

Charting Your Career in Functional Nutrition: Advice from Successful Practitioners

A webinar featuring interviews with successful functional nutrition practitioners

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Disclosure to Participants

Notice of Requirements For Successful Completion

Please refer to learning goals and objectives

Learners must attend the full activity and complete the evaluation in order to claim continuing education credit/hours

Conflict of Interest (COI) and Financial Relationship Disclosures

No conflicts to disclose



Meet the Practitioners

Amy Archer, RDN, CLT, CHWC



Dianne Rishikof, RDN, LDN, IFNCP



Kendra Tolbert, MS, RDN, RYT



Erica Golden, RDN, LD, IFNCP



Cheri Stoka, RDN, CD



Amanda Archibald, RD



Christiane Matey, MSHS, RDN, LDN



Kimberly Duffy, RDN, LD, CPT



Laura Lagano, MS, RDN, CDN

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Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this webinar, the learner will be able to:

1. State two actionable steps to take toward a functional nutrition career
2. Identify three educational resources recommended by successful integrative nutrition practitioners for advancement of integrative nutrition knowledge
3. State three advantages to pursuing a career in functional nutrition based on experiences shared by practitioners in the field
4. State two helpful approaches to overcoming common challenges that may be experienced when embarking on a functional nutrition career
5. State three tips for success in building a functional nutrition career



Part 1:

Functional Nutrition

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What is Functional Medicine?

- Systems-biology based approach that focuses on identifying & addressing the root cause of disease
- A condition can be the result of many causes and one cause can result in many conditions
- Each cause depends on the individual's genes, environment, & lifestyle, & only treatments addressing the right cause will have lasting benefits beyond symptom suppression



(The Institute for Functional Medicine, 2023)

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A Functional Medicine Approach

An individual approach based on emerging research in nutritional science, genomics, & epigenetics to address root causes

The use of low-risk interventions that modify molecular & cellular systems to reverse drivers of disease



(The Institute for Functional Medicine, 2023)

Functional Medicine: 5 Essential Components

1. Eliciting the patient's complete story during the functional medicine intake
2. Establishing a mutually empowering partnership between practitioner & patient that is free of bias
3. Identifying & addressing the challenge of the patient's modifiable lifestyle factors & environmental exposures
4. Organizing the patient's clinical imbalances & underlying causes of disease in a systems biology matrix framework
5. Providing personalized recommendations to guide the patient on their journey to improved health & wellness



(Hanaway P., 2016; The Institute for Functional Medicine, 2021)

Functional Nutrition

- A holistic and individual approach to diet that takes into consideration lifestyle factors that impact food choices such as activity levels, environment, or the presence of chronic disease
- Patient-centered
- Food is medicine



(Institute for Integrative Nutrition, 2023)



Part 2:

Taking the Leap into a Functional Nutrition Career

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Poll Question

Why are you interested in pursuing a functional nutrition career?

- a) My own health journey
- b) The health journey of someone in my life
- c) Lack of satisfaction in my current job role
- d) Desire to learn more about how I can impact my clients' health
- e) Desire to increase income and income flexibility

Amy Archer, RDN, CLT, CHWC

Functional Nutrition Consultant, writer, & author specializing in gut-brain health

Career Background:

- Clinical work in a hospital (critical care nutrition, cardiac care)
- Medical sales
- Felt inspired when husband found success with functional nutrition to treat health issue
- Pursued functional nutrition training
- Owns a private practice specializing in gut-brain health & consults for an ADHD clinic



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Amy Archer, RDN, CLT, CHWC

Functional Nutrition Consultant, writer, & author
specializing in gut-brain health

Areas of specialty include: IBS, IBD, GERD, SIBO, EoE,
ADHD, anxiety, & post-concussive syndrome

Website: www.wellnessRD.com

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Author of [*An Integrative & Functional Nutrition
Approach to ADHD Management: Guidance for the
Clinician*](#)



