



A Parent's Guide on Supporting Your Child with Low Mood

Information leaflet

Provided by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust

Everyone feels low or down from time to time. It does not always mean something is wrong. Feeling low is common after distressing events or major life changes, but sometimes periods of low mood happen for no obvious reason.

You may find your child is feeling tired, lacking confidence, frustrated, angry and worried. A low mood will often pass after a couple of days or weeks and there are some easy things you can try and small changes you can make that will usually help improve their mood.

If your child is still feeling down or no longer gets pleasure from things for most of the day and this lasts for several weeks, it may be they are experiencing depression.

Signs of low mood

- Sad
- Worried, anxious or panicked
- Tired
- A lack of self-confidence
- Frustrated or irritated
- Angry
- Not interested in things
- Withdrawing from usual activities, particularly ones your child used to enjoy or value
- Spending less time with those you care about
- Having trouble sleeping

Tips for talking to your child about their mood

- Think about what you want to say and keep it simple
- Write down things that are concerning you before you speak to them
- Ask open ended questions which will allow them to say how they are feeling
- Choose statements that are facts not judgements
- Try to keep any anxiety you may have to yourself
- Be calm and supportive
- Consider speaking to the school, GP or 111 for further support if you need it

Feelings and how they link together

When we are feeling low it can impact on everything and cause a downwards spiral that can be difficult to get out of. It can cause us to stop doing things, which give us more time to think negative thoughts, which can make our bodies feel strange, maybe tired, achy or tense and this in turn makes us feel more sad.

Our thoughts impact the way that we feel and when we are feeling low our brains tend to pick up on the bad things and make things seem worse and overwhelming.

Types of Negative Automatic Thoughts

Catastrophising - e.g. "This is awful, nothing will ever go right again" common

Black and white thinking - e.g. "I felt a bit better doing something different, but not a lot, so it's useless."

Personalisation - e.g. "It must be my fault, I'm to blame, it's because I'm no good."

Over generalising - e.g. "I tried talking to a friend once and that didn't work, so there's no point talking to anyone."

Tunnel vision - e.g. remembering one bad thing when 10 good things were also said.

Jumping to conclusions - e.g. "Doing something different won't do any good."

Emotional reasoning - e.g. "Feel anxious going to the party so it must be bad."

Mind reading - e.g. "She thinks I'm weird" or "He definitely doesn't want to play with me."

Discounting/disqualifying - e.g. "That doesn't count" or "That was just lucky - it would never happen again."

Challenge unhelpful thoughts

You can do this by recording the thoughts that your child has and seeing what type of thinking style or negative automatic thoughts their brain used because they are feeling low. Then once we have noticed these we can try to challenge these thoughts to balance them, this can be really tricky but you can try to use these techniques to help.

- Think about what they would tell a friend if they were thinking this thought.
- Imagine that they are in a court of law, would this thought hold as a fact or is it your opinion? What would someone say to prove it is not a fact?
- Do you believe this thought 100%? If not what makes up the other percent?
- Will this matter in 6 months time?

Tips for helping improve low mood

- Encourage your child to stay connected with their peers/friends
- Encourage your child to look after their physical health
- Encourage your child to talk about their worries or problems
- Encourage good sleep hygiene
- Encourage your child to do things they enjoy
- Encourage your child into a routine
- Encourage your child into a structured day

Looking after your own wellbeing

As well as thinking about the children or young people in your care, it is important to take care of your own mental health and wellbeing. Children and young people react, in part, to what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers deal with a situation calmly and confidently, they can provide the best support for their children and young people. Parents and caregivers can be more supportive to others around them, especially children, if they are better prepared.

Useful resources for further support

www.camhsbestie.co.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.good-thinking.uk

www.riseabove.org.uk

www.kooth.com

www.barnardos.org.uk

Do you have a concern, complaint or comment?

Contact: Patient Relations Team, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust 2 Kings Court, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester. WR5 1JR **Tel: 01905 681517 Email: Whcnhs.pals@nhs.net**

Do you have a communication or information support need?

If so please contact the person who gave you this leaflet so that those needs can be recorded and responded to.

Do you need to know about accessibility?

Read our detailed guides at www.AccessAble.co.uk



Do you get stressed, anxious or have low mood?

Visit www.nowweretalking.nhs.uk to find out more or call **0300 013 57 27**.



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