



NEURO Plan Playbook

A Science-Backed Program *(and Recipes!)*
for Optimal Brain Health

Welcome!



We're Drs. Dean and Ayesha Sherzai, practicing neurologists, scientists, authors, parents, and a husband and wife duo that know the value of healthy lifestyle choices. We've seen the impact that our **NEURO Plan framework** has in making the sick healthy and in taking healthy to the next level.

We met as young physicians and in our first conversation we learned that both of our grandparents had spent their remaining days on this Earth suffering from dementia.

It was then that we vowed to do whatever we could to help others avoid this fate and build healthy minds and bodies.

Our academic journey led us to conduct research, treat patients, and serve as professors at Georgetown University, Columbia University, the National Institutes of Health, Mount Sinai, and Loma Linda University,

where we serve as the co-directors of The Alzheimer's Prevention Program.

We've worked with devastatingly disease-ridden populations and some of the healthiest people in the world – the Loma Linda 7th Day Adventist population (a Blue Zone community, defined by living measurably longer and healthier lives due to optimal nutrition, exercise, stress management, and social support.).

This NEURO Plan Playbook teaches you the fundamentals of our NEURO Plan framework — a science-based program backed by years of research with thousands of patients.

Nutrition, Exercise, Restorative Sleep, Unwinding, and Optimization (or N.E.U.R.O.) are five pivotal factors that can drastically affect your mind's health. Even better, the NEURO Plan is a program you can follow for the rest of your life

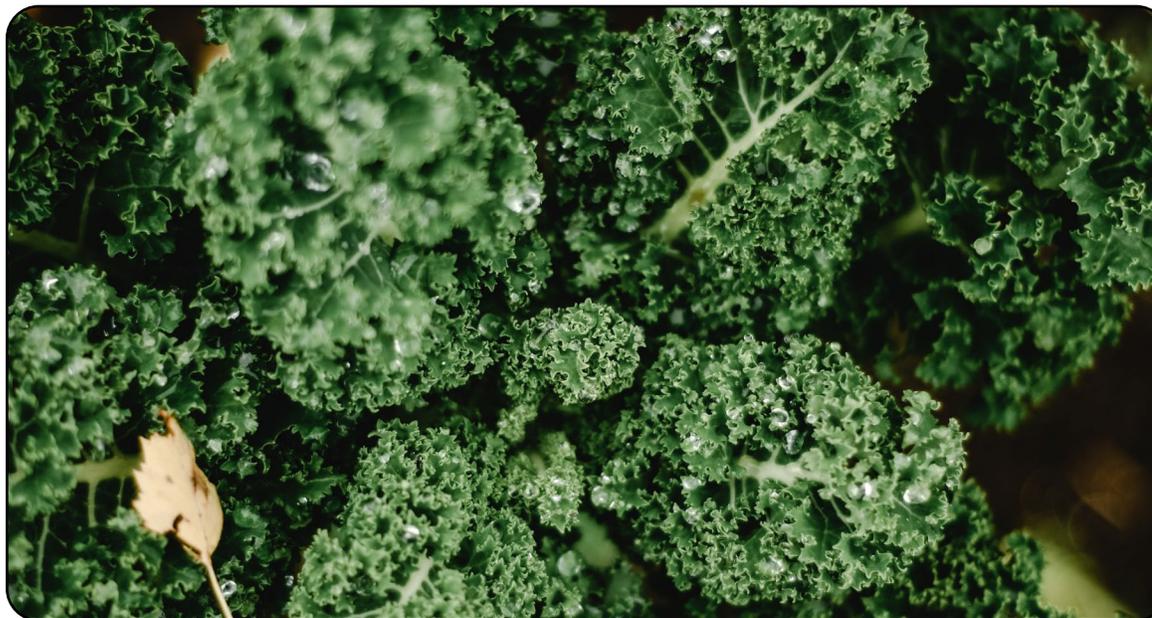
Here's to your health,

Dean & Ayesha Sherzai

N

Nutrition

- Nutrition is a very important element of brain health.
- Evidence shows that a diet HIGH in plant-based foods (green leafy vegetables, other vegetables, fruits and berries, beans and legumes, whole-grains, nuts, seeds, herbs and spices, and if oil is used for cooking, opt for oils high in polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated fats such as extra virgin olive oil) Omega-3 fatty acids (from flax, chia, hemp seeds or supplement with algae-based DHA), and LOW in ultra-processed foods, saturated fats and trans fats, salt and refined carbohydrates (processed sugar, white flour, etc.) can lower the risk of Alzheimer's and vascular dementia.
- Alcohol is neurotoxic and its high use has been associated with increased risk of brain atrophy (shrinkage) and ultimately dementia.