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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“The spark for me was really kind of getting to that root cause. I just think about the way I used to do nutrition and the way I do nutrition now and it’s so dramatically different. After I worked in medical sales I stayed home for about a year and then my husband had really bad headaches and literally he had been on medications, he had done surgeries, ablations, and nothing was really working and so I was doing all this research and I ran across functional nutrition and I ran across MRT, the mediator release test for food sensitivities and we did it on him and literally within four weeks his headaches were gone after three years of all these treatments at Stanford Headache Clinic and I was sold. This is my avenue. This is my calling. And so I kind of went that route. I was so impressed that I got certified and then I also did it on my son, which was just amazing. So I think that was the spark - **just getting at the root cause with people, particularly with my husband.**”*



Amy Archer, RDN, CLT, CHWC

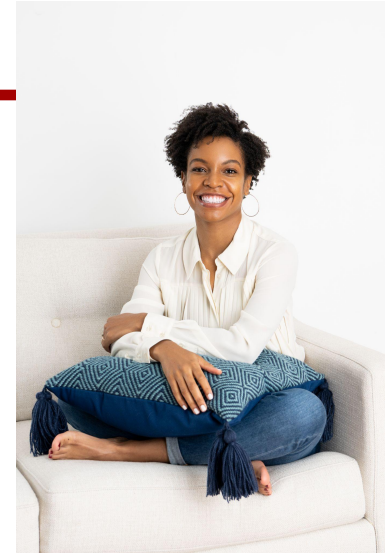
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Kendra Tolbert, MS, RDN, RYT

Functional Nutrition Consultant and Reproductive Dietitian and Yoga Instructor

Career Background:

- Acute care and oncology nutrition
- WIC dietitian
- Urban community care
- Studied herbalism, aromatherapy
- Yoga teacher trained by a traditional chinese medicine provider
- Pursued educational opportunities in functional nutrition



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Kendra Tolbert, MS, RDN, RYT

Owens Live Fertile, a reproductive health & preconception preparation-focused yoga & nutrition consulting practice

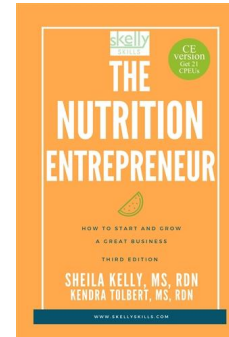
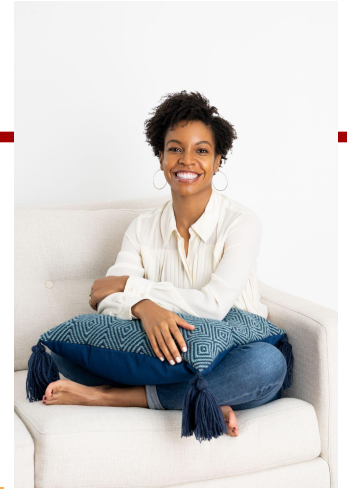
Via Live Fertile, she serves as a subject matter expert for start-ups, marketing psychologists, authors, journalists, & various nutrition companies.

Works 1:1 with clients & leads virtual fertility yoga classes & retreats

Website: www.LiveFertile.com

YouTube channel: [LiveFertile](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

Co-author of [*The Nutrition Entrepreneur: How to Start and Grow a Great Business \(3rd Edition\)*](#)



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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“Definitely a lot of sparks. But, I think it was just knowing that I wanted to help people as much as possible and I think that’s the case for a lot of dietitians. We love nutrition, we love science, but we love people and that’s why we do what we do. And so I think when you’re someone who, at your core, your desire is to help people, you do what you need to do to help people as well as you can and so that does mean expanding your knowledge base and while I loved what I learned in undergrad and grad school, it did feel like there were other things that people expected me to know besides what I had learned. So I think just recognizing that there was something missing in what I was able to provide just made me want to fill that hole just like anyone else. That’s pretty much it - **I just wanted to help people more and more completely and more fully.**”*



Kendra Tolbert, MS, RDN, RYT

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Cheri Stoka, RDN, CD

RDN and Integrative health practitioner

Career Background:

- Played in the Women's Professional Soccer League for almost 10 years before becoming a RDN
- Acute care
- Nutrition & pharmaceutical sales & marketing
- Started weight loss and wellness private practice
- Loves to explore functional nutrition education opportunities



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Cheri Stoka, RDN, CD

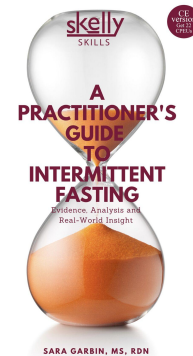
RDN and Integrative health practitioner

Founder and Chief Health Strategist of *Weighless MD and Wellness*

Treats imbalances in the body for optimal weight loss

Website: www.weighlessmd.com

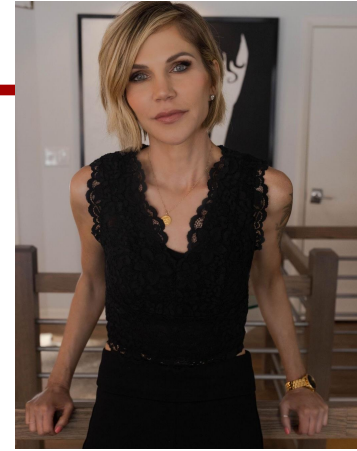
Contributor to [*A Practitioner's Guide to Intermittent Fasting: Evidence, Analysis and Real-World Insight*](#)



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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“What we’re told all the time is that it’s all about the calories and the meal plan and things like that and by spending so much time talking about calories in and calories out, it was those moments that I knew that there was so much more. And that’s what I still talk about to this day is that we have to think about weight loss differently, we can’t just focus on the calories. The future is personalized nutrition so I don’t know if there was that one moment. **It was a combination of things that just started to come together that made a lot of sense.**”*



Cheri Stoka, RDN, CD

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Christiane Matey, MSHS, RDN, LDN

Integrative Dietitian

Career Background:

- Grew up in the restaurant business & went to culinary school
- Connected & worked with [Dr. D'Adamo](#) for several years for her own health concerns
- Became a dietitian
- Pursued integrative and functional nutrition training



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Christiane Matey, MSHS, RDN, LDN

Integrative Dietitian and Founder of MINT Nutrition in Mooresville, NC

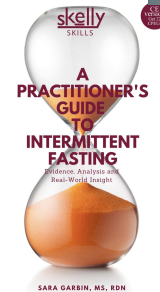
MINT Nutrition specializes in personalized nutrition & lifestyle medicine

Website: www.themintnutrition.com

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Instagram: @themintnutrition

Contributor to [*A Practitioner's Guide to Intermittent Fasting: Evidence, Analysis and Real-World Insight*](#)



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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“I just really gravitated more towards what I learned with Dr. D’Adamo and some of the things I picked up over the last few decades that I felt like I needed to learn more. So I did the Integrative and Functional Nutrition Academy and got my certificate of training through there. I just felt hungry for more and I felt like “Wow, I feel like I’m just scratching the surface” so I got my masters degree in integrative medicine and still feel like I needed to learn more. Once you kind of open that Pandora’s box that world is ever evolving and changing and there’s so many resources at hand to incorporate into your practice. Doing that whole person health really helps people get better and when you start to see that - we’re not only dealing with nutrition. **We’re dealing with the whole body and how it all connects together and then we start to get people to their goals or they start to feel better or their symptoms are gone or they’re in a better place versus the conventional way.**”*



Christiane Matey, MS, RD, LDN

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Laura Lagano, MS, RDN, CDN

Integrative Clinical Nutritionist, Author, Educator, and holistic cannabis practitioner

Career Background:

- Media dietitian
- Attended a conference on sensory integration & food prompted by her daughter with sensory issues and a seizure disorder
- Pursued training in functional nutrition and medicine after struggling with her own thyroid health
- Had success with cannabis treatment with her daughter and became a holistic cannabis practitioner



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Laura Lagano, MS, RDN, CDN

Integrative Clinical Nutritionist with a private practice, [Laura Lagano Wellness](#) in Hoboken, NJ

