dr. Cyr that Vagal Tone is very important to overall health. So adding this knowledge to the puzzle pieces can be very helpful. In fact, Dr. Cyr was instrumental in the development of this product.

As with all Trueview aspects, remember to follow the tips that come with it to ensure longevity and usefulness. Also key is that numbers do not matter; there is no math; there are only line lengths. The longer the line, the more attention needs to be paid to that factor.

It is beyond simple to use!

## Mel Speaks to Dr. Chatterjee: His Approach to Nutrition

We talk about overwhelm a lot — it is a huge turn off for clients. Many will come to you feeling that they can't make sense out of all the information they are being bombarded with. So your job is to simplify a doable approach — something the client can manage and that will produce a successful outcome.

According to a podcast Mel Robbins conducted with guest Dr. Chatterjee, change is simpler than most people think. It is all in the approach.

Dr. Chatterjee advises to never talk down to your client and never blame them for a misstep or for not reaching a goal. He advises to work as a team. Become the equal in an experimental journey. Take the time to explore with them how the foods they are eating are making them feel. The client explores the food-feeling relationship, with your guidance, and soon recognizes what is working for them. The way they tackle this is by evaluating how they feel, their energy level, their sleep, their focus, their gut distress.

The fact that they “own” their journey means they will have control and become more self aware. It is listening to all the external chatter that creates a feeling of being pulled in a hundred directions. You can net this down for the client quite simply.

He points out that often when a diet fails, the person pursuing the meal plan blames themselves when in truth, the diet may not have been the one for that person at this time of their life.

You can start very directly by pointing out that one should eat foods in their most natural forms. These are ideally foods that have one ingredient and no bar code — like an apple or avocado.

For other food desires, it is necessary to label read. There are three simple rules that CANNP has identified:

1. Read them
2. Evaluate the length — too long, take a pass.
3. Pronounce the words you are eating. If

you can't then don't ingest them. Simple!

Dr. Chatterjee suggests that you and your client partake in an experiment for 3-4 weeks before evaluating again. He says this is enough time for taste buds to adjust.

By encouraging the client to feel the changes and to take ownership of what they are doing, their success becomes more personal. You are no longer telling them what to do — it stops being your plan and instead becomes their plan. While you continue to guide them, they will buy into doing what makes them feel the best. This is a key to compliance — they own the changes and can personally see the impact.

The doctor and Mel explored a very interesting approach to cravings. Every client you meet will have cravings of one kind or another.

Dr. Chatterjee says that the brain is a very associative organ and he developed what he refers to as a 3F Framework, claiming it will work for any number of situations.

1. Feel. One gets that feeling, about the same time, in the same situation — in the evening watching television let's say. When that urge hits, he suggests that the client create a space — a pause. Think for a moment about what the feeling is and whether it is a true physical hunger or is it from an emotional source, a practice he claims is learned through repetition. Regardless, the idea is to create a pause between the stimulus and response. Don't automatically give into the feeling, take a few moments to think about it first.

This step he claims, is key to taming cravings. It is the beginning of becoming more self-aware with regard to food choices. It is allowing the client a better understanding of what is going on and become more introspective.

He goes on to say that after taking a pause, if the client still feels like eating the craved item, then that is perfectly permissible.

2. Food. The next phase, perhaps the following day, is to instruct the client to take the pause as described above but

take it one step further. Consider how food would feed that feeling. Again, physical or emotional? It is another opportunity to increase self-awareness.

If after doing this complete evaluation — pause and consider how food is feeding the feeling — the client still wants to eat the craved item, then so be it.

3. Find. The final phase encourages the client to look for a healthier alternative to the craved item. If, for example, the person is eating because they have had a stress filled day, perhaps instead of eating, they should draw a relaxing bath. They could call a friend or go for a walk instead. You and the client can explore different and suitable self-soothing ways that are different and constructive.

Dr. Chatterjee is convinced that confusion comes when the client thinks that there is an expert who knows what is right for them, but really, the client is the one who knows what is best — your job is to guide them with the information they give you. Ideally the most valid knowledge comes from their personal observations.