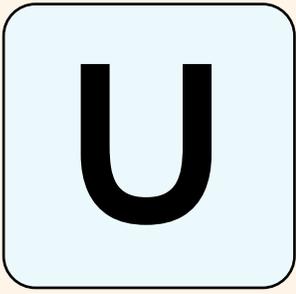


E

Exercise

- Exercising regularly can create more connections between neurons and reduce risk for dementia.
- Resistance training to build muscle mass can help reduce inflammation in the brain, and grow more brain cell connections, which can reduce the risk of Alzheimer's dementia.
- Research studies show that people who have more muscle mass and have better stamina have a sharper brain.
- Focusing on exercising between 150 to 300 minutes per week, dividing it into 3 or 4 exercise sessions per week, and reducing sedentary behavior is key.
- Any type of exercise is good as long as you push yourself safely and stick to it.





Unwind

- Stress has been associated with brain atrophy (shrinkage)
- People who have constant bad stress and worry in their life tend to have higher adrenaline and cortisol in their circulation, which has been associated with neurodegenerative changes in the brain.
- Stress management is very important for building a healthy brain. Increasing good stress (mental challenge and learning) and reducing bad stress (stressors that are imposed) are key to brain health and avoiding dementia.

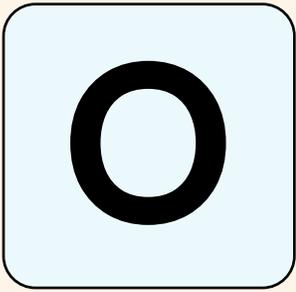


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Restore

- Our brain is cleaned and our memories are encoded and organized when we sleep.
- Sleep deprivation can increase the risk of Alzheimer's dementia. We need 7-8 hours of uninterrupted deep restorative sleep.
- **Here are 5 tips for better sleep:**
 1. Establish a regular sleep schedule - wake up at the same time and sleep at the same time
 2. Aim to get at least one to two hours of natural light during the first half of the day
 3. Reduce the amount of light and sound in your bedroom at night
 4. Stop using electronic devices at least a half hour before sleep (an hour is even better)
 5. Don't eat at least 2-3 hours before bedtime.





Optimize

- The more you keep your mind active, the more resilient your brain will become!
- People who have complex and challenging jobs develop cognitive reserve and resilience that protects them from the manifestations of neurodegeneration.
- Engage in real-life activities that are not just 'connecting dots on a screen' such as learning new skills, solving problems, volunteering, learning a new language, writing, taking an online class, painting and other such activities





Mind Kind Recipes

Whole-food, plant-based recipes
for optimal brain health

Eggplant Rolatini

with Tofu Ricotta, Tomato Basil Sauce and Cashew Cream

Serves 6, keeps in the fridge for several days, not freezer friendly.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium eggplants, sliced lengthwise

Tofu Ricotta Filling

- 1 block of extra firm tofu (we will use Trader Joe's organic extra firm tofu)
- Juice of 2 large lemons
- 2 Tbsp nutritional yeast
- 1/2 cup fresh basil
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- Freshly ground black pepper
- A pinch of salt (optional)
- 1/4 cup walnut parmesan (recipe below)

Cashew Cream

- 1/2 cup cashews, soaked for at least 4 hours or overnight
- 1/2 cup soy milk
- 1/4 tsp garlic
- 1/2 tsp miso paste
- 1/2 Tbsp nutritional yeast

Tomato Basil Sauce

- Extra virgin olive oil spray (optional)
- 4-6 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 28-ounce can (or two 15 oz cans) of tomato sauce or crushed tomatoes, NOT diced tomatoes. You can get whole tomatoes and process them.
- 1 Tbsp dried oregano
- 1/2 cup basil leaves, chopped plus more for garnish
- A pinch of salt, optional
- Freshly ground black pepper

Walnut Parmesan

- This recipe yield 10-12 servings and can be stored in a small jar in the fridge for weeks.
- 1/2 cup raw walnuts (or any other nuts)
- 2 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp miso paste (optional)

TOOLS

- Knife
- Cutting board
- Mixing bowls
- Measuring spoons and cups
- A baking casserole dish 8x8
- Towel to dry the tofu
- Food processor (for the walnut parmesan and tofu ricotta) and a small blender (for the cashew cream)
- Baking sheets for the eggplants (you'll probably need 2)
- A pan or a saucepan to make the tomato sauce
- A jar for storing the parmesan