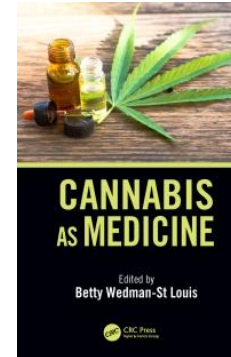
Author of [The CBD Oil Miracle](#)

Co-founder & education director of the [Holistic Cannabis Academy](#), an education program about integrating cannabis with nutrition, yoga, & more

Co-producer of the Holistic Cannabis Summit

Website: www.lauralagano.com

Expert Reviewer for the CE course [Cannabis As Medicine](#)



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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“I had a daughter who had a lot of sensory issues, seizure disorder, and other issues and simultaneous with not that long after she was born I don’t know I must have been surfing on the internet and came across a conference that was not that far from my home all about sensory integration and food and I believe it was being put on by the Feingold Association. Ben Feingold was one of the people who was interviewed and of course at that time he was very much maligned. And I went to this conference and I was totally validated and totally hooked. **So the person who has taken me on this journey is my daughter.** So I can’t say I was doing anything too differently before. The difference is that I eventually then went and formalized my education in functional medicine or functional nutrition by going through the entire Institute of Functional Medicine Program. I was in the first cohort, and at that time when they were doing it, it was mostly “allied healthcare professionals”. It wasn’t physicians. It was nutritionists, it was acupuncturists, it was people who had a deep interest in spending time with people to see what was going on with them.”*



Laura Lagano, MS, RDN, CDN

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Amanda Archibald, RD

Author, Clinician, Educator, Consultant, Public Health Advocate, & leader in translational genomics

Career Background:

- Hospital step-down unit
- Worked for the US Army building wellness centers in Europe
- Market analyst in food and marketing industry
- Started a company focused on culinary translation (Food to Plate)
- Connected with nutrigenomics experts and created the first translational nutrigenomics conference in South Africa



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What is Genomics?

- A field of biology focused on studying all the DNA of an organism - that is, its genome. Such work includes identifying and characterizing all genes & functional elements in an organism's genome as well as how they interact.
- Genomics in health examines the molecular mechanisms and the interplay of this molecular information & health interventions & environmental factors in disease.



(National Human Genome Research Institute, 2023; World Health Organization, 2020)

Amanda Archibald, RD

Author, Clinician, Educator, Consultant, Public Health Advocate, & leader in translational genomics

Founder of [The Genomic Kitchen](#), a platform for delivering education & services that connect genes to food & health

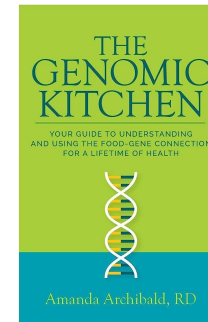
Author of [*The Genomic Kitchen: Your Guide to Understanding and Using the Food-Gene Connection for a Lifetime of Health*](#)

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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“I’m really good friends with Susan Allen, who is also a pioneer in functional nutrition and I was in her first course 11 years ago. **And I knew there was something about functional nutrition that was different, it’s a different way of thinking, it’s a systems based thinking that is contrasted significantly with conventional nutrition,** which is still being taught. So I learned that but, pretty much as the water was rising around my functional nutrition boat, it was when I was introduced to genomics. So for me, genomics became a larger driver than functional nutrition. So it’s a little different, Like if you put two boats in the water and you raise the water, my genomic boat came up faster than functional nutrition but the language of functional nutrition and the systems based thinking was what made genomics a lot easier for me. It’s like genomics drives you back to the literature to understand pathways and it goes right to the science so it doesn’t matter in some ways how you’re taught because you’re looking at how does cysteine function, what pathway does it drive, what’s the science, what’s the literature behind that and that’s what we use. So it’s kind of interesting but many many dietitians who are trained in functional nutrition will train at the same time in genomics. They just do. It’s rare that I don’t see both happening if you will.”*



