

Introduction to Physical & Emotional Balance

Developing a healthy balanced lifestyle, one that contains a variety of different activities that help us to “recharge our batteries” is a definite necessity when we are making behavioural changes. Many people understand the old adage of, “You are what you eat.” However, it’s often the case that we don’t realize the extent that this can impact our daily lives. Our mental health is continuously influenced by our level of physical wellbeing, so it’s absolutely imperative that we pay attention to a few important aspects of this crucial part of our own particular journey.

Most of what we talk about in this part of building a solid foundation is covered in the Dialectical Behaviour Therapy skill that’s called PLEASED which emphasises the importance of paying particular attention to our physical needs as they play a significant role in our mental health too. This starts with staying on top of things like medical appointments. If you need to see a doctor, then take the time to see one. For the most part, trying to follow their advice. At the same time, it’s ok to be curious about what it is they are asking us to do. We don’t want to develop the habit of blindly doing whatever someone tells us to do, even if they do hold a medical degree, as it’s important for us to know exactly what we are putting into our bodies.

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~Steven Morris RP.

Please, please, please remember, if you're taking a medication, take it the way it was meant to be taken, don't take more than has been prescribed or just suddenly stop taking it. There are some significant side effects that can happen from doing either of these things, some of which are extremely dangerous. Also, don't take a medication that wasn't prescribed for you. I can't tell you the number of times I have heard of people doing this, and it's so important to understand that this can also be an incredibly dangerous thing to do. If you're experiencing difficult side effects from taking the medication you're on, make an appointment with your doctor and talk this through. It's ok to ask questions, to voice your concerns, and explore the options that are available to you.

Our mental health is also impacted by what we eat. This is why it's important to eat a balanced and healthy diet, one that works for you and your own particular dietary needs. I always recommend seeking out professional support if this is something that's available to you. I know for me, when my diet isn't going the way I want it to go, I notice my mood often suffers at the same time, so using a DBT Diary card to track this can also be a helpful thing to do. Take some time to plan your diet out, add your mealtimes to your daily routine, if you're practicing intermittent fasting, build this into what you're doing.

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Sleep is also a significant factor for mood and mental health in general. It's well proven that poor sleep hygiene leads to lack of focus, low mood, and vulnerability to physical illness. If you are someone who struggles with getting a good night's sleep, then learn what it means to set yourself up for success in this area. Shut down electronic devices at least an hour before you go to sleep. Stop your intake of caffeine and sugar early in the day, limit what you do in your bed to sleep and intimacy, so your system knows what that space is for, and lower the lighting gradually as you prep for sleep.

On the following page, there is a worksheet that's intended to support you in developing your awareness for what it takes to balance our physical and emotional wellbeing. Taking care of this aspect of Living the Life I want to Live is something we need to focus on every single day. It is part of our own Self-care. If you want to explore this more, take a look at the information about the DBT PLEASED Skill on my YouTube channel or on the pages of the website. If that's not enough and you want to know more about how to make these changes, come join the conversation in the free, online groups that I facilitate every week on Zoom.

Physical & Emotional Balance Worksheet

P = Physical Wellbeing

Reflect on what your current level of physical wellbeing is like and how you are contributing to this. What medications are you taking, and are you taking them as prescribed, contemplate your level of personal hygiene and describe how this plays out in your life, or how you want it to be in the future.

L = List Barriers to Treatment

Reflect on the things you do that stop you from Living the Life you Want to Live and describe what you can do differently in this area of life. List the resources you might need to create what it is you are looking for.

E = Eat a Healthy Diet

Reflect on what your diet currently looks like and what you would like it to look like in the future, describe what you would need to do, or continue doing, to make this a part of your new way of living.

A = Avoid Mood Altering Substances

Reflect on what substances you may currently be using that can influence your physical ability to Live the Life you Want to Live. Describe anything you're using that makes it difficult to achieve the things you want to achieve. Remember to include things like caffeine and sugar as these can impair our physical ability to be who we want to be in areas of life that are important to us.

S = Sleep Hygiene

Reflect on how you practice good sleep hygiene right now, what are you doing well, and what would you like to change to make things better in this area. If you don't know how to change things, describe what you need to do so you can educate yourself on how to reach your sleep hygiene goals.

E = Exercise on a Regular Basis

Reflect on what your current level of physical activity looks like. What are you doing well, and what do you want to change in this area. Please make sure you consult with a medical professional before making any changes to your exercise routine.