

Pleased (PL)

- **CORE CONCEPT:** Self-care skills reduce emotional vulnerability and promote well-being.

Self-care is the foundation of feeling well and being ready to weather emotional storms.

Use the acronym PLEASED to help you remember the building blocks (**P**hysical health, **L**ist resources and barriers, **E**at balanced meals, **A**void drugs and alcohol, **S**leep between 7 and 10 hours, **E**xercise 20 to 60 minutes, **D**aily) of this skill. These building blocks are described in further detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Physical Health

Attend to your physical health to feel well. That means staying current on your health through regular medical checkups and engaging in proactive skills and behaviors that keep your body as healthy as possible. It also means treating illness when it arises and complying with medical advice. Take medications as prescribed, consult with your prescriber if medications are not working or side effects are intolerable, and make life changes to minimize use of medications with the advice of your physician. Always consider how your physical health may be impacting your mental health.

List resources and barriers

Resources include skills you might already use (such as O2E, Pros and Cons, and Willingness), people who support you, having a growing knowledge base about health and wellness, and having practical means of increasing self-care (e.g., having a physician, owning exercise equipment, and having access to healthy food). Consider your resources for each part of the PLEASED skill.

Barriers also abound with PLEASED skills. Identify barriers that interfere with any part of effective self-care and develop a plan to use skills to address those barriers.

Eat balanced meals

Eat three balanced meals plus a couple of healthy snacks mindfully throughout the day. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean protein are must-haves. Eat “whole” (unprocessed or minimally processed) or single-ingredient foods when possible. Drink eight full glasses of water a day. Avoid eating too much or too little and minimize sugars, saturated fats, and food or beverages with little or no nutritional value. Replace “diets” with lifestyle changes and keep current on reputable nutritional information. Start small and build on success. Consult with a physician or nutritionist if needed. Read the next section—Focus on Nutrition and Exercise—for more information.

Avoid drugs and alcohol

The risks associated with drugs and alcohol, along with the emotional, physical, relational, financial, and other effects, can make their use problematic. If you find you need larger amounts to reach a “desired” effect and/or experience an inability to cut down or quit use, you probably need some help and support. Refer to the Addictions module for more information.

Sleep between 7 and 10 hours

Sleep is important to regulate our moods and to maintain physical health. Find an amount of sleep that works for you. Refer to the suggestions in the Sleep Routine section for more information.

Exercise for 20 to 60 minutes multiple times weekly and move throughout the day

Exercise for a minimum of 20 minutes three to five times per week. Balanced exercise will positively impact almost any symptom of mental illness. Find natural ways to move about, such as taking stairs, parking at the far end of a parking lot, gardening, cleaning, and playing with pets or children. Humans are not biologically designed to be sedentary, so movement is vital. Consult a physician if you have any concerns about starting an exercise routine. See the Focus on Nutrition and Exercise section for more information.

Daily

PLEASED skills need to be daily habits for you to reap their tremendous benefits. Record PLEASED skills on a diary card (see the Diary Card section in Getting Started) and/or include them in written routines and schedules.

Focus on Nutrition and Exercise

- **CORE CONCEPT:** Use these guidelines to improve your nutrition and exercise habits.

Poor nutrition and a lack of exercise are leading causes of and contributors to illness and diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. While the links between nutrition, exercise, and mental and chemical health issues are less well established (but getting there), it is absolutely naive to think that what we put into our bodies and how we move (or do not move) our bodies has little effect on our well-being. In fact, the smart bet is that what we eat and the amount of movement we get have major and profound effects on how well we feel physically, psychologically, and emotionally. The good news is that, just as poor nutrition and exercise cause and contribute to problems, an emphasis on eating well and getting exercise can be healing and lead to better overall health.

The first step toward changing your lifestyle (some people call it a “healthstyle”) is making a commitment to be in it for the long haul, for life. *There are no shortcuts. It takes effort and consistency.* But it is worth it. As the adage says, “If you do not make time for your health, you will have to make time for illness.”

If you have a long way to go or are already suffering from obesity and/or other health problems, you should strongly consider seeing your physician and getting a referral to a dietitian or nutritionist as well as getting cleared for an exercise program.

Below are some tips and guidelines to get you started on better nutrition and exercise habits. These lists are not meant to be exhaustive, though following them consistently will get you on the road to wellness.

