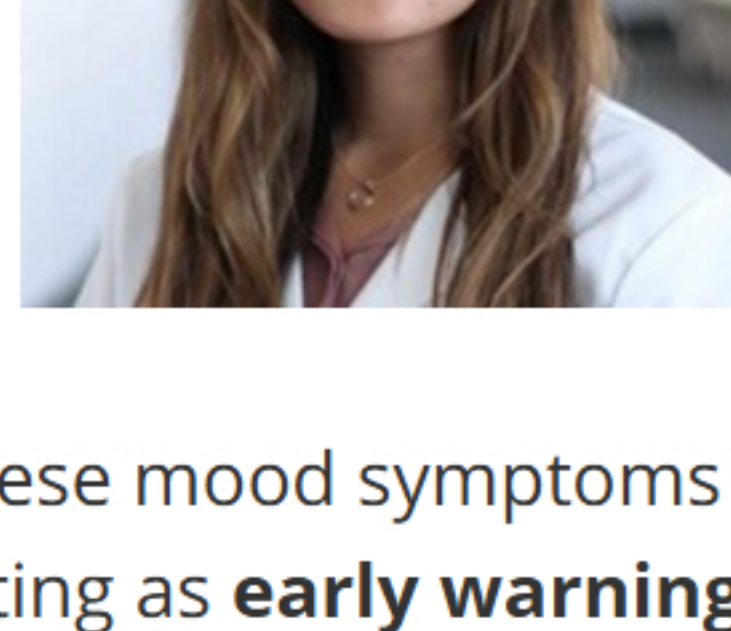


ELEVATING YOUR MOOD
PROTECTING YOUR BRAIN

Pacific Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Newsletter | SEPTEMBER 2025

Spotlight Story

* Protecting Your Brain from Depression and Anxiety



Claudia L. Wong, FNP-BC
Brain Health Nurse Practitioner

Depression and **anxiety** are more than just feelings—they can have a real impact on **brain health**, especially as people age.

These mood symptoms can show up **years before memory problems**, sometimes acting as **early warning signs**. Research shows that depression in later life can **double or even triple the risk** of developing **dementia**, including **Alzheimer's disease**, and anxiety also increases the risk, though to a lesser degree. **Women** are more likely than men to experience both depression and anxiety, and they also have a **higher lifetime risk** of Alzheimer's disease.

A key player in this story is the **amygdala**, a small, almond-shaped region deep in the brain. The amygdala helps process **emotions** like fear and happiness, and it's tightly connected to the **hippocampus**, which is important for **memory**. **Gut health** is also important for **mood** and **cognition**. Research shows that depression and anxiety can be well managed with **evidence-based, practical steps** helping you to protect your **brain health, mood, and gut health**.

[READ MORE](#)

Dr. Miller's Memory Minute

* Mindful Fall Cleaning



Karen Miller, PhD
Senior Director, Brain Wellness & Lifestyle Program

When we think of “spring cleaning,” it’s usually about sorting through closets, garages, or drawers and letting go of clothes, papers, or knick-knacks that no longer serve us.

But as we move into the fall season, with holidays just around the corner, it can be just as rewarding to do a little “fall cleaning.” Think pantries, closets, the garage, or even your home office—it’s the perfect time to refresh your space.

What’s more, tidying up is more than just good for your home—it’s good for your brain and mood. As neuropsychologists like to say, it’s a “whole brain workout.” Here’s how it works:

- **Planning and organizing** (deciding where to start, sorting through items) exercises your **frontal lobes**, which are responsible for executive functioning.
- **Reviewing and remembering** why you keep or enjoy certain items taps into your **temporal lobe and memory system**.
- And don't forget your **visual-spatial skills**, which help you size up each item and decide if it's worth keeping.

* Fall Cleaning Challenge

If the idea of tackling fall cleaning all at once feels overwhelming, try focusing on just one area each month. For example, try the following:

- The pantry in September is in preparation for gut-friendly foods
- A main closet in October
- Your office space in November

By spreading it out, the task feels much more manageable. Plus, you'll head into the holiday season feeling lighter, more organized, and mentally refreshed—all while giving your brain a healthy workout that supports long-term cognitive health.

The Balanced Plate with Molly

* Choose Gut-Friendly Foods to Elevate Your Mood



Molly Rapozo, MS, RDN
Registered Dietitian & Senior Brain Health Coach

Now that we know *what* to eat for gut health, let's discuss *how* to incorporate those foods into your daily routine. Supporting the gut-brain axis—our body's communication system between digestion, cognition, and mood—starts with simple, nourishing choices. Fermented foods, fiber-rich grains and legumes, and seasonal fruits and vegetables all play a role in feeding beneficial gut bacteria and promoting mood, memory, and resilience.

