

Low mood

What is it?

Low mood can mean feelings of sadness, lack of motivation/pleasure, worry, tiredness, frustration or anger. Most people will experience these at some point, however they will usually lift after a short period of time. Feeling this low mood persistently can lead to depression. Feelings of depression are longer lasting and deeper than shorter periods of unhappiness, and can affect the person's daily life. Low mood can sometimes be a response to life events such as exam stress, bullying, bereavement or parental separation.

Signs and Symptoms

There are various signs you may pick up on that could point to a child or young person (CYP) having low mood. However, these can sometimes be difficult to spot.



Cognitive and psychological signs

- The young person may be overly critical about themselves or their school work, which could lead to them choosing not to complete the work in order to prevent "failure".
- They may also lose interest in hobbies or previous interests.
- Thoughts of helplessness
- Unable to concentrate e.g. you may notice them struggling to focus on chores, school work etc.
- Indecisiveness e.g. cannot decide when you give them options
- Problems with memory e.g. forgetting something you have asked them to do

Feelings

- You may notice they are feeling unhappy, becoming tearful or often feeling tired/exhausted.
- Feeling guilty, shame, fear or anxiety.
- Feeling numb/unable to feel or describe emotions
- These feelings can be difficult to spot in others, especially if they are good at hiding how they are feeling. Changes in behaviour are often easier to notice.

Physical Sensations

- Changes in weight
- Under or over eating
- Loss of energy/ fatigue
- Trouble sleeping/ not sleeping enough
- Changes in personal appearance (personal hygiene, not caring about appearance)
- Changes in sex drive

Behaviours

- Avoiding social situations
- Getting up late or not wanting to get out of bed
- Spending more time in their room
- Avoiding eye contact - are they looking at you when you speak to them?
- Engaging in risk taking activities e.g. smoking, truanting, fighting, alcohol/drug use
- Lack of interest in extracurricular activities/hobbies - have they stopped participating in activities that they used to enjoy?
- Distraction from school work
- Changes in relationships with peers and family members
- Excessive internet/phone use
- Unexplainable emotional outbursts

Suggestions for Parents

- First of all trust yourself if you sense something isn't right with your child. If you notice symptoms don't ignore them. Speak with your child about what you've noticed.
- Try not to ask too many questions or offer solutions straight away, take time to listen and empathise.
- If they don't want to talk to you straight away try again the next day. Be gentle but persistent.
- Put time aside each day to have one on one time with them. This could promote social engagement and give you time to check in.
- Exercise is important. Try and get them out to exercise once a day, this could be walking the dog, going for a hike, skating, playing sport. Anything that gets them moving.
- Try and get them interested in something. Look at what they used to enjoy or are good at e.g. art, music, a hobby etc.
- Celebrate achievements and pleasure. When people feel depressed they often forget what they have achieved and what they enjoy. Praise them for the successes in the day.

- Encourage plenty of sleep - this may require putting time limits on technology.
- If things continue and you are worried they are becoming depressed contact your GP.

Useful websites / Resources

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/low-mood/>

<https://www.mymind.org.uk/resources/mood/low-mood/>

<https://www.getselfhelp.co.uk/freedownloads.htm>

<https://www.mind.org.uk>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/feelings-emotions/depression-feeling-sad/>



This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg