
The Relation Between Nutrition And Mental Health In Don Quixote

One aspect that plays a big role in Don Quixote's diagnosis is the environment in which he grows up in. His diet may have had a huge effect on his mental stability, which would explain some of his questionable actions. There could be a direct relationship between nutrition and Don Quixote's mental health. Don Quixote's relationship with food makes an appearance within the first paragraph of the novel which states, "Somewhere in La Mancha... a gentlemen lived..."

An occasional stew, beef more often than lamb, hash most nights, eggs and abstinence on Saturday, lentils on Friday, sometimes squab as a treat on Sundays." () Professor Barry Ife of King's college in London did an extensive study on Don Quixote's diet and claims that "it seems clear that Don Quixote's diet is frugal, monotonous and unappetizing, and its hardly surprising that with such meager fare Don Quixote is as thin as he is portrayed." It is no coincidence that Don Quixote is always characterized as unrealistically gaunt. It's not a stylistic choice, but genuinely because the character rarely ate a full nutritious meal throughout the book. Don Quixote tends to spend his days and nights reading and only occasionally stops to eat food, junk food at that. Professor Ife calls this "classic syndrome of the single male." Men tend to go through a similar phase, but most eventually to grow out of it. On the contrary, Don Quixote fails to ever get out of this state of mind and continues on with his unhealthy eating habits. It does not take a qualified doctor to recognize Don Quixote's symptoms of malnutrition.

According to the text Don Quixote's diet consisted of five staple foods; a classic slow cooked stew made with beans and sausage, cold meat with onions and vinegar, lentils, some form of eggs and the occasional pigeon. It can also be inferred that Don Quixote's diet was also supplemented by bread, wine, fruits and vegetables, but these are never mentioned throughout the text. A table within the article portrays Don Quixote's likely nutritional diet combined with principal nutrients which are expressed as the recommended daily allowance (RDA). The portrayed diet in the table shows that Don Quixote was very deficient in energy. His calorie intake shows that he was only getting a quarter of the calcium a man of 50 years old requires for a healthy lifestyle. The consequences of this type of long term mal-nourishment causes serious wasting of the flesh and muscle loss.

Don Quixote is below the recommended amount in every single nutrient, dangerously so in calcium (8%), Vitamin C (6%) and Vitamin E (10%). This serious lack of energy and Don Quixote's neglect of his physical needs would cause major damage not only to his body, but also to his mental stability.