Amanda Archibald, RD

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Erica Golden, RDN, LD, IFNCP

Integrative Mental Health & Gut Health Dietitian

Career Background:

- Worked in a residential eating disorder clinic
- Worked for the VA and continues to part-time
 - Created substance abuse treatment programs and focused on mental health, elder care, GI
- Wanted to upskill her mental health and gut health knowledge for more comprehensive client care
- Started private practice
- Wrote a book on functional nutrition for mental health



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Erica Golden, RDN, LD, IFNCP

Integrative Mental Health & Gut Health Dietitian

Owner of [Nourished Mind Nutrition](https://www.nourishedmindnutrition.com) in Colorado Springs, CO, where she uses a weight-inclusive, trauma-informed approach to help her patients soothe & heal their digestive systems, fuel healthy hormones & neurotransmitters, support a calm & resilient nervous system, correct deficiencies & imbalances, & improve their relationship with food

Author of *Nutrition and Mental Health: Integrative Approaches for Diet, Dysfunction and the Gut-Brain Axis*

Website: www.nourishedmindnutrition.com

Instagram: [@nourishedmindnutrition](https://www.instagram.com/nourishedmindnutrition)



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Why Functional Nutrition?

“I think it was that feeling of being stuck partially.....I started realizing the connections and the correlations between my passion for GI and my passion for mental health and just feeling like I could do some good here, like I could actually help people. I think that was what I had always needed was that push to just feel like I had a niche or a passion for something. I had always had this big issue with not wanting to sell myself; you know that’s so uncomfortable and we’re all taught to be really humble but once you feel like you have a niche and you have something that you’re really passionate about. It’s not selling any more - it is hope, it is giving hope and once I started seeing it that way that’s when I decided maybe private practice is for me and maybe it’s not such a marketing type thing anymore. It’s something that I really love.”



Erica Golden, RDN, LD, IFNCP

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Dianne Rishikof, RDN, LDN, IFNCP

Functional Nutritionist, Author, National Speaker & Mentor

Career Background:

- Started out with private practice as a conventional dietitian
- Sought out functional medicine for her own health issues
- Pursued training in functional nutrition



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Dianne Rishikof, RDN, LDN, IFNCP

Functional Nutritionist, Author, National Speaker & Mentor

President of [Health Takes Guts](http://www.healthtakesguts.com), where she uses innovating cutting edge techniques & a holistic approach to get to the root of & address health issues & heal the body from the inside out

Areas of specialty: gut health (IBS, IBD, SIBO, GERD, gluten sensitivity), brain health (ADHD/ADD, anxiety, depression) & chronic un-wellness (fatigue, inflammation, hormone imbalances, pain, skin issues)

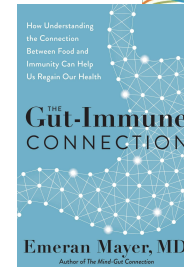
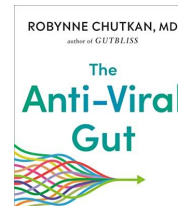
Expert Reviewer for the CE courses *The Gut-Immune Connection* & *The Anti-Viral Gut*

Website: www.healthtakesguts.com

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Instagram: @healthtakesgut

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Eliminating Pathogens

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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“You could say there were two (factors). **One is that I personally have Crohn’s disease and conventional dietetics wasn’t helping me at all and so I was looking for something more, and I found it.** And I was like “Oh my gosh, there’s a whole world here and there’s a whole piece of this and there’s a whole sort of section of science that looks at root causes and underlying issues so you can really resolve people’s issues”. That was definitely a spark. And also, the same kind of thing for my work. **Things were kind of flat in my practice. I wasn’t helping anybody and I felt like they had real problems and I was like “yeah I don’t really know what to do”.** So I was motivated to change that and to learn about something that could really impact clients so that I could really help them which is very rewarding but also you get into this big business where if you’re helping them you can actually make a lot of money and be thriving as a business. It was like “I figured this out. Let me spread the word.”*