Here are three practical ways to bring gut-friendly ingredients into your meals this season:



Make a Probiotic Yogurt Dressing You'll Use All Week

Combine ¾ cup plain yogurt or kefir, 1 tbsp olive oil, 1 tbsp lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, 1 tsp Dijon mustard, and a pinch of salt and garlic. Whisk until smooth. Use it as:

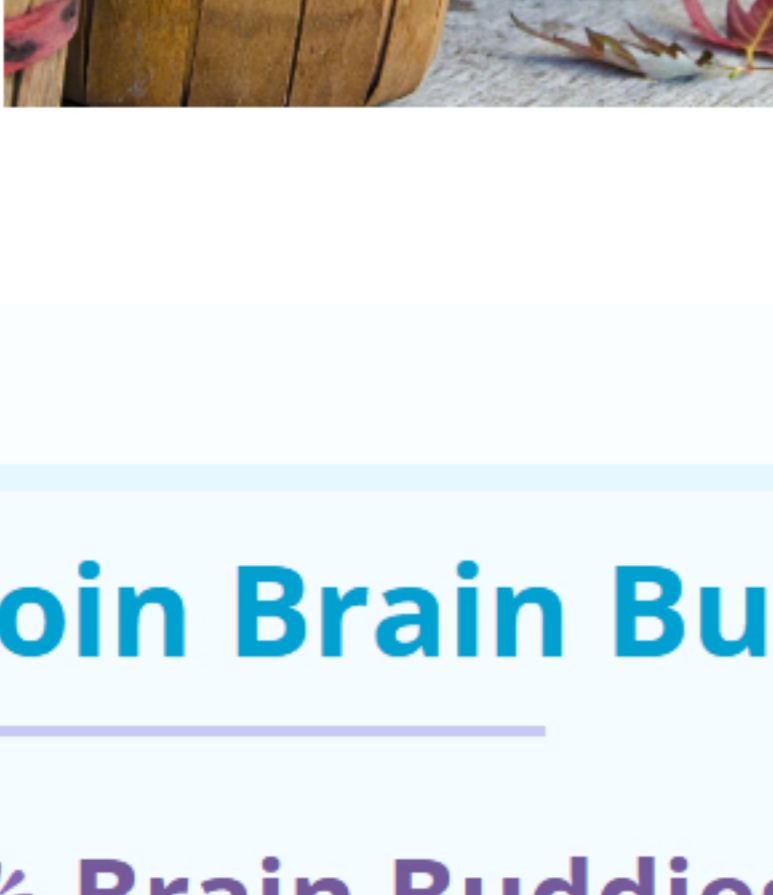
- A creamy salad dressing for fall greens and roasted squash
- A veggie dip for carrots, cucumbers, and bell peppers
- Drizzle over warm roasted beets, cauliflower, or grain bowls



Use Fiber-Rich Legumes and Whole Grains

Lentils, black beans, quinoa, and farro are rich in prebiotic fibers that nourish beneficial gut bacteria—key players in producing mood-regulating compounds like serotonin. Try this:

- A Mediterranean farro salad with chopped tomatoes, cucumber, and red onion, tossed in olive oil and lemon juice
- Swap rice or pasta with fast-cooking quinoa
- A warm lentil and vegetable soup with cumin, garlic, and a splash of vinegar

