



Low Mood and Depression

A Self Help Guide for
Students and Parents

Low Mood and Depression



Teenagers can often find that their mood can change a lot. Sometimes gradually over time and sometimes very quickly. This might be because of a particular event which has been difficult or challenging or for no reason at all. This has a lot to do with the huge changes in brain function and chemistry that happen during the teenage years. These feelings can be very intense and scary if you've never felt this way before and don't know how to cope with it.

It is very normal to have ups and downs. Some days we feel happier and more positive than others. Different periods in our lives may cause us more anxiety and in turn make us feel sad. Changes in our circumstances can all play a part in lowering your mood. Different factors that make it more likely to happen, include biological make-up, upbringing, or reaction to life events. What keeps it going though, is how we deal with those things. The way we think and what we do affects the way we feel. Low mood can impact what we think, feel and do:

Thoughts

People who are suffering with anxiety or depression tend to think very negatively about themselves, the future and the world around them. It can be like seeing life through "gloomy specs" and can include thoughts such as:

"Everything is hopeless - nothing can change"

"I'm useless, worthless"

"It's all my fault"

The reality however is very different and we can change the way we think

Physical Sensations

Low mood and depression can cause us to have physical changes and these may include tiredness, fatigue, lethargy, difficulty concentrating or remembering, sleep changes (sleep more or less) eating changes (eat more or less), irritability and moodiness beyond what is normal, tearfulness or becoming more angry than normal.

Behaviours

Because of the tiredness, difficulty sleeping and eating, and negative style of thinking, we tend to do less and less. We stop doing the things we used to do and enjoy. We might isolate ourselves from friends and family, we might become more defiant or have violent outbursts.

Changing the Way you Think

Some people think they need to change how they look and feel good about themselves but just changing how we think can help us to see things differently. There are a number of things you can do to overcome negative thoughts:

- Challenge your unhelpful thoughts and replace them with something more positive
- Plan your time well so you are not left with time to dwell on problems for long periods
- Take time to notice the things you do well and remind yourself that there are things you do well
- Focus on and appreciating the positive things around you

Making Positive Changes



Look at this diagram to see an example of 'vicious cogs'. By looking at all of the smaller cogs to see what keeps the central problem going we can target them and make positive changes in each of the cogs such as choosing not to withdraw or isolate ourselves. Which will at least, slow down, and at best, stop, the problem of low mood

How to Boost Your Mood

- Don't beat yourself up about it this will probably make you feel even worse
- Be patient – 'Rome wasn't built in a day', feeling different might take time
- Stick to a routine – work out how you like to get things done and follow that. It will stop you getting too overwhelmed by stuff
- Notice the small stuff – a smell you like, trees changing, what other people are wearing. This can get you out of your own head
- Talk to someone about it - not having to hide how you feel can make it easier
- Don't eat too much junk food. Don't stop yourself from having things you like but eating healthily can change the way you feel
- Listen to music – it is really emotional stuff. Maybe you will find something to express how you feel, sometimes you will find something to inspire or make you feel good.
- Exercise – this realises endorphins in the brain that can boost you mood. You may not feel like it but won't feel worse afterwards
- Be crafty – this can give us a focus and sense of accomplishment. Think about what you might like to try; model making, cooking, drawing, designing a computer game or outfit, woodwork or redesign your room
- Keep it simple just to what you need to, have to then what you can manage.
- Don't be set back by a setback. Sometimes you might feel better sometimes you might feel worse it doesn't mean things won't ever change
- Be around people. It might be that you don't feel like doing this or talking to people but you might feel worse if you isolate yourself all of the time
- Remind yourself of things in the past that you enjoyed at the time to remind yourself of what feeling happy can be like
- Laugh. Watch stand-up comedy, sitcoms, goofy YouTube videos – whatever does it for you
- Don't just focus on the negative remember what happened today that was ok
- Just because you feel this way now doesn't mean that you always will. Is there something in your future real or imagined you can keep in mind?

In Library: **Hyperbole and a Half** by Allie Brosh, **The Rough Guide to Happiness** by Nick Baylis, **Self Esteem and Mental Health** by Anna Claybourne, **Reasons to Stay Alive** by Matt Haig