

We know that people can be more vulnerable to their emotions and make impulsive decisions when they don't practice basic self-care. It is important to understand where some of these vulnerabilities lie, to make sure that you're doing what is needed to protect yourself from overly emotional decision-making.

Treat Physical Illnesses

Make sure you're seen by a doctor if you are in physical pain or have other difficulties and engage in treatment as prescribed by your doctors. When you're in pain or experiencing physical discomfort, you can be particularly sensitive to your environment and emotional reactivity. Take medication, if indicated and as prescribed for medical conditions, and following doctor's orders or known self-care techniques during bouts of illness is necessary to help with these things.

Balanced Eating

Eating too much or too little can also make you more vulnerable to emotional experiences. Many people find that eating too much may make them feel lethargic, sleepy, and decrease motivation. Eating too little can make people edgy and more easily upset. Additionally, eating the right things can be important as well. Finding a balance between both the amount you're consuming and the types of foods is important for maintaining energy and can also impact even moods.

Avoid Mood Altering Substances

There are many things that people consume that may impact mood to a greater extent than we may think. Alcohol is a depressant and can lower your mood. Some drugs are stimulants and can artificially and suddenly raise your energy level. Both can lead to impulsive decision making or making choices based on an artificial emotional state. Things like coffee, soda, and other things that contain caffeine can have some similar effects and make some people edgy, overactive, anxious, etc. Trying to focus on eliminating these substances will put you in a better place to make more thoughtful choices and make “crashing” after the fact less likely.

Balance your Sleep

Like eating, sleeping too much or too little is very important for mood management. Sleep is heavily intertwined with our mood. Many of the things we do (like exercise, substance intake, etc.) can impact sleep, so it is important to be mindful of our sleeping habits. Sleeping too much can be a symptom of depression, but can also cause depression-like symptoms. People who sleep too much often find that they are still tired and it's more difficult to get motivated the longer they lay around. People who sleep too little may find that in addition to being tired, they're more irritable, grumpy, and prone to sudden emotional reactions and their frustration tolerance is lower. Leaving yourself enough time to sleep at night (7-9 hours for most adults) and avoiding naps during the day is important. Attempting to go to sleep at the same time and wake up at the same time each day can help with this. Doing relaxation activities and having a night-time routine before bed as well as avoiding television within a couple of hours of bedtime can also be helpful to prepare for a better night's sleep.

Exercise Regularly

Exercise can be a fantastic way of balancing your mood. Exercise releases endorphins which give you an emotional boost, and certain types of exercise (like stretching and weight lifting) can help your muscles relax. Some people who exercise rigorously will notice a point when they get the release of endorphins and experience a shift in mood and perception (e.g. “runner's high.”) Because many times people don't want to exercise, building this into your daily routine may be difficult. At the same time, when you complete the task, you'll feel better both physically and mentally for having marked it off of your to-do list. Even 20-30 minutes a day of brisk walking can be beneficial, and there are a variety of exercises, including stretching, bodyweight training, yoga, Pilates, and calisthenics that you can do in most environments with even little room and no additional equipment.

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“ABC Please” Skill - Please

Practice

Instructions: Over the next few days, when an unpleasant emotion occurs, be mindful of your body and ask yourself the following questions:

Did I take my medications as prescribed? What did I do today to take care of my physical health?

What did I eat today that was healthy? What food/drink could I have done without?

Did I avoid mood altering substances? If not, what willful thoughts stood in my way?

How much sleep did I get and what was the quality of my sleep on a scale of 0 to 10?

How much exercise did I get today?

In what areas can I improve in order to reduce vulnerability to my emotions?

What did you notice as you made improvements in those areas?
