

WHEN THE BODY TALKS

Fit Tips 33—brought to you from my upcoming short book called CARBS & CALORIES



MIKE MISURACA

AUG 10, 2026



Mike's Substack is a reader-supported publication. To receive new posts and support my work, consider becoming a free or paid subscriber.

✓ **Subscribed**

Why listening is vital to success

It's true! There's a reason why you have two ears and one mouth. We've all heard this saying before, but how many of us REALLY believe it.

Listening is an art. One I cultivated for decades because I wanted to be a champion in the fitness field. However, first I had to listen to someone with more knowledge than myself. Why? In order to learn, the brain has to pick up on new patterns that lead you towards the intended goal. You can't pick up something new if you don't know how to do it. This involves listening more than we speak.

1. The curious verses the disinterested

To be honest this is going to turn a lot of people off and possibly hurt my fan base. In order to win in this game, you have to be curious about how to play. This comes from a natural instinct few of us have. Look around you. Especially in the United States, where I currently reside. What do you see? Fat, slopy, and unhappy people mostly. The few of us that do workout, go to the gym, and count calories are not common here.

The reason for this is that people are mainly disinterested in what doesn't make them feel good in the immediate future. Remember when I said listening was an art earlier? It takes literal effort to sit through a conversation with someone and focus on what they're telling you. Most people converse like it's a boxing match. I've been guilty of this too.

2. Hurry up and get to the point of distraction

The fact is people are easily distracted. Not even from external sources but by their own thoughts. Half the time when you're speaking to someone, they're not even listening to you.

When I was a lot younger, I had a serious problem with listening. The infamous "what" or "huh" would constantly fly out of my mouth. Only because while the other person was talking, I wasn't listening. I didn't

find what they were saying to me as important as what I was thinking about at that moment. Which was usually some bullshit swirling around my head like a tilt-a-whirl carnival ride. *I was distracted by my own thoughts that I believed were really important at the time.*

3. Your thoughts are not that important

Many of you may be like, "Hold up, Mr. Mental, is everything, guy? Yes, *I am that guy.* However, in reality our thoughts are meaningless without our feelings, and that is controlled by the body. Thoughts come into our minds all day long; some of them are good, and a lot of them are not. *If we allowed our mind to control our thoughts instead of our feelings, there would be a lot of dead bodies on the street.* It depends on how you feel in the moment if that particular thought will take precedence in your life. That is why some people can shrug off a personal attack and others go into a fitful rage.

4. The body-brain connection

The human has 12 pairs of major named nerves directly attached to it, called cranial nerves (24 individual nerves total). However, the brain itself is made of roughly 86 billion individual nerve cells (neurons) that form trillions of connections, rather than separate distinct "nerves." [[clevelandclinic](#), [kenhub](#), [healthdirect](#), [brain&spinecenter](#), [merckmanuels](#)]

The human gut contains more than 100 million to 600 million neurons. It's been labeled the "second brain" because it can control our digestive system independently of the brain. [[hopkinsmedicine](#), [pubmed](#), [wikipedia-enteric-nervoussystem](#), [mediaplanet-the-brain](#), [loyolamedicine](#)]

Is there truth to the body being able to listen to us through our gut? A two-way communication network connecting our digestive tract and central nervous system. Signals travel back and forth through the vagus nerve and chemicals like serotonin, meaning *our mental state alters our*

digestion, and gut signals shape our moods. [[hopkinsmedicine](#), [pmc.ncbi](#), [youtube](#), [youtube](#), [the-gut-brain](#)]

5. The second brain

What is a gut feeling? Does it really exist, or is it just a common cliché we like to use in conversation? Turns out it's right on both accounts, and here's why:

How the **Gut** listens and talks to us. **The Second Brain:** The enteric nervous system lines your gut with over 100 million nerve cells. It acts independently to manage digestion while chatting with your brain.

[[healthbeat](#), [hopkinsmedicine](#)] **The Vagus Nerve Highway:** This large nerve connects your brain stem directly to your abdomen. *Most messages actually **travel upward from the gut** to report physical or emotional distress.* [[feinstein.northwell.edu](#)] **Chemical Messengers:**

Microbes in your stomach make neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, *influencing how calm or anxious you feel.* [[metcounseling](#), [wellness/nutrition](#), [youtube](#)]

6. What this means for you

Stress and anxiety can easily trigger stomach aches, nausea, and even cramping because the brain overrides the importance of digestion during fight-or-flight mode. Irritations and imbalances in your GI tract can send warning signals up towards the brain, causing you to feel anxiety or in a low mood. Calming yourself through breathing and relaxing can soothe physical discomfort.

Clinical research into the "psychobiotic diet" shows that targeting your gut microbiome with specific nutrients can significantly lower perceived stress levels in as little as four weeks. [[nature.com](#), [biocodex](#)] The most effective way to do this is nutrient-rich food and physical stimulation of the vagus nerve.

Psychobiotic Foods to Eat

- **Fermented Probiotics:** Yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and miso introduce healthy live microbes that can alter brain activity and promote calm.
- **Prebiotic Fibers:** Leeks, onions, garlic, oats, and bananas act as food for your good bacteria, directly helping to reduce systemic stress hormones.
- **Polyphenol-Rich Foods:** Dark chocolate (75%+ cocoa), green tea, olive oil, and berries feed specific microbes that improve cognitive function.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Wild salmon, walnuts, and flaxseeds provide essential fats that decrease neuroinflammation and build up beneficial gut strains.

Habits to Strengthen the Vagus Nerve

Because the vagus nerve serves as the literal physical highway between your abdomen and brain stem, you can “tone” it through physical actions to soothe both your digestion and your mind:

- **Vocal Vibrations:** Sing loudly, hum, or gargle water forcefully to stimulate the vocal cord muscles directly wired to the vagus nerve.
- **Temperature Shocks:** Splash ice-cold water on your face or end your shower with a 30-second cold rinse to rapidly activate your parasympathetic nervous system.
- **Diaphragmatic Breathing:** Practice slow, deep belly breathing (inhaling for 4 seconds, holding, and exhaling for 6 seconds) to slow your heart rate and ease GI cramping.
- **Postural Shifts:** Sleep primarily on your right side to optimize anatomical alignment and digestive transit while supporting vagal function.

Items to Minimize

- **Ultra-Processed Foods:** Emulsifiers and artificial additives degrade the protective gut lining, increasing permeability and brain fog.
- **Added Sugars:** High-sugar diets create a hostile environment for beneficial microbes, heavily correlating with higher rates of anxiety and mood swings.

*If you would like me to create a customizable meal plan and/or scheduled vagus nerve stimulation session, leave a comment below. As you can see, there's more to working out than just weights, supplements, and protein shakes. Begin to listen to your body and be amazed at how connected the two of you can become. Taking your fitness goals to new heights using only your imagination.

References for psychobiotic foods to eat and habits to strengthen the vagus nerve:

[Healthline gut-brain connection](#)

[The Cleveland Clinic gut-brain](#)

[The enteric nervous system](#)

[Science/your gut is directly connected to your brain](#)
