

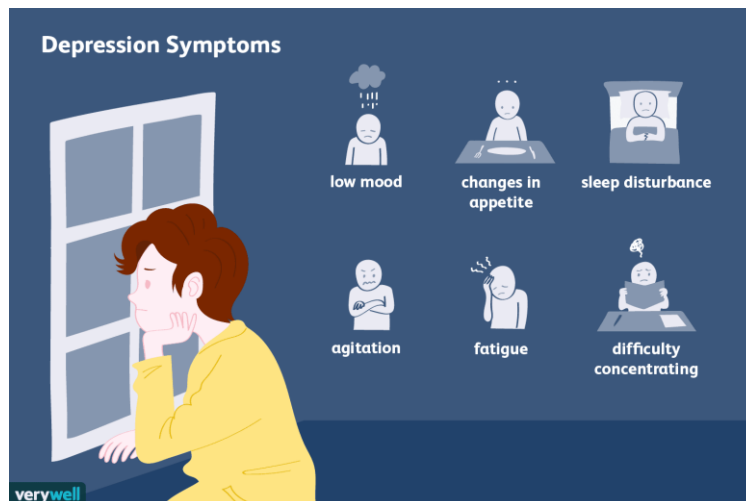
Low mood

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 e.g. may not be able to work independently or without extra support from staff.
- Unable to concentrate e.g. you may notice them struggling to focus on the task in class.
- Indecisiveness e.g. can't decide when giving a choice of tasks by staff, struggle with friends to agree about social plans etc.
- Problems with memory e.g. this could present as difficulty completing the task in class if they are forgetting your instructions.

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 Signs

- 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- Avoiding social situations - you may notice they have withdrawn from their friends or avoid taking part in class.
- Arriving late and leaving early - was this person often punctual? Are they turning up to your class late consistently? Are they leaving class when things get too much for them?
- Avoiding eye contact - are they looking at you when you speak to them or when they are participating in class?
- 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 used to enjoy.
- Distracted from school work e.g. not completing classwork/homework, not participating in class, avoiding class etc.
- Changes in relationships with peers and school staff.

Suggestions for Schools

Key adult/emotionally available adult

Ask the CYP how they are and give them the time and space to share their feelings. Ensure they know you are taking their feelings seriously and help the CYP to identify the symptoms of their low mood. Help them to recognise when they are struggling and who they can go to for support. Make it clear where they can go in school when they need help and support them to create a plan they can follow when they are feeling particularly low. This may include strategies such as finding someone to speak to, journaling, exercising, listening to music, engaging in activities they enjoy. You should then arrange to 'check in' with the CYP. This gives the key worker the opportunity to monitor how the CYP is doing, and show them they have an emotionally available adult who they can go to when they need support. Ensure the key adult is someone they would feel comfortable talking to and who has the time to offer support.

Refer CYP for extra support

Refer to interventions you may have in place in your school e.g. ELSA that can support them to identify their feelings and provide coping skills for their changing feelings or life circumstances.

You can also refer to counselling or third sector agencies if appropriate. Speak to pastoral staff and the CYP before making a referral as it may not be needed. Referrals into child and adolescent health services (via GP) are typically appropriate when first line school interventions have been tried but things haven't improved and symptoms are impacting on the CYP's day to day functioning.



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If you are really worried about a child and believe they are a risk to themselves tell your safeguarding officer, contact parents/carers and support the CYP/family to access specialist support via the GP or out of hours A&E.

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