

## Reducing Vulnerability to Negative Emotions

This is a skills that we can use to keep ourselves less vulnerable to having negative emotions, and less likely to get into a state of Emotion Mind, where emotions control our thoughts and actions.

These skills are things that affect your physical and your mental well-being. As you read through them, you may find that you are already doing some of these things, or that you need especially to work on one or two.

Linehan uses this chart as a way of remembering these skills, with the phrase **"PLEASE MASTER."**

treat **Physical** illness  
balance **Eating**  
avoid **mood-Altering** drugs  
balance **Sleep**  
get **Exercise**  
build **MASTERY**

If we are feeling sick, hungry, tired, under the influence of drugs, don't get much exercise or aren't doing something in our day that gives us a sense of mastery or accomplishment, we are more likely to be vulnerable to negative emotions, to experience or see the negative than the positive, less able to handle situations and interactions with our wise mind.

---

### P & L: Treat Physical illness

Do you have a physical illness that needs to be tended to? Do you have medication or treatments prescribed for you that you aren't taking or doing? What things keep you from treating your physical illness? Take some time to think about this, and see what it would take for you to take care of your physical needs.

### E: Balance Eating

How well do you eat? Do you eat too little? Too much? What kinds of food do you eat? (Eating too little means that your body doesn't get the nourishment it needs. Also, if you eat too little over a period of time, your body goes into starvation mode, and burns the food more slowly, trying to protect itself from starving.)

What foods make you feel good? Calm? Energized? What foods make you feel bad? How does eating a lot of sugar make you feel? Caffeine? The key here is to eat foods that are healthy and that make you feel good.

### A: Avoid Mood-Altering Drugs

Alcohol and drugs can lower resistance to certain negative emotions. For example, I found that when I drank alcohol, I felt more depressed and sometimes more frightened. If you use drugs or alcohol, notice how they make you feel. If they are a problem in your life, can you get some help?

### **S: Balance Sleep**

How much sleep makes you feel good? Some people do fine on 5-6 hours, others need 9-10 hours. Some people need to nap during the day. Learn to plan your schedule so that you get the sleep you need. Do you have trouble sleeping?

Sleep is a big one for me. If I do not get enough sleep on a regular basis, I get irritable, short-tempered, my judgment is less good and I get upset much more easily. I have to work on it all the time.

### **E: Get Exercise**

Regular exercise, besides being good for your heart, lungs, muscles and bones, stimulates chemicals in your brain called endorphins, which are natural antidepressants. We are talking about aerobic exercise, the kind that makes you out of breath.

Do you get regular exercise? What kind? If not, is there something you can do for exercise, starting out with just a little?

### **MASTER: Build MASTERY**

Do things every day that make you feel competent, confident, that you are good at something or are learning something. What kinds of things are you good at doing? Can you learn a new skill? What kinds of things give you a sense of mastery, of being good at something or meeting a challenge? Sometimes these things will be a little bit hard or challenging.

---

### Discussion

If you are someone who has not yet incorporated some of these things into your life, perhaps you could make a plan for doing so, perhaps trying just one thing at a time.

If you want to keep track of how you are doing at sleep, for instance, you might keep a little chart of what time you go to bed and how much sleep you get each night. Sometimes we are not really aware of how much sleep we get or what exactly we eat. You could use your diary

card as a checkoff chart.

The purpose of this section is to get you to take a look at these parts of your life. Notice what you do and how you feel. Once you are aware of which areas are working well and which you would like to improve, you can choose something to work on.