You should be certain that the client understands that though food is part of an overall health plan, you will be depending on the client to provide feedback so that together you can modify and enhance to get the best results.

He does touch on briefly the need for will power. He claims to try not to use all will power up in the house. Instead, keep the foods to avoid out of the house and direct will power to the outside where it is most needed.

Dr. Chatterjee and Mel go on in the podcast, entitled, “Change Your Body and Your Life in 1 Month: 4 Small Habits that Actually Work,” to speak about the other pillars of health — movement, sleep and relaxation.

It is definitely worth listening to.

*Mel has kindly given CANNP permission to share some her approaches with our Members.*



*Paul Fink, BA, MBA, CPA (former), is a graduate from the University of Michigan and worked as a CPA at Peat, Marwick, Mitchell (now KPMG) in Detroit, Michigan, before moving to Toronto and becoming a leader in Commercial Real Estate Brokerage.*

*Paul shares his extensive experience in business and his expertise in financial matters with the CANNP board.*

## Spring is in the Air

Tis the season to make all things fresh and bright! It is the time of year to make sure that all your business related affairs are in good order and that you are prepared to be as efficient as you can be — Spring is in the Air!

Now is the time to address every aspect of your business life and clean it up. That means your physical environment, your digital space, your finances and your overall business plan.

### Physical Space

**Declutter.** Start with your desk top and move to your drawers. Look at your supplies — do you need 40 pens for example? Anything that is broken, discard and replace. Streamline where you can. The more organized your space, the more effective you can be. You will soon see that you know where everything is stored and you can retrieve all of it at a moment's notice. Working this way will lead to greater productivity.

**Personalize.** Since you will, at the very least, have your environment seen virtually, be sure that you are pleased with it. Perhaps consider some art work or plants — just make certain that your environment reflects you and what you are doing and is visually appealing and calming.

### Digital Space

**Organize.** Unsubscribe wherever you can so that you lessen the in flow of daily emails. Only hold onto those subscriptions that serve you and that you use. Doing this will help you stay focussed and provide less of a distraction. While you are at it, delete old emails that you no longer need on hand. Despite doing this daily, one seems to always be able to do more!

**File.** Create files to hold those emails and downloads that are important to you. Sorting this way will help you retrieve what you need more effectively. It's a big task but if you do a little each day, and ensure that incoming emails go to their rightful destination, you will soon be super organized.

**Back up.** Be sure to adequately back up your system several times a week. Don't wait until something catastrophic happens to learn this important lesson.

### Financial

**Review business expenses.** There are two ways to increase your profit — increase your revenue or decrease your expenses. Perhaps in eliminating some of the subscriptions you had, as above, you can cancel some outgoing dollars. Try to find ways to optimize spending such as bulk purchasing for example. Watch for sales on office supplies. Are there responsibilities which you had previously delegated but now feel more comfortable taking on yourself? Now is the time to determine if there are areas where you can save.

**Pay what is due.** Make sure that you are paid up in terms of your business related invoices. Try your best to not waste money on costly interest charges. Contact vendors if necessary to make arrangements for deferred payment plans.

**A new tax year.** Make both a digital and physical file available to store the paperwork you will require for the coming tax year. Even though you just completed taxes, this is a new year and the perfect time to implement a new more common sense approach to managing tax paperwork. Start with your CANNP tax receipt. Put it in the file for safe keeping.

### Business Plan

**Review procedures.** Once a year review how you do things and be sure to document each and every step so should something happen, someone would be able to step into your shoes and manage your business. Prepare this paperwork as though it were for someone who knows nothing at all about how you carry on your day-to-day business. You will be surprised at how many details you take for granted.

**Plan a vacation.** Summer is coming and you need a break! How are you going to take it? Who can step into your role? Start making those plans now with a list of what needs to be taken care of.

Just start and make a little bit of progress on these steps each and every day and before long you will be all cleaned up and running like a well-oiled machine!