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 C).
2. Arrange the eggplant slices on 1-2 baking sheets in an even layer and bake oven for 20 minutes, then flip and bake for another 10 minutes. Set aside and maintain heat to 375 degrees F (190 C).
3. While eggplant is baking, add all the walnut parmesan ingredients in a food processor and pulse a few times. You want a course meal, not a powder. Pour the parmesan out of the processor container and set aside.
4. Now add the tofu ricotta ingredients to the food processor and pulse to combine, scraping down sides as needed. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed.
5. Make the cashew sauce by blending all the ingredients in a blender and food processor. Set aside.
6. Now make the tomato basil sauce: place the garlic in a pan on medium heat, sprayed with extra virgin olive oil or avocado oil and let it become fragrant for about 30 seconds. Then add the tomato sauce, oregano, black pepper, basil, and salt (optional). Mix and place on very low heat for about 15 minutes so the flavors get to mix with each other. Set aside.
7. Pour about a cup of the tomato sauce into an 8×8 baking dish (or similar sized dish) and reserve rest of sauce for topping / serving. Set aside.
8. Scoop generous amounts (about 2 Tbsp) of tofu ricotta filling onto each eggplant slice and roll up. Place seam side down in the sauce-lined baking dish. Continue until all filling and noodles or eggplant strips are used up. Pour more tomato sauce on the rolls for extra flavor. Drizzle or spoon over some cashew sauce on top in a zig zag pattern.
9. Bake for 20 minutes, or until sauce is bubbly and warm and the top of the rolls are very slightly golden. Serve immediately with additional drizzle of the cashew sauce, walnut parmesan and fresh basil. Leftovers keep for a couple of days,

Notes:

- You can avoid oil and skip the salt.
- If you don't like eggplant, you can use pasta shells instead, but try to find whole wheat pasta. You could also cook this with whole wheat penne pasta - mixing the ricotta with the pasta and covering it with the tomato sauce and cashew cream.
- If you can't have cashews, use 3/4 cup silken tofu to make the cream and add a tiny bit more nutritional yeast for taste.
- If you can't have walnuts, substitute with sunflower or pumpkin seeds.
- If you can't have tofu, mix the eggplant slices with white beans and steamed spinach, and cover it with the tomato sauce and cashew cream.



Lemony Brussels Sprouts

with Walnuts

Prep time: 10 mins

Cooking time: 15 mins

Total time: 25 mins

Yields 6 servings

The nutritious Brussels sprouts can be cooked in many delicious ways and are a must-have addition to the holiday table and beyond. To help them cook evenly, cut in half lengthwise or if large, cut in quarters before proceeding with the recipe.

INGREDIENTS

- 1lb/450g Brussels sprouts, trimmed
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 shallots, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup walnuts or pecans, coarsely chopped
- 3 tablespoons nutritional yeast
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 1 teaspoon whole grain Dijon mustard

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a boil over a medium-high heat; add the sprouts and cook for about 3 minutes. Drain and plunge them in iced water for 20 to 30 seconds, then drain and set aside.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over medium heat, add the shallots, and cook until begin to caramelize, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic and walnuts and continue cooking for 2 to 3 minutes, until the walnuts are golden brown. Stir in the nutritional yeast and lemon zest and set aside.
3. Heat the remaining tablespoon olive oil in a large skillet over a medium heat, add the sprouts, and cook, stirring often and drizzling with a tablespoon of lemon juice at a time, for about 7 to 10 minutes, or until slightly caramelized. Stir in the mustard and any remaining lemon juice.
4. Season the sprouts to taste, transfer to a serving plate and scatter the pecan mixture on top. Serve immediately.



Acorn Squash Bake

with Romesco Sauce

Prep time: 20 mins

Cooking time: 35 mins

Total time: 55 mins

Yields 4 servings as a side, 2 servings as a main dish

INGREDIENTS

- 4 red bell peppers
- 1 cup almonds
- 5 whole cloves of garlic with skin on
- 2 Tablespoons apple cider
- 1 tablespoon EVOO
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 4 teaspoon monk fruit sweetener (or erythritol)
- 2 teaspoons harissa paste (or chili garlic sauce), add more to taste

Squash

- 1 acorn squash, seeds removed, sliced in 1/4-inch rounds
- 1 tablespoon harissa paste or 2-3 tsp chili garlic sauce
- 1 tablespoon EVOO
- 2 tablespoons water
- 1 tablespoon monk fruit
- Pinch sea salt
- 1/3 cup roasted hazelnuts, chopped
- Fresh mint

