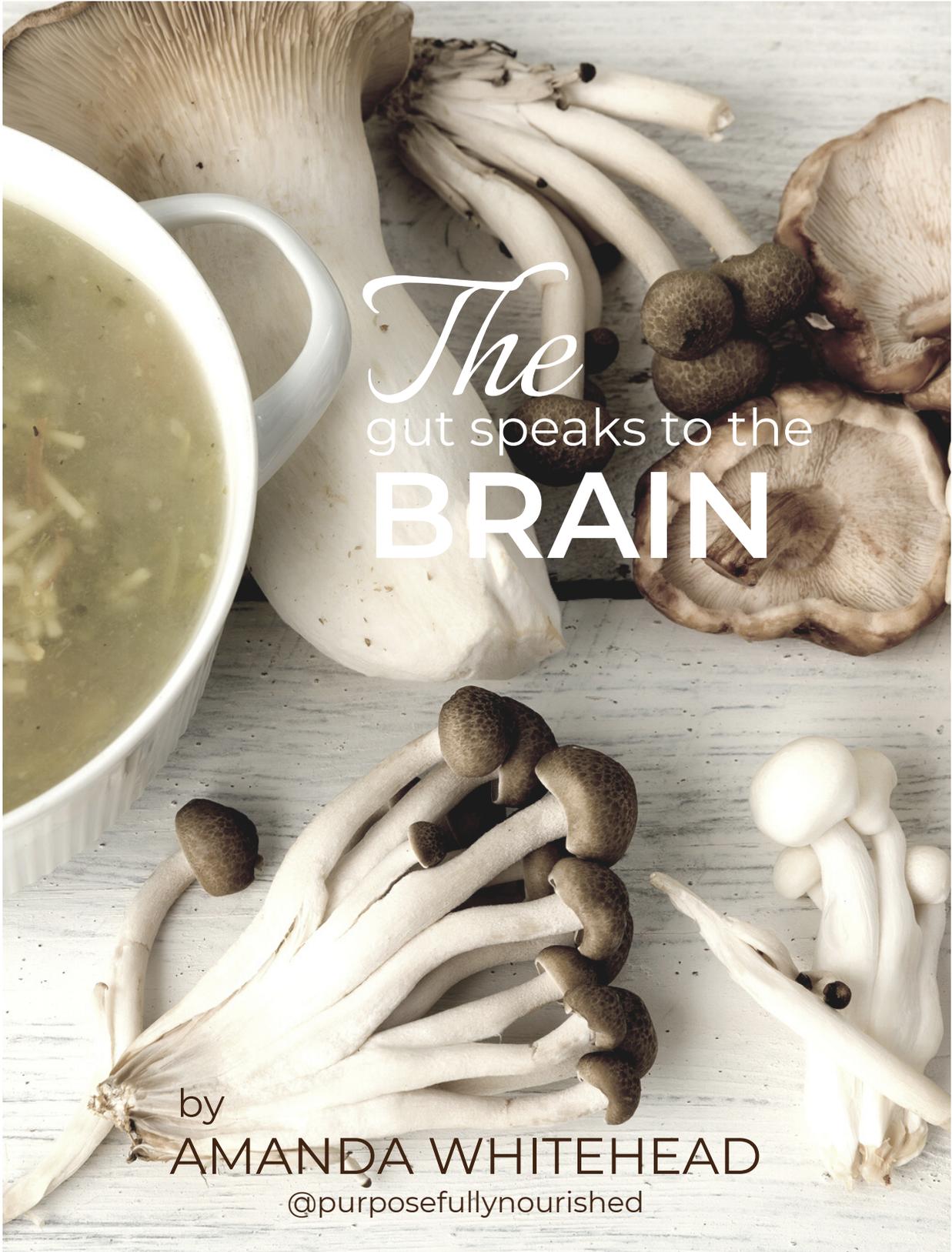


GUT HEALTH



The gut speaks to the **BRAIN**

by
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STORY **Amanda Whitehead** PURPOSEFULLY NOURISHED

Sometimes

our life mission comes to use when we are the most UNaware of our needs. My journey began when at 15 years old, I started taking antibiotics for chronic sinusitis and, not coincidentally, began suffering from irritable bowel syndrome.