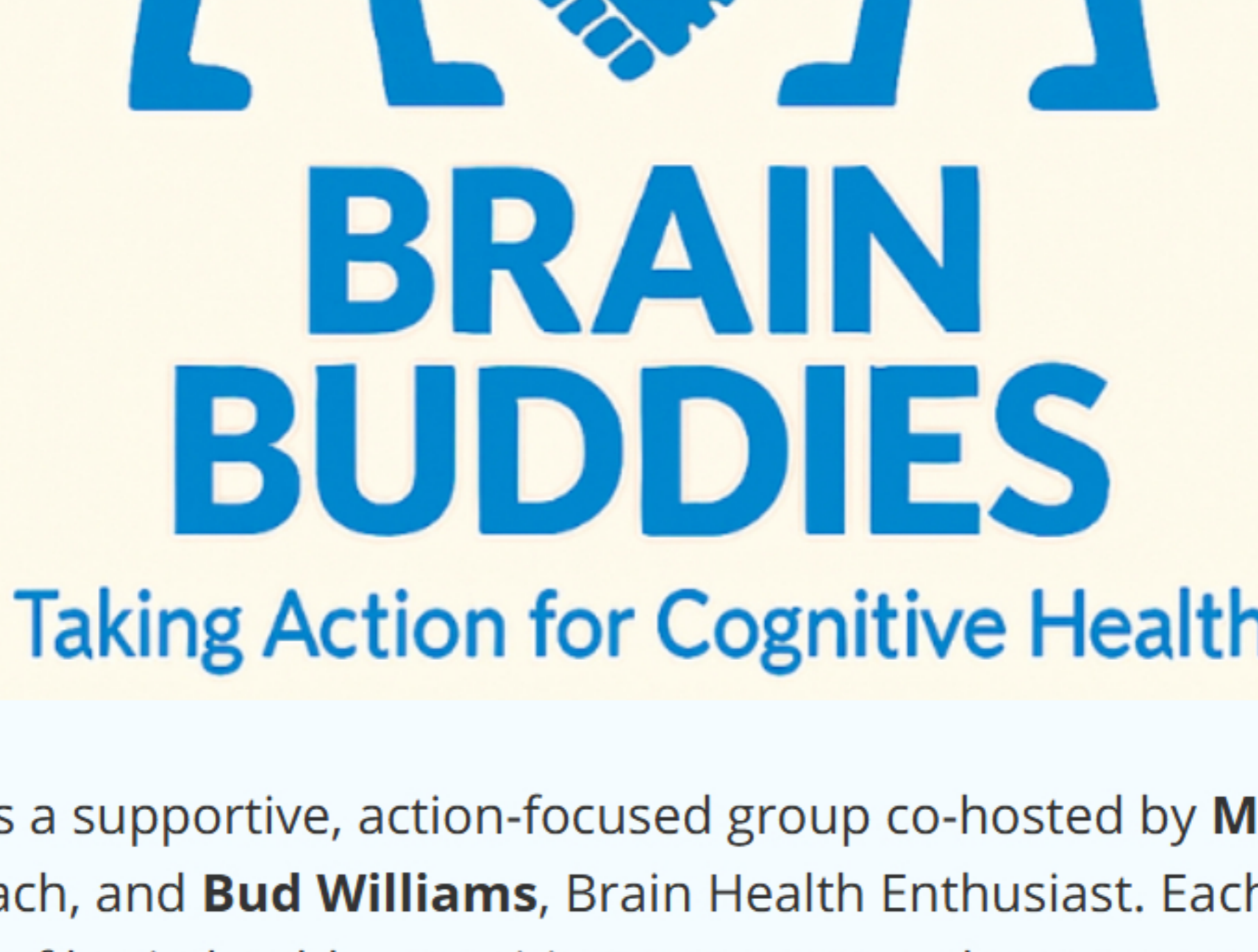


Choose Seasonal Produce That's Naturally High in Fiber

Fall fruits and vegetables like apples, pears, Brussels sprouts, kale, and delicata squash are rich in fiber and antioxidants. Roast them, sauté them, or add them raw to salads and slaws. Garnish savory meals with fermented vegetables like kimchi or sauerkraut to boost microbial diversity and add tangy contrast.

Join Brain Buddies This Fall

* Brain Buddies: Live the Pillars of Brain Health Together



Brain Buddies
Taking Action for Cognitive Health

Brain Buddies is a supportive, action-focused group co-hosted by **Molly Rapozo**, Brain Health Coach, and **Bud Williams**, Brain Health Enthusiast. Each weekly session explores a pillar of brain health—nutrition, movement, sleep, stress, connection, or mental stimulation—through practical tips, open discussion, and personalized action steps.

Topics include **nutrition, movement, sleep, stress, connection, and mental stimulation**.

9 group sessions
Tuesdays at 10:00 AM PT
Oct 14, 21, 28; Nov 4, 11, 18; Dec 2, 9, 16
60 minutes on Zoom

[Learn More](#)

