

# “PLEASE MASTER”

Don't build a house unless you have a strong foundation. The same goes for your body, mind and soul. Treat yourself like crap and you'll feel that way. Take good care of yourself and you'll have the foundation you need to build a full, happy and healthy life. That may make sense, but how do you actually do it? Use the acronym “PLEASE MASTER”:

## Treat **P**hysical **I**llness

I don't know about you, but when I have a cold, I get very grumpy. Any ailment, from a hangnail to a terminal illness will affect our mood and sensitivity. Following your doctor's guidance by taking prescribed medications, and doing what they recommend to cure or manage whatever might ail you improves your mood.

## Balanced **E**ating

Certain foods, and the amount of food you eat have a direct connection with your emotions and mood. Depending on what we eat, our bodies create brain chemicals called neurotransmitters. We know that three of these (Norepinephrine, Dopamine and Serotonin) affect our mood. We can take advantage of certain foods to improve and even stabilize our mood. Here are some general guidelines:

- Excessive calories decrease alertness and concentration — simply eating reduces blood flow to our brain, which makes us feel tired and less alert. Eating too much can increase this effect.
- Carbohydrates to relax — Diabetics know that foods like pasta, bread, rice, cereal and fruit, when eaten in moderation can produce insulin in our bodies. This can help us feel calm and relaxed and even help us sleep. Too many carbohydrates, though, can cause us to gain weight.
- Protein for energy — Foods like fish, meat, poultry, tofu, beans, cheese and milk increase our energy levels and alertness. Eggs and Liver are good sources of B complex vitamins, which also improves memory and focus.
- Folic acid for improved mood — food with folic acid (e.g., strawberries, orange juice, lentils, spinach, asparagus, broccoli) can elevate mood and help those with mild depression.
- Lacking Selenium can cause depression — Selenium is a mineral that our bodies require in very small (trace) amounts. The best sources of Selenium are dried Brazil nuts, light tuna fish (canned in oil), cooked beef, spaghetti, cod, and turkey).

## **A**void Mood-Altering Drugs

While many of us use drugs and/or alcohol to feel better, these substances have an adverse effect on our minds and bodies. Aside from causing various physical ailments and decreasing how our organs function, it can negatively affect our brain chemistry, making our moods more difficult to manage.

## **S**leep

Sleep is a biggie. About 50% of all adults have had, or still have, problems sleeping. A good night sleep means getting enough (6 - 9 hours for healthy adults), high quality sleep (staying asleep the whole time), regular times (getting to bed and waking up about the same time each day). Condition yourself to associate your bed with rest. Avoid other activities such as study, reading, television, eating in your bed; teach yourself that the purpose of your bed is to sleep. Maintain consistent bedtimes and wake up times.

## **E**xercise

Exercise can stimulate neurotransmitters in the brain, and act as an anti-depressant. With regular exercise (20 - 30 minutes each day), our bodies process nutrition better giving us better access to necessary vitamins and minerals, we use calories more efficiently, and we improve the quality of our sleep. It helps us feel better generally.

## Build **M**ASTERY

Do at least one thing every day that makes you feel competent and confident. The more we do things we like doing, the higher our self-esteem and the more satisfied we feel. We can get the same feeling when we pick something new and learn to master it. This can be something simple or complex. Even the process of improving through practice can help build self-esteem.