Dianne Rishikof, RDN, LDN,
IFNCP

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Kimberly Duffy, RDN, LD, CPT

Registered Dietitian and Personal Trainer

Career Background:

- Clinical dietitian in a hospital and skilled rehab facility
- Stayed at home with her children for 10 years
- Worked in a fitness center
- Worked in a major hospital as an oncology dietitian
 - Was introduced to functional nutrition through a colleague
 - Attended a functional nutrition conference
- Pursued training in integrative and functional nutrition
- Opened a private practice with a colleague



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Kimberly Duffy, RDN, LD, CPT

Registered Dietitian and Personal Trainer

Kim left her clinical career in a hospital to open a private practice and help others discover their best life through prevention of chronic illness using quality nutrition and exercise

Co-owner of [Strength in Nutrition](#), a private practice offering nutrition and fitness coaching

Website: www.strengthinnutrition.com

Facebook/ Instagram: @strengthinnutritionllc



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Why Functional Nutrition?

*“My business partner and I worked at a large hospital during Covid and it was rough. It was very stressful. It was kind of all hands on deck. Placing feeding tubes on a lot of very very sick patients. And my partner and I, during that time, **we just started kind of dreaming about working with people in helping to actually prevent illness rather than just this constant treatment of acute and chronic disease in the hospital** where, you know, you would go and educate a patient and you would basically get maybe 30 minutes with them one time before they were sent out into the world and you were trying to fix habits that had been created so many years before. And we just both started dreaming about being able to work with healthy people or even people that have kind of started having health type issues and what if we could reverse those. What if through quality nutrition and exercise we could actually help them to avoid the hospital and avoid all of the medications that are thrown at some of these chronic diseases?”*

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Kimberly Duffy, RDN, LD, CPT

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Part 3:

Advice from the Experts

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Poll Question

What do you identify as the biggest roadblock in getting started with your functional nutrition career?

- a) Overwhelm and uncertainty of where to start
- b) Lack of information
- c) Concern over what other dietitians or practitioners may think
- d) Fear

Taking the First Steps

1. Educate yourself - today!
 - Utilize free resources
 - Take a course
 - Attend a training
 - Read a book
 - Listen to a podcast
 - Pursue a certification
2. Connect with dietitians who specialize in functional nutrition
 - Join a community of functional dietitians
 - Seek out a mentor
 - Request to shadow or intern for a functional RDN



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Favorite Educational Resources

- Integrative and Functional Nutrition Academy (IFNA)
- Institute of Functional Medicine (IFM)
- DIFM DPG
- Conferences
- The Herbal Academy
- Women's Health Nutrition Academy
- Yoga teacher trainings
- HealthMeans website
- SIBO Academy
- A4M board certification
- [The Genomic Kitchen website](#)
 - [DNA chat videos](#)



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Favorite Educational Resources Cont.

- Unconventional RD SEO training
- Functional medicine cert through the academy?
- Research
 - PubMed
 - Integrative Practitioner
- Mentoring & coaching
- Supplement & testing/lab companies education resources
 - Webinars
 - Literature
 - Training programs
- Podcasts
 - Dr. Aviva Romm
 - Dr. Hyman
 - Peter Attia
 - Andrew Huberman



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Advantages of a Functional Nutrition Career

1. It allows you to look at the big picture
2. Improved patient outcomes
3. Improved personal health



“It’s changed so much in the sense that we’re looking at the big picture rather than that one piece because we know it all makes a difference when looking at someone’s health and the inflammation in their body and their predisposition towards chronic disease and acute illnesses.”

Kimberly Duffy, RDN, LD, CPT



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Advantages of a Functional Nutrition Career

4. Improved job satisfaction and sense of gratification/ fulfillment
5. More exciting



“It’s definitely made it more exciting. It keeps it interesting because there is always something new to learn and there is always something new I can add and there is always a new way of looking at things and it’s really cool to find connections where you didn’t expect to find connections.”

