



Alderbrook School Pastoral Team

Wellbeing Guidance for Parents and Students

Support for Students experiencing Low Mood or Depression



Advice For Students

What is low mood and depression?

- Depression is a mood disorder that causes you to feel very down. People suffering from depression often talk about feeling hopeless about everything, as if nothing is worth the effort and as if they have no power to change things. It can be frightening because you may feel as if you have nothing to live for.
- There are several types of depression such as reactive/situational, dysthymia (less severe but long lasting), Seasonal Affective Disorder or Bipolar (spells of low and high mood which can include harmful behaviour), to name a few.
- If you think you have symptoms of depression, or you contemplate suicide, it's vital to get help. Over 80% of people who become depressed can be successfully treated.

What are symptoms of low mood and depression?

- Symptoms include feeling low or really sad for no reason, lack of energy/motivation, feeling unable to do anything or concentrate, an inability to enjoy the things you used to like doing, wanting to be alone, irritability, anger or anxiety, being agitated/restless, weight fluctuation and too little or too much interest in eating, trouble falling asleep or getting up, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, aches and pains though nothing is wrong, not caring about their appearance or what happens in the future, thoughts about death or suicide.
- You may begin with feeling generally unhappy, and having these symptoms above does not necessarily indicate that you are suffering from depression. However, if any of these are interfering with your daily life or if you have particularly dark thoughts, you should seek professional help. An evaluation by a skilled health practitioner is required for a proper diagnosis of depression.

What should I do about these feelings?

- Consider one of the strategies on this website <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/selfcare/> and work out what helps you best.
- **The most important thing you should do is tell someone you trust at home and/or school such as your Pastoral Manager about your feelings. Your GP can make referrals so you can get the right support.**
- Choose someone who will listen to you and help you to access support. School staff will simply be concerned for your health and wellbeing. We will not judge you or be impatient.

What can I do to help myself stop if I am feeling low or depressed?

- Get outside or look out of a window. Fresh air and exercise do help. Most feelings pass.
- Release some tension: move around, stretch, breath and feel the ground under your feet.
- Be aware of 2 or 3 things you can see, hear, smell, and feel – concentrate on each one.
- Build a support network: Share your feelings with friends and family who can offer emotional support. Sometimes, talking about your feelings can provide relief.
- **The Cameron Grant Memorial Trust and YoungMinds Crisis Messenger services provide free 24/7 support in a mental health crisis - text CAM or YM to 85258.**

How can I change the way I feel longer term?

1. Work out, maybe with help from someone you trust, what helps you to feel better and who needs to know how you might be feeling. Confide and explain how they can help you.

2. Plan how you will cope with each part of your day and make a daily schedule that helps you regain some balance and control.
3. Keep a notebook where you jot down one thing you did well that day, carry affirmation cards, a photo that calms you or an object, memory or scent that helps you to feel calmer.
4. Relax through art, exercise, dancing or a stress ball. Learn a simple mindfulness technique like looking at an object while you slow your breathing down. Listen to music or use an App.

Advice for Parents

Why do young people feel low mood/depression?

- Depression can be temporary, a hormonal reaction, a consequence of something like abuse, bullying or family breakdown, but it can also run in families. It frequently develops alongside anxiety, but it should not be underestimated because the consequences can be devastating.

What should I do if my child is feeling low/depressed?

- Create structure and routine, particularly around eating and sleep.
- Provide a non-judgemental perspective and remember that a young person who is anxious or low will focus on the negatives more than the positives.
- Listen carefully to what your child says. Ask them how they feel. Be gentle and calm so they feel they can talk openly about their emotions.
- Try to be accepting and open-minded. Let your teen know you're there for them, and that they're loved. Reassure them that they can talk about their distress and you support them.
- Your child might not want to talk to you because you are too close to them. If this is the case you may want to encourage them to talk to someone they feel comfortable with. Don't take it personally. They might want to protect you or worry about your reactions.
- Offer to lend them a hand. You could offer to contact a GP or a counsellor via a service such as Solar (CAMHS). Avoid taking control though – **encourage them to take action**.
- Suggest they try alternative activities, listen to an App that will provide relief and strategies, show them online resources that will help them communicate with someone else independently via a helpline and absorb constructive professional advice. The websites below have practical ideas on supporting a young person with low mood/depression, and the Combined Minds App also has a range of tips you can have handy on your phone.
- Let the school know so that we can support them while they are in our care.
- Try to understand your own feelings. You might feel hurt, devastated, shocked, angry, sad, guilty or powerless. If you're struggling yourself, you might want to talk to a counsellor too.

How do I help them manage their mood?

- Use the ideas above to help them plan for how to cope if they have a bad day, and/or make a self-soothe box of comforting items they can carry discreetly and use when needed.
- Encourage them to identify someone they can tell who will help them wherever they are and ensure that person knows how best to help them in the event they need support.
- **The Mix has a helpline 0800 808 4994 and they offer a webchat service or they can also text THEMIX to 85258.**

- YoungMinds has a free parent helpline 0808 802 5544 that you can also call for advice on how to support your child.

What do I do if they have suicidal thoughts?

- Speak to someone, with or on behalf of the person you know to be at risk – a member of staff, their GP, SOLAR Crisis line via 0121 301 2750 (Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm) or out of hours (weekdays 5pm-8pm, weekends 8am-8pm) 0121 301 5500. Samaritans offer a 24 hour hotline 365 days a year 116 123 or contact one of the services below. If necessary, call 999. Never assume they are just seeking attention.

External sources of help and advice about Low Mood/Depression

Apps to help manage low mood/depression:

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/> contains numerous apps that tackle low mood/depression

<https://combinedminds.co.uk> mental health charity Stem4 helps carers have a positive influence on a young person who is struggling <https://www.headspace.com> offers a variety of meditation and wellbeing options <https://www.smilingmind.com.au> helps users find a sense of balance **Low**

Mood/Depression: <https://www.depressionalliance.org/complete-guide-to-depression/>

<http://www.sane.org.uk> <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/medications/>

Suicide:

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

<https://papyrus-uk.org/> runs HopeLine call 0800 068 4141 email pat@papyrus-uk.org text 07786 209697

<https://www.samaritans.org>

Counselling support:

Kooth <https://www.kooth.com> online counselling for young people every day

Solar <https://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk/our-services/solar-youth-services/> call 0121 301 2730 **Pause**

<https://www.forwardthinkingbirmingham.org.uk/services/13-pause> call 0300 300 0099

Some of the best general resources regarding health of young people:

Health For Teens <https://www.healthforteens.co.uk>

Mental Health advice <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people>

Mind <https://www.mind.org.uk> a mental health charity which has information, helplines, and an online community for anyone experiencing mental health problems.

The Mix <https://www.themix.org.uk>

Teen Breathe is a magazine aimed at young people that is full of practical advice about feelings and how to practice mindfulness, available locally in WH Smith, Waitrose or subscribe online via

<https://www.teenbreathe.co.uk>