

Self-Care & Eating

What is Self-Care?

- At its most basic definition, self-care is simply what it sounds like: nurturing yourself! It means treating yourself as *kindly as you do others in your life*.
- Our health and wellness are based upon a foundation of self-care behaviors involving many aspects of our lives: eating, sleeping, keeping an active lifestyle, managing our stress, staying hydrated, keeping healthy relationships and nurturing our self-esteem.
- Eating is one of the core components to self-care. We can't help others if we don't care enough for ourselves.



<http://www.keywordbasket.com/cGjcnR1cmVziGhYmI0IDU/>

SELF-CARE WHEEL



<https://www.hattiesburgclinic.com/youinmind/self-care-in-the-new-year/>

There are many self-care practices you can employ to help create more peace and joy in your life. Some ways to practice self-care include exercising, seeking social support, engaging in relaxing tasks such as reading a book, journaling, increasing sleep and eating a balanced diet!

Women, and sometimes men, too, often put self-care last on their list as they are busy caring for everyone else around them, investing all their energy into their career, or doing a combination of the above, plus more! However, self-care is for everyone. Putting self-care on the back-burner can often include eating poorly such as: rushing eating between work task, getting too busy to stop and eat, or ignoring hunger signals in order to lose weight – ultimately, preparing foods and eating almost becomes a burden and a nuisance. *But what, when and how much we eat can play a role in how we feel and show up to life!*

Eating is a Core Form of Self-Care.

How is eating a form of self-care? Here are a few of the ways that fueling our bodies nurtures us:

Food Affects Our Performance & Energy Levels

- Food is what gives our cells the energy they need to accomplish their tasks! When we go long periods of time without eating during our waking hours (i.e. greater than 5-6 hours), our bodies do not function at peak level. We may not be able to think as clearly due to our brain being starved of glucose, the simplest form of carbohydrate.
- We may also experience other symptoms of low glucose such as fatigue, low energy and headaches. If our day involves exercise or a lot of movement, we may not have sustainable energy to get through the day!



https://ssir.org/articles/entry/healthy_eating_active_living_reflections_insights_and_considerations_for_the_road_ahead

To keep your energy and blood sugar levels consistent include a balance of healthy carbohydrates, proteins, and fats (mono & polyunsaturated) throughout the day to help nourish your cells with what they need to help you perform. We do not advocate a “carbohydrate-free/keto-like diet. This may increase the rate of weight loss but is not sustainable and often weight returns when carbohydrate intake returns or increases.

Hunger/Fullness Scale

1	so starved you're weak or dizzy
2	extremely hungry and feeling irritable; lots of stomach growling
3	less famished; hungry enough for occasional stomach growling
4	mildly hungry—often following a light snack
5	satiated—feeling neither hunger nor fullness
6	mildly full with no discomfort
7	full enough for mild discomfort
8	stuffed enough for more notable discomfort
9	“Thanksgiving-stuffed,” possibly with extreme discomfort
10	filled to the point of feeling sick

<https://www.idealfit.com/nutrition/using-the-hunger-scale/>

Food Can Impact Our Mood

- Food provides important compounds that contribute to the hormones in our body which regulate our mood. In particular, carbohydrates and protein affect our ability to make serotonin, the “feel good” hormone. Both of these macronutrients also contain important vitamins and minerals that influence our neurological system. When our cells and brain are not receiving enough fuel, we can experience irritability or what is commonly referred to as being “hangry”.



<https://reysdannny.com/self-care-is-essential-to-your-mental-health-and-wellness-446268139f3b>

- On the opposite end of the spectrum, if our brain and cells are given too much fuel at one time, we may experience lethargy/sleepiness. Tune into your signals of hunger and fullness as well as how foods make you feel. Use the Rate Your Hunger/Fullness scale (shown to the left) to practice identifying your signs of hunger. Avoid getting to a level 1 on the scale and try to stop eating when you are at a 5 or 6.

Food Provides Comfort and Satisfaction

- Taste buds allow us to experience the pleasant (and occasional unpleasant) tastes associated with foods- so ENJOY! Food can provide comfort and satisfaction in different ways – from a nice hot bowl of chili on a cold day or a refreshing bowl of ice cream in the summer. However, turning to food as the major way to soothe uncomfortable emotions is not healthy and we need to seek alternatives to this behavior/habit.
- Tune into why and when you eat to identify if you are turning to food as a coping mechanism. If you often find yourself eating to soothe uncomfortable emotions. Instead of passing harsh judgement on yourself, approach the situation from an angle of curiosity and self-compassion.
- Ask yourself what you are really needing in the moment and experiment with alternative activities to address feelings that you may be experiencing. Talk to your bariatric registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) and/or cognitive behavior therapist (CBT) as a first steps in changing your relationship with food.



<https://diyparty99.com/>

Key Points to Remember

- Eating plays a huge role in self-care
 - We can increase our energy levels as well as performance by eating a balanced diet
 - You can help regulate your mood by eating regularly and using the hunger scale to identify your signs of hunger
 - While we should aim to enjoy our food most of the time, it should not be used as a coping mechanism
- Self-care is for everyone and not only results in improved health, It will allow you to feel like a better you!