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

By Trudy Scott, Food Mood Expert and Nutritionist, author of *The Antianxiety Food solution*

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. Read on to learn about the amazing amino acids and how addressing neurotransmitter deficiencies 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 those initial sugar and carb cravings or addictions or love of certain foods as you are easing into fasting and a low carb or keto way of eating. They are a powerful tool to help you make the changes with no willpower and no feelings of deprivation.
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 but often with carbs and sugary foods too. Insomnia can also be due to low GABA and you’ll experience physical tension (rather than the ruminating thoughts which is the low serotonin type of insomnia – although 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 as some contraindications) then opening a capsule of a GABA-only or a GABA-theanine combination are my next choices when working with someone.
- 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.
- Do a trial to determine if the anxiety in in fact due to low GABA. I always do this with clients before starting any amino acid. Be sure to read how to do an amino acid trial – it has the low GABA questionnaire, the precautions and information on how to use targeted individual amino acids.

Meme Grant, GAPS Practitioner, Nutritional Therapist, FNTP, participated 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 why addressing neurotransmitter deficiencies 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 – very quickly.

Here is another example: 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):

*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?*

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

I start trials of the amino acids on day 1 when I’m working with someone so they get relief from anxiety, low mood and cravings right away and feel hope. It also makes it SO much easier so there is no willpower and no feelings of deprivation.

When a client has candida, sugar cravings are also out of control so I use the amino acids to help with some of the cravings (that may also be driven by brain chemical imbalances) to help quit the bread, cookies, candies and soda that has to happen for a successful candida elimination program.

It’s when I’m getting less than ideal results with sugar cravings reductions with the amino acids that I start to suspect candida is an issue. When candida is really bad, the amino acids can only help so much. We have to address the candida to completely eliminate the cravings and other symptoms cause by candida – like dysbiosis, bloating, pain, gas, brain fog and even some anxiety.
I also share the connection between serotonin and candida. In a paper published in 2003: Antifungal properties of 5-hydroxytryptamine (serotonin) against Candida species in vitro, looking at clinical isolates of Candida albicans, Candida glabrata, Candida tropicalis and Candida parapsilosis, it was found that short exposure to serotonin resulted in antifungal activity.

The authors conclude with this:

*I*denifying the mode of action [of serotonin] could be of great help in developing and researching new antifungal drugs.*

Of course, my solution is to provide serotonin support via diet, exercise and the use of the targeted individual amino acid tryptophan or 5-HTP. I use the amino acids -tryptophan/5-HTP as well as GABA, DPA, tyrosine and glutamine – and they actually help with so much of the sugar craving we see in candida. I also use this approach to gauge when candida is really serious.

So in this instance, tryptophan or 5-HTP is

- helping address low serotonin mood symptoms such the worry-type of anxiety, sadness, PMS, irritability, insomnia and pain
- helping to address the low serotonin cravings for carbs which tend to occur mid-afternoon and evening
- helping you more easily reduce carbs and sugar while you’re on the candida diet
- providing anti-fungal benefits to help get rid of the candida (I’m extrapolating here)

If you have brain chemical imbalances (like low GABA or low serotonin) or have candida I’m sure you can relate to what I often see with clients: some rather unsuccessful attempts at fasting (or eating lower carb or even trying a ketogenic way of eating) due to out-of-control carb cravings where you self-medicate to feel good and get through the day. Perhaps the thought of having to give up some of the carbs or sugary goodies you absolutely adore, is holding you back from even trying.
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.

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


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/

And the Anxiety Summit here https://www.theanxietysummit.com/
Food Mood Expert Trudy Scott is a certified nutritionist on a mission to educate and empower anxious individuals worldwide about natural solutions for anxiety, stress and emotional eating. She 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.

*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*, available in major books stores and via online stores like Amazon. You can [find out more here](#).

“excellent job of explaining the science behind anxiety and then bringing it to a practical level”  
- Elizabeth Lipski, PhD, CCN, author *Digestive Wellness*

“a real tour de force in complementary mental health literature & refreshingly original”  
- Jonathan Prousky, ND, author of *Anxiety: Orthomolecular Diagnosis and Treatment*

“Replete with specific and practical suggestions, this book is backed up by research and clinical expertise”  
- Julia Ross, MA, MFT, author of *The Mood Cure*

“I recommend this book not only to those who suffer from anxiety, but to their health care providers too”  
- Karla Maree, certified nutrition consultant