Kendra Tolbert, MS, RDN, RYT

Advantages of a Functional Nutrition Career

6. A more personalized approach to better meet the needs of clients
7. More options when working with clients



“I feel like I’m really making a difference in people’s lives. There’s always that sense of accomplishment after working with clients when they’re feeling better.”



Amy Archer, RDN, CLT, CHWC

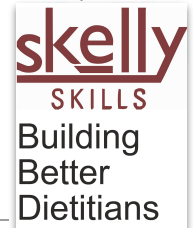


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Overcoming Common Challenges


Challenges	Solutions
<p data-bbox="189 505 378 536">Overwhelm</p>  	<ul data-bbox="981 505 1653 994" style="list-style-type: none">● Carve out time and chip away at the information available through quality resources● Build in training time while you transition your business over● Stay patient: things come together over time and some things are trial and error● Find a mentor● Choose a niche that aligns with your knowledge & passion



Overcoming Common Challenges

Fear of judgement from other dietitians	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Share your knowledge bravely● Find a supportive community of dietitians● Track your clients' positive results for encouragement
Clients wanting a 'quick fix'	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Help clients understand that health & lifestyle change takes time● Start with small changes the client is willing to do● Understand your population & clearly communicate how you can help

Overcoming Common Challenges

<p>Setting up business logistics & 'wearing all the hats'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take the first steps & learn as you go• Take advantage of free resources & tutorials• Make a list & tackle one thing a week• Utilize a mentor
<p>Resistance from conventional medicine practitioners regarding 'the big picture'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start small• Find supportive communities that are more open to functional nutrition
<p>Marketing</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on your strengths & passions• Be authentic• Capitalize on the things you do best



Secrets for Success

1. Meet the patient/client where they are
2. Network with other functional providers (mastermind groups, group memberships)
3. Find a mentor
4. Set up referral sources & don't be afraid to refer out if the client needs are out of your scope of expertise
5. Practice empathy & really listen to your clients
6. Be patient with yourself as you learn
7. Learn about marketing
8. Be open-minded & remain curious

“Don't give up. It's not easy but it's incredibly fulfilling. If you're looking to answer the question “Why on earth did I train in nutrition? This field will give you that answer.”
Amanda Archibald, RD



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More Secrets for Success

9. Stay organized
10. Get paid what you're worth
11. Set boundaries & practice self-care to avoid burn out
12. Create a specialty
13. Fall in love with research
14. Have fun!



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Words of Encouragement



“Wherever anybody is in their journey right now, you can always change. You don’t have to feel stuck.” Erica Golden, RDN, LD, IFNCP



“So just follow your passion. What do you enjoy?...The world is open. The job is open. It’s just what do you want to do? And sometimes you have to create it, but you can also find a lot of other people that are interested in that as well. It’s networking with those people.” Amy Archer, RDN, CLT, CHWC

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Words of Encouragement



“I think we all understand that personalized nutrition is here and here to stay. This has allowed me to move people along the spectrum at exponential amounts...people can get better now. People are seeing things they never thought possible...” Cheri Stoka, RDN, CD

Questions?



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Thank you for attending!

- Live attendees: You'll get a link to the feedback survey in one hour/CE Cert tomorrow



For Your Continued Learning

- [*The Anti-Viral Gut: Tackling Pathogens from the Inside Out*](#)
- [*The Gut-Immune Connection: How Understanding the Connection Between Food and Immunity Can Help Us Regain Our Health*](#)
- [*The Nutrition Entrepreneur: How to Start and Grow a Great Business \(3rd Edition\)*](#)
- [*An Integrative & Functional Nutrition Approach to ADHD Management: Guidance for the Clinician*](#)
- [*A Practitioner's Guide to Intermittent Fasting: Evidence, Analysis and Real-World Insight*](#)
- [*Cannabis As Medicine*](#)
- [*The Genomic Kitchen: Your Guide to Understanding and Using the Food-Gene Connection for a Lifetime of Health*](#)
- *Nutrition and Mental Health: Integrative Approaches for Diet, Dysfunction and the Gut-Brain Axis (Coming Soon!)*
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