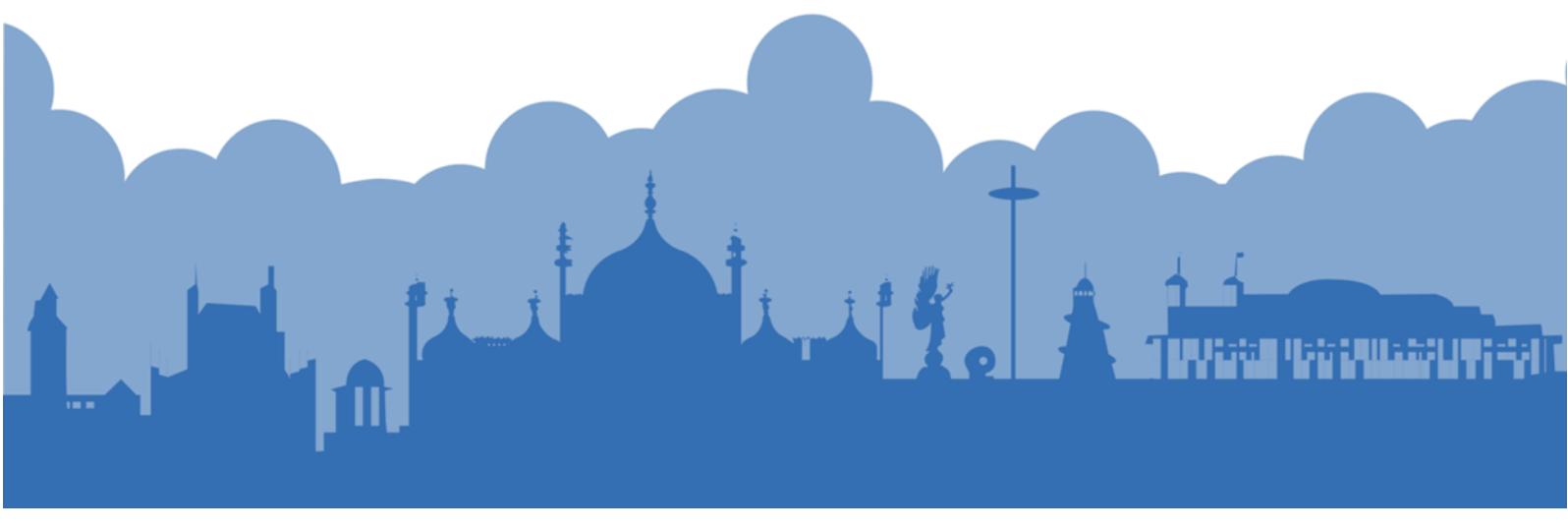


# Low Mood

## Self help guide



## How can this guide help me?

It may seem that nothing can be done to help you feel better. But there are things that you can do to make a difference. There is also further help you can get if the low mood does not seem to be getting better.

This guide aims to help you recognise symptoms of low mood, understand what it is and ways to manage or overcome it. The guide is based on the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) approach. CBT uses methods that have been tried and tested and found to be effective. It involves looking at the way you think about things and what you do.

This booklet can help you to begin to understand and deal with low mood practically. You might find it helpful to complete these exercises.

## **What is low mood?**

Most young people experience ups and down during their teenage years and occasionally will feel down or upset by certain things going on in their lives. Some young people feel sad, lonely, down, and anxious or stressed for longer periods of time to the extent that it can affect their everyday lives and can prevent that young person from doing things they would normally do.

### **Symptoms of low mood**

- not wanting to do things that you previously enjoyed,
- not wanting to meet up with friends or avoiding situations
- sleeping more or less than normal
- eating more or less than normal
- feeling irritable, upset, miserable or lonely
- feeling hopeless
- maybe wanting to self-harm
- Feeling tired and not having any energy.

One in 10 young people aged 5-16 suffer from a diagnosable mental health problem, that is three people in every class. Two per cent of children under 12 experience low mood, and this rises to five per cent among teenagers which is at least one depressed child in every classroom, so it is not uncommon and adults experience it too.

Research has helped us to understand depression more clearly. We realise that thoughts play an important role in low mood. Changes in feelings may occur gradually, but the way a person thinks about themselves when they are feeling low is very different from how they thought before. An example of negative thinking is the clever student who thinks they can't concentrate and is stupid.

People who experience low mood typically have such thoughts and at the time they believe them to be true. When someone's thoughts change like this, they also begin to experience other changes.

