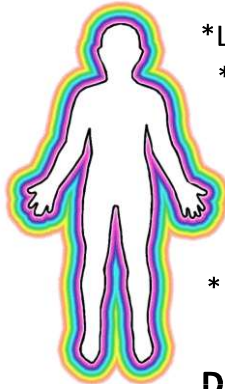


Low Mood

We all feel sad from time to time and that's ok. This can be for many reasons. However, if you are feeling this way for long periods of time (2 weeks or more) or it is having an impact on day to day life then you may need to seek extra support. This leaflet contains some self-help information.

Symptoms of low mood include:



- * Loss of interest or participation in activities you usually enjoy
- * Struggling to sleep or sleeping more than usual
- * Low energy
- * Comfort eating or losing your appetite
- * Isolating yourself from others
- * Struggling to concentrate or remember things
- * Feeling restless

Difficult feelings/emotions:

- * Low self-esteem
- * Sadness, worthlessness
- * Feeling anxious or worried
- * Feeling angry/frustrated
- * Feeling lonely
- * Thinking negatively
- * Thoughts of harming yourself or suicide
- * Being self-critical



Low mood occurs in a cycle. How we think impacts how we feel, behave and how our bodies react. The first step to breaking this cycle is to work on challenging any unhelpful/negative thoughts you may have. Firstly, ask yourself: Can I solve this problem? If **yes** – then how? If **no**, ask this: Is there evidence to support my thought? Is there evidence against my thought? What would I say to a friend in a similar situation? Will this matter in a year's time? What about in 5 years' time? Am I focusing on negatives and ignoring all the positives? Am I being mean to myself?

Once asking yourself these questions you can:
let go, distract or do nothing.



Let go: imagine destroying your unhelpful thoughts in your head, or write them down and rip them up.



Distract: think of something positive (your favourite place, a comforting memory, your biggest achievement), try some breathing techniques or mindfulness (check out the apps on the back), cheer yourself on "I can do this!" or pick an activity from the take a break page.



Do nothing: Decide to dwell on your unhelpful thoughts. It is likely your mood will not improve and you will continue to feel the same way or even worse.

Working on these 5 ways to wellbeing can also help you feel better:

*Exercise



Complete a minimum of 30 minutes of focused exercise per day. This could be walking, riding a bike or playing with a ball. Exercise releases natural happy hormones.

*Diet



Try to include more fruit and vegetables into your diet. Aim to have 3 meals a day with healthy snacks in-between. Try not to eat too late in the evening. You should have between 6 and 8 glasses of fluid a day. This includes water, milk and sugar-free drinks.

*Sleep hygiene



To help get your internal body clock get into a routine, try to sleep at regular times. Also create an order to help you wind down e.g. bath, pyjamas, small drink, brush teeth, toilet, read a book or listen to music then get into bed. Avoid napping and try to avoid all electrical screens an hour before settling down to sleep. Make your bedroom sleep-friendly – make sure it is tidy, dark, quiet and warm. Avoid drinks containing caffeine in the evening.

Here are some helpful websites:

- Young Minds - www.youngminds.org.uk/
- Health Talk Online – www.healthtalk.org/peoples-experiences/mental-health
- CAMHS website - www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/
- NHS: <https://www.nhs.uk/livewell/youth-mental-health>
- Family Lives - www.familylives.org.uk
- Mood Juice - <http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/>
- Mind Ed - <https://www.minded.org.uk/>

4 interactive mindfulness apps to help relaxation:

