

A naturopathic approach for depression and anxiety

Case Study: Dana

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Dana walked into my consulting room with a big smile on her face and appeared to be in good spirits. She spoke with tremendous speed as though she wanted to tell me everything there and then. I invited her to sit down, offered her some water and encouraged her to take some deep, calming breaths.

Dana was seeking treatment for depression and anxiety. She worked in marketing and had a very demanding job, which required her to put on a “good show” to win clients and keep their custom. She mentioned that she also suffered with recurrent thrush (an infection caused by the yeast *Candida albicans*) and often experienced dizzy spells toward the afternoon. As someone who is focused on solutions, she indicated that her depression and anxiety were really pulling her down, and that she wanted to get to the bottom of it.

Dana disclosed that she was a workaholic and thrived in the “high stress” environment of the marketing world and that she therefore had little time for hobbies or leisure. She also rarely saw her family and this was something that bothered her

deeply. Furthermore, she was single, approaching her thirties and was eager to settle down and have children.

Although Dana was slim, her eating habits were poor. She did not eat breakfast and favoured sweet and refined snacks like chocolates, cereal bars and crisps that she could eat on the run. She rarely ate lunch and would opt for a sandwich or pie if she had the opportunity to eat. Furthermore, she consumed caffeine-laden drinks throughout the day and drank very little water. Her evening meal comprised microwaved meals that she would eat in front of the television. She told me that she craved carbohydrates and felt tired most of the time.

I quickly began to see various links between Dana’s lifestyle and her health concerns. By skipping breakfast and then opting for refined sugary snacks, her blood sugar level would not be able to regulate itself properly, resulting in fluctuations between highs and lows throughout the day. This would account for the fatigue and also influence the *Candida* infections she experienced. The fact that Dana relied on pre-prepared foods and microwaved meals was another concern because her food was neither fresh nor cooked under optimal conditions.

The daily stress of Dana’s job would also contribute significantly to her symptoms, as increased levels of cortisol (a hormone released during stress) are implicated in not only sugar imbalance, but depression and anxiety as well.^{1,2} As she did not actively pursue leisure activities, and clearly missed her family, Dana did not have an outlet for her stress. The effects of stress alone are cumulative and have an adverse, cascading effect on other body systems. Stress management and lifestyle modification were therefore essential requisites for her recovery and overall wellbeing.

Dana had been to see her GP recently, who ran a series of blood tests. These revealed that her blood count, thyroid function and random (non-fasting) glucose levels appeared to be normal. I wanted to establish whether Dana was suffering from hypoglycaemia, which could account for her mood symptoms³ and also influence her frequent *Candida* infections.⁴ I therefore contacted her GP and requested a glucose-insulin tolerance test (G-ITT), which is more sensitive in diagnosing hypoglycaemia than other