**These are some of the signs or symptoms that you may experience if you are feeling low**

Emotions or Feelings –

- Feeling sad, guilty, upset, numb or despairing
- Losing interest and/or enjoyment in things
- Crying a lot or unable to cry when a truly sad event occurs
- Feeling alone even if you are in company
- Feeling angry and irritable about the slightest thing

Physical or Bodily Signs –

- Tiredness
- Lack of energy
- Restlessness
- Sleep problems
- Feeling worse at a particular time of the day – usually mornings
- Changes in appetite and eating

Thoughts

- Losing confidence in yourself
- Expecting the worst and having negative or gloomy thoughts
- Thinking that everything seems hopeless
- Thinking you hate yourself
- Poor memory or concentration

Behaviour

- Not making decisions
- Can't be bothered to do everyday tasks
- Putting things off
- Not doing things you used to enjoy
- Avoiding seeing people

## What keeps low mood going?

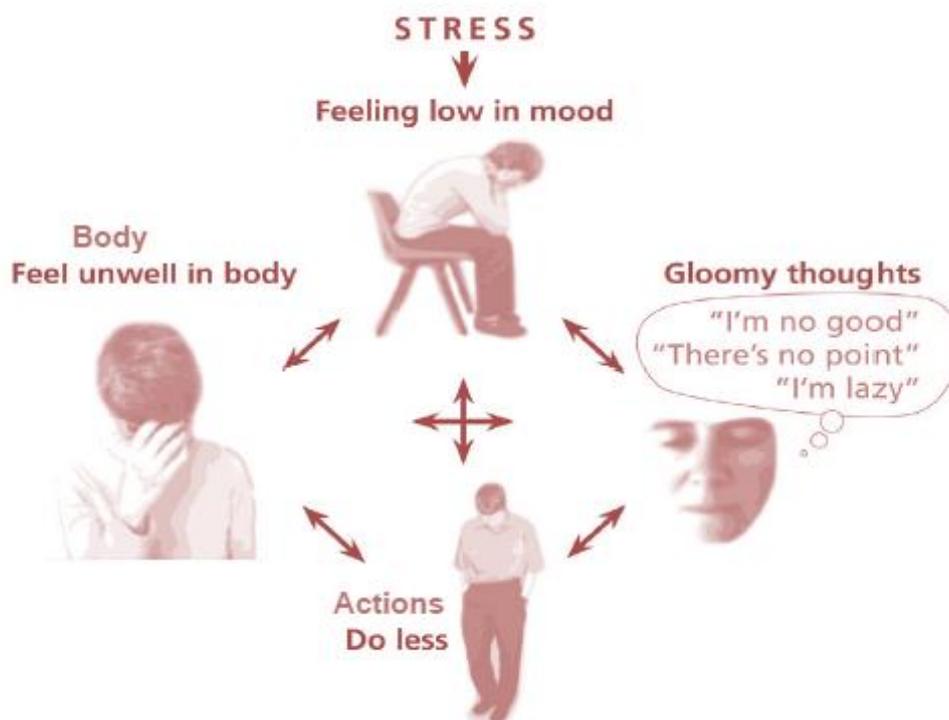
When you are feeling low you might have negative way of looking at yourself, the world and your future. These negative thoughts are a key factor in keeping the low mood going. This can affect the way you interpret situations.

Sometimes negative thoughts can stop you from doing the things that you would normally enjoy. As a result, you may have critical thoughts about being lazy, or irresponsible, which make you feel even worse. In other words, you get caught up in a vicious cycle.

For example suppose you are walking down the street and you see a friend who appears to ignore you completely. You might wonder why your friend has turned against you and you feel a little sad. Later on, you mention the incident to your friend, who tells you that they were preoccupied at the time and didn't even see you.

Normally, you would feel better and put what happened out of your mind. But if you're feeling low, you probably believe your friend has rejected you. You may not even ask them about the incident, and then the mistake goes uncorrected. If you're feeling low you're more likely to make mistakes like this over and over again.

The vicious cycle can look like this:



**Has a similar cycle happened to you? Try and draw it out.**

## Challenging unhelpful thoughts

When you are feeling low the negative thoughts may be so familiar and happen so often to you that you just accept them as fact. These thoughts often occur outside of our control, and can be unhelpful. It is important to try and remember that they are just thoughts, and not necessarily facts. Even though we may believe a lot of our unhelpful thoughts when we are anxious, it is good to remember that they should be questioned as they are often based on wrong assumptions. This section aims to help you to begin to recognise negative thoughts, and how you can make changes to this. You might have unhelpful thoughts about all kinds of things.

### Use some of these questions to challenge unhelpful thoughts.

**Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?** – *“I’ve done well in previous exams”*

**Can you identify the patterns of unhelpful thoughts?** – *“I have no evidence to suggest I’ll fail”*

**What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?** *“You’ve always worked well, you can only try your best”*

**How will you feel about this in 6 months’ time?**

**What are the costs and benefits of thinking this way?**

**Costs** – *“It’s making me more anxious thinking about it”*

**Benefits** – *“I can’t think of any”*

**Is there another way of looking at this situation?** *“I’ve done well in the past so I will be fine, I can only do my best and at worst I can re-take the exam next year”*

What else should I know about these negative thoughts?