* What To Expect From Your Coach | Molly Rapozo, MS, RDN

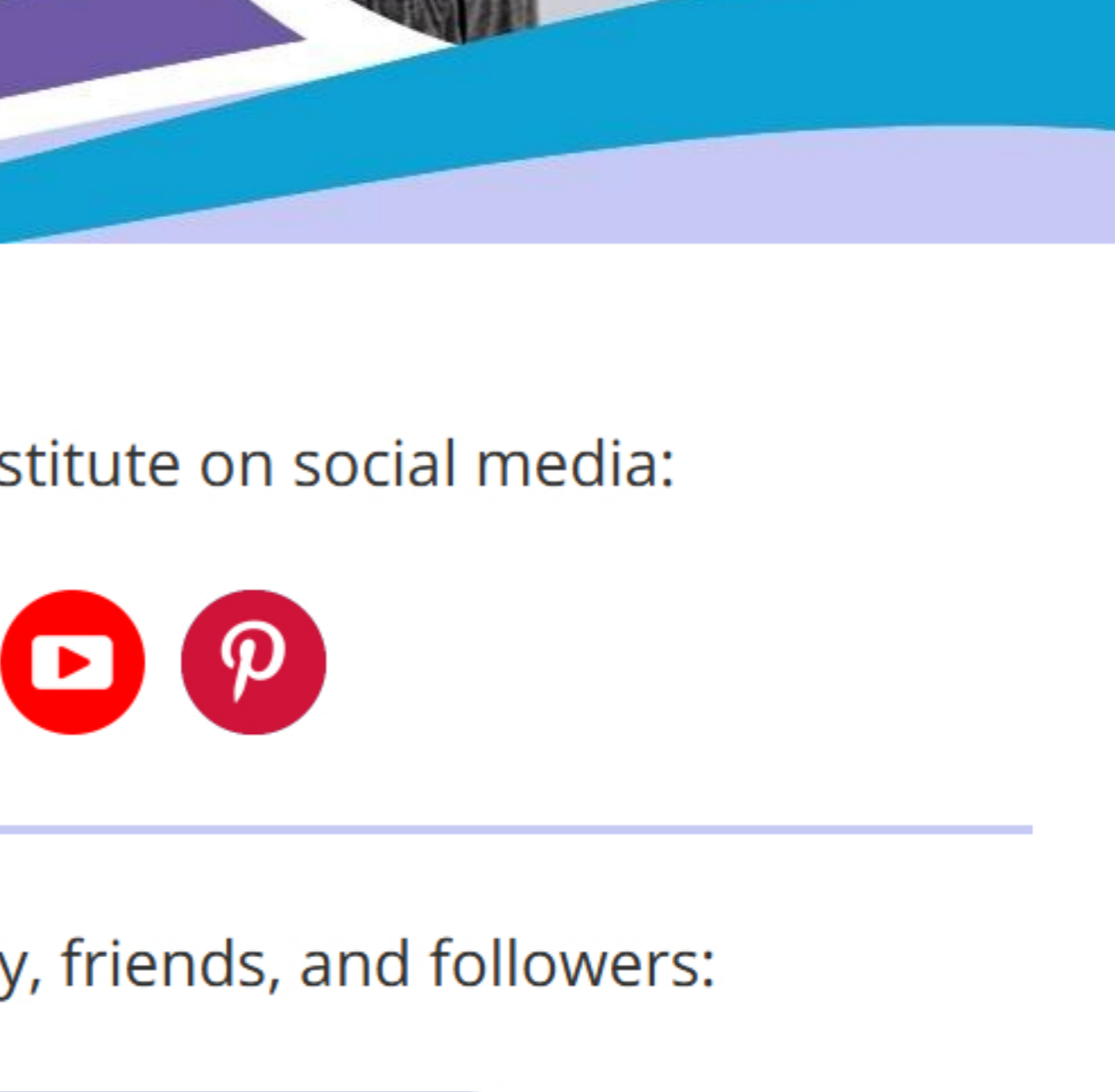
With 20 years of experience in integrative and functional nutrition, Molly will guide you toward lifestyle strategies that truly support healthy longevity. As a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist, Molly combines whole foods nutrition, counseling, and research to help you focus on what's evidence-based and worth your effort. You can [contact Molly directly here](#) with any questions.

Brain Wellness & LIFESTYLE PROGRAM

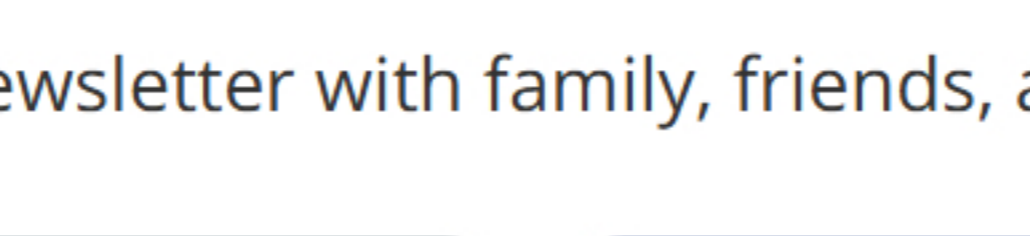
213-344-2037

PacificLifestyle.org

Lifestyle@pacificneuro.org



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