Nutritional tips and guidelines

Humans were not biologically designed to eat many of the foods that are created, processed, and marketed to us, and we are certainly not designed to eat these foods in the qualities that they often get eaten. These tips and guidelines will get you on a better path:

- Drink at least eight glasses of water a day. Water detoxifies, is essential for our bodies, and is needed for physical energy and for mental attention and concentration. What if you don’t like the taste of water? Remember that our tastes change with time and water might become your favorite drink. Alternatively, you can lightly flavor your water with cucumber, lemon, or another healthy addition. Avoid drinking calories in any form. Juices, sodas, and flavored coffees add needless calories with limited or no nutritional value. Black coffee and tea are ok in moderation, but be careful in regard to caffeine.
- Try to stick to whole and minimally processed foods. Can you picture where that food came from? There is no cookie, cracker, or jelly donut tree! Shopping on the exterior of the super market creates a focus on whole, single-ingredient foods. As a general rule, avoid foods in boxes.
- Cut out foods that have little or no nutritional value and/or are actively harmful. Examples include candy, pastries, donuts, and chips. Start to think about sugar that does not occur naturally in foods as *poison*. Research shows that excessive sugar consumption is a leading cause of obesity, diabetes, and liver disease. Other foods with little nutritional value that cause harm include fried foods and foods with a lot of

saturated fat, both of which cause heart disease. Stop eating fast food. Stop stocking unhealthy foods in your home.

- Eat at least six servings of fruits and vegetables a day. At most meals at least half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables. In time, you will come to enjoy these foods if you do not already. If you are on a budget then buy seasonal selections or buy frozen fruits and vegetables, which are much cheaper but retain the nutritional value. Eat these foods first to crowd out less healthy options.
- Eat starches and grains in moderation. These should not cover more than a fourth of your plate. Some of the most healthy choices are whole-grain cereals, whole-wheat breads and pastas, brown rice, and quinoa. Sweet potatoes and yams are also healthy choices.
- Limit dairy to no more than three servings a day, favoring low-fat milk, unsweetened yogurt, and lower-fat cheese such as mozzarella or cottage cheese.
- Limit meat to six ounces or less per day, favoring lean cuts of beef and pork or poultry without the skin. A serving of meat is about the size of a deck of playing cards and should take up no more than a fourth of your plate. Incorporate fish into your diet and consider meat alternatives such as lentils and tofu.
- Overall, maximize fruits and vegetables and increase fiber while you limit saturated and trans fats, sugar, and sodium. Follow the adage “eat not too much, and mostly vegetables.”
- Have a “crowd out” instead of a “cut out” state of mind: Focus on healthy foods first and crowd out poor food choices. When you focus on eating what is good for you first, there is less temptation to eat much of what is not good for you. It works!
- Do not let yourself get too hungry. Preplan healthy snacks such as nuts, vegetables with hummus, or a piece of fruit.
- Consider taking a multivitamin and/or other supplements, but remember that they *supplement* healthy eating and cannot be a replacement for it.
- Create a meal plan to stay focused. Track your food choices and consumption. Worry less about calories and instead focus on the *quality* of food you eat. You can treat yourself from time to time with less healthy food, but the treats have to be the exceptions and not the rule. Obtaining and maintaining a healthy weight is roughly 80 percent what you eat and 20 percent movement and exercise.
- Use your mindfulness skills to slow down and be present while you eat. Enjoy your food, notice the flavors and textures, and stop eating before you are overfull. Be mindful of the portion sizes you choose to have and the amount of food you eat. Eat because you need the nourishment and not to soothe emotions or manage stress (with the exception of using Self-Soothe with Taste with a *morsel* of food).
- Remember that consistency and time are the keys to having a healthy lifestyle and enjoying the benefits of eating well.

Exercise tips and guidelines

Humans were not biologically designed to be sedentary. These tips will get you moving down a better path.

- Exercise for at least 20 minutes multiple days a week at a moderate intensity. Moderate intensity means that your heart rate is elevated but that you are still able to carry on a conversation. Break up the time if needed; three 10-minute sessions can have the same benefits as 20 minutes straight. Brisk walking, perhaps with occasional stretches of jogging or running, works for a majority of people. Schedule and prioritize your exercise time. Get a walking or workout buddy, and keep each other on track.
- Mix it up and have fun. Try biking, light weights, kettle bells, or yoga, or join a particular exercise class or even a sports league. Sign up for a fun run and set a personal goal. Reward your efforts.
- Use technology (e.g., a Fitbit, an online program, fitness apps, or a pedometer) to track and inspire efforts.
- In addition to scheduled exercise time, it is important to move around throughout the day. Every waking hour take 5 to 10 minutes to get up, do some light stretching, and walk around.
- Find natural ways of increasing movement. Take a walking break, park at the far end of a parking lot, take the stairs, carry your groceries, do housework, garden, or play with your children or a pet.
- Sometimes when you exercise your hunger spikes. Eat a healthy snack. Do not fall into the trap of thinking that exercise gives you a free pass with what you eat or that you can double your portions. *You cannot exercise yourself out of poor eating choices!*