1. Negative thoughts tend to be automatic. They are not actually arrived at on the basis of reason and logic, they just seem to pop up out of the blue.
2. Often the thoughts are unreasonable, and unrealistic. They serve no purpose. All they do is make you feel bad and they get in the way of what you really want out of life. If you think about them carefully, you will probably find that you have jumped to a conclusion which is not necessarily correct. For example, thinking someone doesn’t like you because you haven’t spoken recently.
3. Even though these thoughts are unreasonable they probably seem believable and correct to you at the time.
4. The more you believe and accept negative thoughts, the worse you are likely to feel. If you allow yourself to get into the grip of these thoughts, you find you are viewing everything in a negative way.

## Techniques for when you feel low

This section will look at practical steps to help overcome negative feelings and thoughts

### Positive steps

- List things to do
- Meet up with people
- Join in activities
- Exercise
- Do things you enjoy



### Make a daily plan

When people feel low they often don't feel like doing anything, find it hard to decide what to do each day and can end up doing very little.

Start by making a list of things you would like to do. Then plan out an action list and start with the easiest task first. Work through the list and tick off what you've done. At the end of the day you'll be able to look back and see what you've achieved.

Physical exercise and activity can really help to lift your mood.

List some exercises or activities which you could do. This can be as simple as a brisk walk or doing a puzzle with your family.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity Planner:** Plan your activities for the week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

**Thought Diary:** Whenever your mood changes, try to write down what you were doing, how you felt and what you were thinking at the time.

Situation	Emotion(s) How it makes you feel	Unhelpful thoughts	Balanced thought

## **General tips for managing low mood.**

- Drink up – Ensuring you drink enough water is one of the simplest ways we can look after ourselves. Herbal teas such as Chamomile can also help soothe symptoms of low mood and anxiety.
- Try and stick to a healthy diet and not eat too much sugar or additives or drink caffeinated drinks
- Setting a regular bedtime can help you to get the right amount of sleep. Stick to a calm bedtime routine and avoid too much screen time in the evening.
- Exercise- you don't need a gym membership, simply pop on some trainers and head out for a short walk. Sunlight and fresh air are instant mood-boosters
- Relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises can help reduce stress, for example square or mindful breathing. Yoga stretches will also help to relax your muscles
- Read a book or listen to the radio to distract from any worries or anxieties

# *Self-care Worksheet*

Below are some questions to help you figure out what you could use for your daily self-care practice. Refer back to them when you need some inspiration

I'd like to feel...

The things that comfort me are...

The top three people I enjoy spending time with...

Things I'd like to try (food, crafts, adventures)...

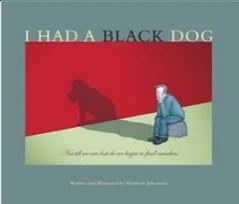
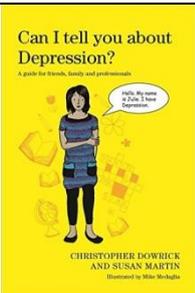
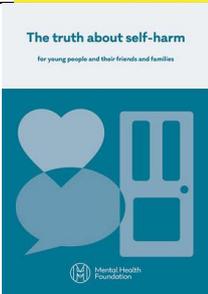
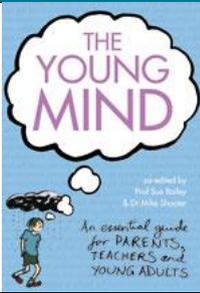
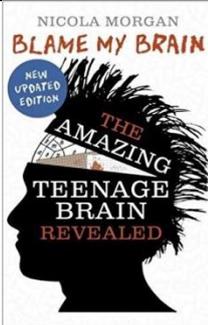
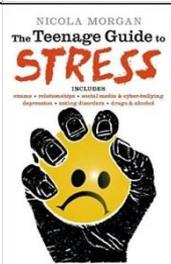
Dreams which still play on my mind...

The small steps I could take towards one of those dreams is...

Three items I'm putting up with/ could do with an upgrade...

My favourite smell is...