INSTRUCTIONS

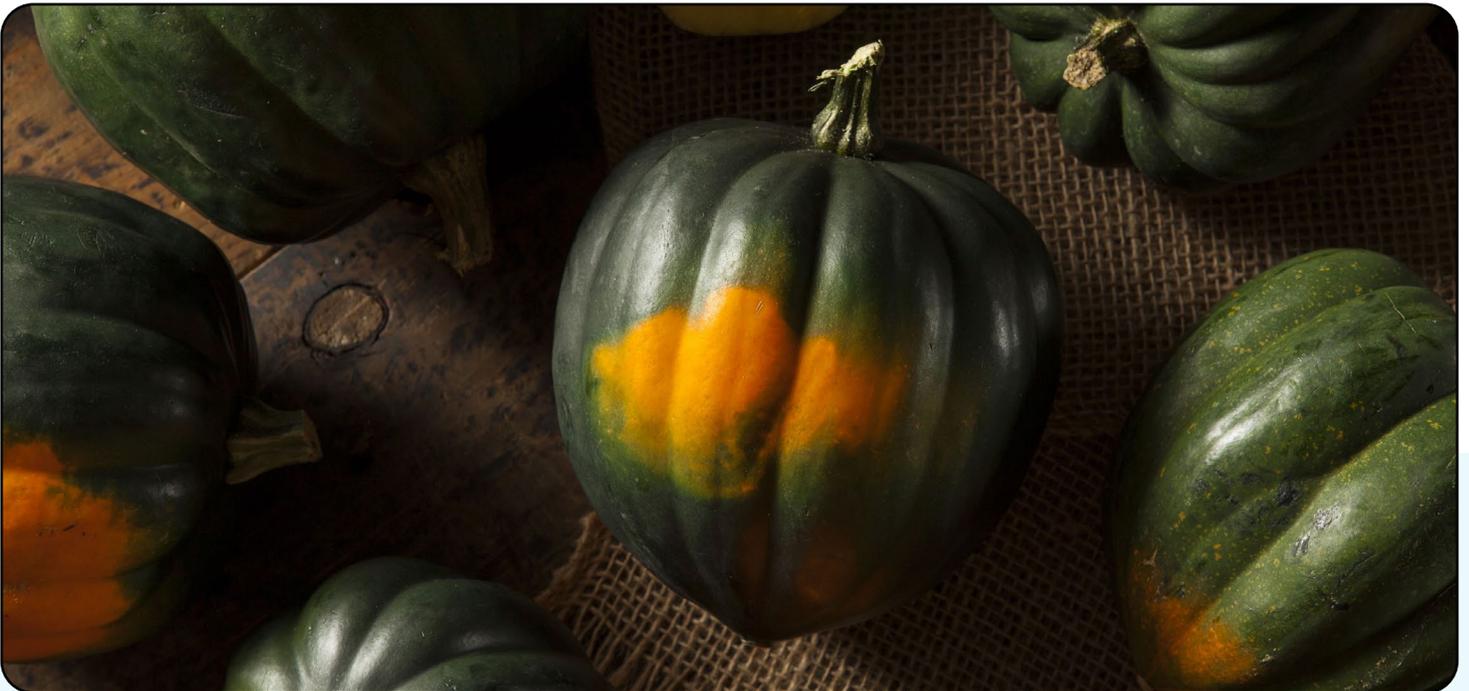
1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Cover baking sheet with parchment paper. Arrange the whole red peppers on one end of clean baking sheet. On the other end of baking sheet, arrange almonds and garlic (still in skin).
2. Place baking sheet in oven and roast almonds for 6-7 minutes (or until light golden brown) - make sure they don't burn. Then remove from pan and set aside. Flip garlic and bake for another 8 minutes or until golden brown and slightly caramelized. Then remove and set aside.
3. Allow red peppers to roast until skin is bubbled and mostly blackened, flipping halfway through to char both sides. Once charred, wrap roasted red peppers



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in foil or parchment paper to steam. Set aside.

4. Line the baking sheet you just used with parchment paper or foil.
5. In a small mixing bowl, mix together remaining harissa paste, chili garlic sauce, monk fruit, and sea salt. Arrange sliced acorn squash on baking sheet and brush both sides generously with the harissa mixture. Sprinkle with a bit more sea salt and then roast for a total of 20 minutes, flipping at the 10-minute mark to ensure even cooking.
6. In the meantime, peel away the skin, seeds, and core from the red peppers. Also, remove skin from garlic. Add peeled peppers, almonds, garlic, vinegar, paprika, sea salt, monk fruit, and harissa to a blender or food processor. Puree until smooth, scraping down sides as needed.
7. Taste and adjust seasonings as desired.
8. To serve, add a generous amount of Romesco to a serving dish and top with squash. Drizzle on more sauce and garnish with hazelnuts, pomegranate and mint.



Stay in Touch!

We'd love to get to know you. Connect and engage with us on social media for more brain-healthy living tips, research, and recipes.



To your health,

Dean & Ayesha Sherzai