Not so sure that Canada has caught up but the United States has taken the lead in terms of banning red dye Number 3. Usually Canada is the one paving the way for this sort of thing but not this time. Banned by the FDA, this dye made from petroleum, has been associated with cancer in animals. Some studies show that it is also associated with ADHD. Companies in the USA have until January 2027 to reformulate products. Pharmaceutical companies have an additional year. Here is hoping that Canada follows suit. What do you need this dye for anyway?  
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/article/red-dye-no-3-is-now-banned-in-the-us-is-it-legal-in-canada/>

The 2025 INFORMAS Canada report is out. The report assessed the state of food environments in the country, revealing several gaps where the current system fails to support healthy eating. The report found that food environments, such as access to affordable healthy foods, food marketing, and nutrition labeling are not sufficiently aligned with public health goals. These findings are particularly concerning given the rising rates of diet-related chronic diseases in Canada, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. By improving food environments, such as increasing access to nutritious foods in underserved communities and regulating harmful food marketing, the report argues that Canada can reduce the burden of diet-related diseases.  
<https://informascanada.com/about>

A 2024 study published in the *Nutrition Journal* examined the relationship between breakfast consumption and life satisfaction among children and adolescents across 42 countries. To measure life satisfaction, a subjective assessment scale was used in the form of a “ladder,” visually spanning from 0 to 10. The study found that those who ate breakfast regularly reported significantly higher life satisfaction compared to those who skipped breakfast. The study suggests that a nutritious breakfast might enhance mood, cognitive function, and social interactions, leading to higher life satisfaction.  
<https://nutritionj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12937-024-00979-5>

A European study involved over 450,000 participants across ten countries explored the relationship between adherence to the Mediterranean diet and the risk of developing obesity-related cancers. The study found that individuals who closely followed the Mediterranean diet, regardless of weight loss, had a 6% lower risk of obesity-related cancers compared to those who did not follow the diet. This study underscores that this diet, rich in anti-inflammatory foods such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, and healthy oils, long associated with a range of health benefits, plays a role in reducing cancer risk. The findings are particularly significant as they suggest that dietary patterns, not just weight loss, play a critical role in cancer prevention. The results reinforce the importance of promoting healthy eating patterns, particularly those that include anti-inflammatory foods, as part of public health strategies to reduce cancer rates. The findings of this cohort study are quick to point out that the results are modest and that more study is required before definitive claims can be made.  
<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2830586>

## www. Wild, Wacky, Wonderful

### onelook.com

Onelook is an ideal site if you are writing content for any project. The program scans 16,965,772 entries in 805 dictionaries. You then have the option to find definitions, related words, quotes, lyrics, colors, and more.  
It provides opposite words, phrases, adjectives and mentions which use the word.  
How you can use this site is mind blowing.

### noisli.com

Noisli allows you to mix and match different sounds in order to create your perfect sound environment — one that might be ideal for meeting clients.  
At this time there are 28 high quality backgrounds available which can be used individually or combined. You can adjust the volume for each sound in order to customize combinations to your needs and make them your own.  
Use the timer to help manage your sessions. Presently the free version allows for 16 sounds at 15 hours a day usage.

### howtopronounce.com

HowToPronounce.com is a free online audio pronunciation dictionary which helps anyone to learn the way a word or name is pronounced. How great for those tricky nutritionally related phrases necessary to incorporate into a presentation.  
Learn how to correctly say a word, name, place, drug, medical or scientific terminology. Now you are sure to sound like the pro you are!

## AI is Coming Like It or Not!

There is a lot of chatter about the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) so we wanted to look into it a bit. Would it be helpful to your business? What can you use it for; what will it replace?

This is just our take on the current situation, so please do your own investigation and make the appropriate decision for you.

Bottom line — it is not ready yet, but it is changing quickly every day.

We may have the impression that it came out of nowhere but in truth, AI has been worked on for many, many years. AI is on your iPhone and your Home Google. It is the application that you can talk to and that will answer you. It is just that specific models do specific things and with that, the possibilities seem endless.

There is LLM which is large language model. This is the like the common Chat GPT which understands the words you use. You can ask it a question just like you would your best friend, and an answer will be generated. Give it more granular, specific instructions and context to get more accuracy. Speaking to LLM like it were a child will ensure more detailed and easier to understand answers.