## Recommended reading

	<p><b>I Had a Black Dog</b> – Matthew Johnstone</p>
	<p><b>Can I Tell You About Depression</b> – Christopher Dowrick</p>
	<p><b>The Truth about Self-Harm:</b> For young people and their friends and families</p>
	<p><b>The Young Mind. An essential guide to mental health for young adults, parents, and teachers</b> – Dr Mike Shooter and Prof Sue Bailey Information and guidance for parents, teachers and young adults looking specifically at anxiety, stress, and self-harm.</p>
	<p><b>Blame My Brain: the Amazing Teenage Brain revealed.</b> Nicola Morgan Aimed at young people and their parents, an explanation of the ups and downs of the teenage brain.</p>
	<p><b>The Teenage Guide to Stress</b> Nicola Morgan Written for teenagers but also targets parents who want to understand all the stresses that teenagers face.</p>

## Helpful apps

	<p><b>Headspace</b> Learn to meditate in just 10 minutes a day with the Headspace app. Personalise the app to what matters to you. Includes reminders to keep you on track. Free access to the first level of meditation exercises designed for beginners (10 x 10minutes)</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>iRelease</b> Guided meditation to relieve stress and increase energy instantly. Convenient, easy listening, perfect for rejuvenating breaks throughout your day.</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>Breathe</b> Breathe is a mindfulness app that helps you stay calm and battle anxiety by sending you gentle deep breathing reminders and mindfulness quotes throughout the day. Personalise the reminders to how frequently you would like to see them and the content of them. Reminders when you need them most!</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>MindShift</b> Mindshift is designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety. MindShift will help you learn how to relax, develop more helpful ways of thinking, and identify active steps that will help you take charge of your anxiety. This app includes strategies to deal with everyday anxiety, as well as specific tools to tackle sleep, intense emotions, worry, panic, and social anxiety</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>Self-help for Anxiety Management (SAM)</b> Offers a range of self-help methods for people who are learning to manage their anxiety Self-help techniques including anxiety rating scale, self-help tool-kit, and an anxiety tracker. This app also introduces guidance on putting self-help into practice</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>

	<p><b>iChill</b> iChill can help by teaching you a set of self-help skills. You will learn simple info about how stress affects the mind and body</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>What's Up</b> What's Up is aimed to help you to cope with depression, anxiety, stress, and anger. It features common negative thinking patterns and simple methods to overcome them, a diary to keep your thoughts and feelings, a grounding game with questions to keep you grounded in the present when stress is taking over, and simple breathing techniques for keeping calm and relaxed.</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>BASE</b> This app was designed by CAMHS to help young people manage stress, anxiety and depression. It allows you to note your feelings and daily experiences and logs the data into a graph so you can see how your mood changes. You could use this app at your next appointment with your mental health professional.</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>Daylio</b> enables you to keep a private diary without having to type a single line. Daylio tracks your mood and what you get up to each day so you can look back on each diary entry.</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>StayAlive</b> is a pocket suicide prevention resource, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else. StayAlive also includes numbers for crisis support.</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>
	<p><b>Calm Harm</b> provides tasks that help you resist or manage the urge to self-harm. You can add your own tasks too and its completely private and password protected.</p> <p><b>Itunes</b> ✓ <b>Android</b> ✓</p>

## Other useful organisations

### Depression UK

<http://www.depressionuk.org>

National self help organisation that offers support to help cope with depression.

### E-motion

<https://www.e-motionbh.org.uk>

A free online counselling project for young people aged 13-25 years old who live in Brighton and Hove

### Find Get Give

<http://www.findgetgive.com>

A national mental health services directory and advice website for 13-25 year olds.

### Mind

Information about services available that offer support around mental health and wellbeing

### Ru-ok? Young People's Substance Misuse Service

<http://www.ruokservice.co.uk/>

ru-ok? Works alongside under 18s whos lives are affected by substance misuse in Brighton and Hove

### Where To Go For

<http://wheretogofor.co.uk/>

<http://wheretogofor.co.uk/everything>

Helps connect you to local directories that offer help, advice, activities and support for young people in Brighton and Hove.

### YMCA Downslink Group

<http://www.ymcadlg.org>

Offers free counselling for 13-25 year olds

Right Here – a service for young people that supports mental wellbeing

### Young Minds

<https://youngminds.org.uk>

a UK charity that offers information to young people and children about mental health and support available to you.

### Youth Collective

<http://brightonandhoveyouthcollective.org.uk>

Made up of eight local organisations (including YMCA, YAC and Young People's Centre)

## **Need immediate mental health and wellbeing support?**

**Brighton and Hove CAMHS** – If you have an urgent enquiry or referral you can call the duty number on **0300 304 0061**. Duty workers are available 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

**NHS 111:** You can call **NHS 111** when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. Call **111** if you don't know who to call, don't have a GP or need health information about what to do next.

**Mental Health Rapid Response Service (MHRRS):** A local support service offering rapid assessments for people experiencing mental health issues who don't feel able to stay safe. **0300 304 0078** (24/7)

**Sussex Mental Healthline:** Helpline staffed by trained mental health workers for anyone in Sussex with a concern related to mental health. Open 5pm – 9 am Monday to Friday and 24 hours at weekends and bank holidays. **0300 5000 101**

**The Samaritans:** A national helpline providing confidential listening support. **116 123** (free phone)

**Emergency services – 999:** If you or someone else is at risk of immediate harm, contact the emergency services on **999**

References are available on request. Please contact us on 0300 304 0061 for more information.