Irritable indeed! I was fed up with myself as much as the drugs and the lesser quality of life (exhaustion, anxiety, and bloating is no way to live!). By my “enough is enough” moment at the age of 30, I was a mum of two and had been diagnosed with an underactive thyroid as well. I had two excellent reasons to get well: my children and mySELF!

The more I came to follow a path into wellness, the more I came to follow my GUT health.

There is a reason we say that the gut is the “second brain.” Our gut (i.e. digestive system) is home to the most significant density of immune cells in the entire body. It is responsible for 80% of our hormones and 90% of our immune system.

This “second brain” and the brain are in constant communication. The Vagus nerve runs between the two and sends a steady stream of signals through our bloodstream and communicates with other organs like the eyes, kidneys, liver, and heart.

TAKE ACTION

to take care.

Nourishing the gut is nourishing the soul. It is a way of telling your body and mind, “I care about you.” So how do we do that?

- Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits alongside quality protein and healthy omega 3 fats. Fresh fruit and vegetables also contain high levels of fibre, on which the gut bacteria thrive and keep the bowel environment healthy and regular.
- Move! The muscles, ligaments, muscles, and the gut too crave movement and flow. Balance between cardio and gentle flowing movements, such as yoga and stretching.
- Moving and connecting to nature is particularly beneficial and pleasurable.
- Listen to what your body needs and honour that.



*And sometimes
the best action we can take is to*

RELAX

Stress has a significant impact on the health of your gut-brain connection. It can show up on our skin as acne, psoriasis or eczema; in our eyes as dryness and dehydration; and in many other areas of the body as inflammation and disease caused by oxidative stress.

Oxidative stress is an imbalance of free radicals and antioxidants within the body. When there are more free radicals than antioxidants, they damage the fatty tissue, DNA, and proteins. Over time such stress manifests in skin breakouts, anxiety, premature aging and diseases like diabetes, heart disease, and inflammatory conditions like thyroid imbalances and mental health disorders.

To help prevent oxidative stress, feed your body with antioxidant-rich foods, such as berries, citrus fruits, dark leafy greens, broccoli, olives, tomatoes, and carrots, all high in antioxidants. And relax...

RELAXATION

is often easier said than done.

Yet it can be quite simple:

- Develop a morning routine. This doesn't have to take hours! My morning consists of 15 minutes of breath work, 10 minutes of stretching, jotting down my Gratitude List (writing down what I am grateful for always raises my vibe), and 20 minutes of reading. All within an hour!

If you are new to all of this and want to change habits, go for 5 minutes of stretching and 5 minutes of focused breathing before switching on your phone.

- Cultivate an evening routine: go to bed by 10 pm and give yourself a full hour to wind down beforehand. As simple as a basic bedtime routine, such as brushing your teeth and washing your face, in addition to meditation and Yoga Nidra.

- We even have a “no screens in the bedroom” rule, which drastically changes sleep quality and living.

Some more tips:

- Be aware of the products you use on your skin and the chemicals and toxins they may contain.
- Build an environment in your home that is beautiful, clean, and safe. Surround yourself with people in your life who contribute to your happiness.
Spend time in nature with trees and get plenty of fresh air.
Take deep breaths throughout the day.
Get plenty of rest and sleep.
Meditate or practice breathwork.
- Consider pain, fatigue, and discomfort as your body's way of communicating with you. Honour what your body asks of you and when going through challenges, lean in and embrace them.

These two amazing and unique organs go hand-in-hand. Balance is so important and putting yourself, and your health as your priority is crucial. As a mum, I must constantly remind myself that when I take care of myself, I am taking care of everyone around me. And when I follow my gut health, I take care of my body, mind, and self.

Amanda Whitehead