GeniAI or generative AI only understands key words. In this case you would use terse language knowing that order and repetition increase the “weight” those words bare.

LLMs actually are trained to predict the next word, from the half a trillion it is trained on. That is what it does. You can ask it to write an article for example, in your writing style, if you train it on what your style looks like. You can direct it to speak like a 65 year old instead of a 25 year old.

One of the most interesting things about Chat GPT, and assuming like models, is that it is trained to please you. So, for example, if you ask it for 10 Reasons to add vegetables to your meals, and there are only 6 legitimate ones, it will make up another 4 just to fulfill the ask. They call this “hallucinating.”

AI does this because it does not necessarily

know facts, it just predicts what the most likely response might be. It is most common to see when the topic is not too common or less specific. It will try to be helpful to you even if it means guessing a response.

If you were to ask ChatGPT to give you a word for each of the 30 letters of the alphabet, it would not make up 4 additional words. In this instance, the specifics of reality will intervene. You may be told that only 26 letters exist. This is a fact that is “baked” into the AI training much like the sun sets in the West.

It is always helpful to ask for verification of information — “please site your sources.” You will then be able to search the sites to ensure legitimacy and help to make the answers more your own.

Sometimes the information given is outdated or the site source no longer exists. When it comes to “current events” AI might be behind the times since it is not constantly updated. In real time a predictor of a sporting event conclusion for example, may refer to an event that has already occurred.

Remember the following tips:

1. Always be clear and specific in your ask. The more details you provide the happier you will be with the accuracy of the response.
  2. Protect your data. Never disclose personal or sensitive information to an AI format.
  3. Consider your attempt the first of several. Each time you get a response, consider asking something more specific, dig deeper or change it up. AI does not get it quite right on the first try.
  4. Make it your own. Don't use AI to replace your ideas. Instead use it to enhance your own style or judgement. Always make it your own.
  5. Check and double check. Ask for sources and check them, especially in the health world. You must do your due diligence and be comfortable with the responses that you plan to share.
- Many AI options charge for their services, and perhaps with more dollars come a wider range of abilities. It will be interesting to see how this all unfolds and what it means for the small business owner.

### Respond to: Are Your Services Covered by Insurance?

Just like having an elevator speech at the ready, it is imperative that you are prepared for the question, “Are your services covered by insurance?” We are fortunate enough in this country to not have to pay out of pocket for health care. The consequence though, is that many have an expectation that anything to do with health should not have to be paid for.

What many do not necessarily see, are the hours of personal research and guidance that practitioners invest in order to find the best holistic healing journey to a better quality of life. Your business success depends on how you handle the question about insurance coverage.

Most insurance coverage will only cover a couple of appointments which is not enough for many people to have the support that they need to accomplish their health goals.

#### Consider sharing this message:

“It takes years for imbalances to develop in the body to the point that you see symptoms, and so it makes sense, that a holistic approach to healing and getting to the root cause, will also take time to unwind. You may have coverage for part of this process, but that isn't something you can count on. Consider if you are ready to really commit to and invest in improving the quality of your life, and if so, we can work together to develop a step-by-step plan, adapting it as you evolve into better health.”

## Optimal Digestion's Missing Link

by Dr. Nadine Cyr, ND

For nutritionists, Polyvagal Theory provides an essential framework to understand why even the most nutrient-rich diet may fail without nervous system regulation.

### The Vagus Nerve: The Gut-Brain Superhighway

At the heart of Polyvagal Theory is the vagus nerve—the longest cranial nerve in the body and the main conduit of the parasympathetic nervous system. Often referred to as the “wandering nerve,” it meanders from the brainstem to the digestive tract, heart, lungs, liver, and more. It is our body's information superhighway, relaying signals from the body to the brain (afferent signals) and from the brain to the body (efferent signals)—including crucial messages that influence digestion, immune function, and emotional regulation.

In the digestive system, the vagus nerve governs essential processes such as: stomach acid production; enzyme secretion; bile flow; intestinal motility; and satiety cues and appetite regulation.

This nerve forms the anatomical foundation of the gut-brain axis, demonstrating that digestion is not simply a mechanical process—but an emotional, neurological, and relational one.

