

## **Presentation Title:** Harnessing the Untapped: The Power of the Gut-Brain Axis



**Tamiza Teja** is a retired pastry chef with a degree in nutrition who also has over 20 years' experience in emergency management. She has engaged in numerous complex issues such as CBRNE, natural disasters, pandemics, mass fatalities, continuity, supply chain, scarce resource allocation, and the gut-brain axis. She is highly experienced in diverse learning methods, training creation, and exercise design. Her work in uniting diverse individuals within ICS and EOCs deepened her insight on the need for improved organizational and workforce development. Leveraging her public health expertise and preventive approach, she now uses neuroscience principles to enhance individual and team performance, leadership, and organizational culture via the Crisis Athlete™ program. She serves as Mozaik Solutions' COO, focusing on emergency management, business continuity, and organizational development, plus she authors food-themed puzzle books and is developing a cookbook. She has a BS in Dietetics and Food Administration, Master of Public Health, and Certified in Public Health credential. Her interest in the field is rooted in her time as a Maternal and Child Health Peace Corps Volunteer in Morocco.

### **About the Presentation**

Have you ever felt a knot or butterflies in your stomach when you're nervous, stressed, or excited? Does what you eat dictate how you feel? Does what and when you eat dictate how you lead? Can it influence how our communities respond or recover from disasters? No, this isn't a lecture on diet and nutrition. Everyone knows the "eat healthy" mantra. Rather, we'll discuss how what we eat impacts how we think, what we do, how we lead, and how it impacts behavior (our own and others). New research shows that the gut-brain axis impacts mood, cognitive function, stress reactions, memory, and neuroplasticity. Our "gut" has a highly complex and completely unique neural communication to the brain. Our brains weigh 2-3 pounds but consume more than 20% of our energy. With over 100 million neurons in the gut – it's a massive source of power. Energy is one of our most precious resources. Poor understanding of this power means the battery can be drained or cause the transformer to blow. So how do we tap this typically under-utilized power source for increased resilience and well-being, better decision making, and to be better leaders for the betterment of others? This interactive presentation leverages advances in neuroscience and a passion for food through the lenses of crisis management, and organizational/systems change. Practical and immediately applicable takeaways and ideas for application at the individual, organizational, and community levels will be provided.