### Vagal Tone: Key to Digestive Health

The “tone” of the vagus nerve—its responsiveness and capacity to shift states—is a critical marker of autonomic resilience. High vagal tone is associated with flexibility, regulation, social connection, and robust digestion. Low vagal tone is linked to poor digestive function, inflammation, food intolerances, anxiety, and chronic disease.

Clients living with chronic stress, trauma histories, or dysregulated nervous systems often present with digestive complaints—such as bloating, reflux, constipation, IBS, SIBO, or food sensitivities. In these cases, it's not always the food that's the problem, but how the nervous system is interpreting the internal and external environment.

When the body is in a fight-or-flight (sympathetic) or freeze (dorsal vagal shutdown) state:

- Blood flow is redirected away from the digestive tract to the muscles.
- Stomach acid and bile production decrease.
- Peristalsis slows down.
- The immune system becomes either hypervigilant (leading to histamine and food intolerance reactions) or suppressed.

This physiological shift often leads to dysbiosis, leaky gut, and nutrient malabsorption. So, a client eating an anti-inflammatory, organic, whole foods diet may still feel bloated, foggy, fatigued, or inflamed—if their nervous system is not in a parasympathetic “rest and digest” state.

### Role of the Microbiome in Vagal Tone

A healthy microbiome not only supports digestion—it also sends signals to the brain through the vagus nerve, influencing mood, immunity, and autonomic balance. Recent research has shown:

- Specific strains like *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* and *Bifidobacterium longum* produce GABA, a calming neurotransmitter, which can modulate vagal activity.
- Short-chain fatty acids produced by fiber-fermenting microbes stimulate vagus nerve signaling and reduce systemic inflammation.
- Gut dysbiosis can impair vagus nerve signaling, increasing the risk for depression, anxiety, and visceral pain.

This bidirectional relationship means that supporting microbiome health through prebiotic and probiotic foods, as well as reducing gut inflammation, can improve vagal tone and autonomic flexibility—ultimately helping clients digest, assimilate, and heal more effectively.

### Being Polyvagal-Informed

Understanding a client's autonomic state—whether they are in a sympathetic, parasympathetic, or dorsal vagal state—can dramatically shift how we approach nutritional care. It invites a more effective model of support that recognizes the nervous system as the foundation for healing.

Being polyvagal-informed means:

- Recognizing the signs of nervous system

dysregulation (e.g., food restriction, emotional eating, gut symptoms).

- Tailoring nutrition plans that align with the client's current physiological capacity.
- Using tools that activate the vagus nerve and restore parasympathetic tone.

### Practical Vagus Nerve-Enhancing Strategies for Nutritionists

Here are evidence-based practices that you can integrate into sessions or recommend to clients to improve vagal tone and digestion:

1. Mindful Eating: Eating in a calm environment, with full attention on the meal, slows the nervous system and enhances digestion.
2. Deep Diaphragmatic Breathing: Stimulates the vagus nerve and signals the body that it is safe.
3. Cold Exposure: Splashing cold water on the face or cold showers can activate vagal pathways.
4. Singing, Humming, or Chanting: Vibrates the vocal cords and stimulates vagal activity.
5. Connection and Co-regulation: Eye contact, laughter, and safe social engagement send strong signals of safety.
6. Chewing Thoroughly: Slows the eating process, initiates digestive enzyme release, and signals the brain that food is on its way.

### Finally, Finding The Missing Link

In the evolving landscape of nutrition and functional medicine, nervous system literacy is no longer optional—it is foundational. The Polyvagal Theory empowers us to shift our lens from just “what to eat” to “how and when to eat”—in sync with the body's innate cues of safety and connection.

By integrating polyvagal principles, nutritionists and health coaches can help clients build a deeper trust with their bodies, support true digestive healing, and foster resilience from the inside out.

*Dr. Nadine is a licensed Naturopathic Doctor who deeply believes in the healing power of nature and in the body's innate ability to heal. Throughout her work as a clinician, course creator and facilitator, Dr. Nadine strives to make health solutions useful, practical, and applicable. Contact via email: drnadinecyrnd@gmail.com*