

# Low mood and Depression

Let's talk about mental health  
**Lamp**



## Low mood:

### What is low mood?

-Low mood causes us to feel sad, anxious or worried and is an appropriate reaction to things that we experience in life.

-Many children and young people will encounter low mood at some point in their childhood.

-Low mood tends to lift within a short period of time and changes to their situation or lifestyle will help to improve things.

-Where low mood persists for longer than a few months a diagnosis of depression may be made.

## Depression:

### What is depression?

-Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed-up for a few days. The symptoms of depression range from mild to severe.

-At its mildest, sufferers may feel persistently low in spirit, while severe depression can make them feel suicidal and that life is no longer worth living.

-Symptoms can be bad enough to interfere with a person's social life. It is important to recognise that depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms.

## Causes of low mood and depression:



There are indicators that may make a young person more likely to experience low mood or depression. These can include:

- Abuse
- Bereavement and loss
- Unstable family life
- Parental separation
- Drug and alcohol use
- Bullying

Pressures of study, exams and friendship breakdowns can also be a factor, but it may not always be clear why it has developed

Research has shown that there is a genetic link to depression so young people may be more at risk of low mood or depression if there are other family members who suffer from it. Environmental factors can also increase the risk.

## Signs and symptoms:

### Symptoms of low mood:

- Sadness
- Feeling anxious or panicky
- Low self esteem
- Frustration and anger



### Symptoms of depression:

- Persistent low mood
- Sadness
- Getting no enjoyment from life
- Withdrawing from social activities
- Feeling tired or lacking energy
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- Feeling tired or lacking energy
- Change to appetite; for example, eating less or over-eating
- Disrupted sleep patterns
- Self harm
- Suicidal thoughts

### Types of depression:

Postnatal depression – this occurs after becoming a parent and can affect both women and men.

Prenatal depression – this occurs during pregnancy.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – this usually occurs during the winter months

# Supporting children and young people with low mood and depression:



As someone working or volunteering with children and young people you should:

- Look for warning signs by paying attention to the children and young people around you
- Encourage them to talk and be open about how they are feeling
  - listen non-judgementally
- Offer reassurance and guidance and direct to self-help resources
  - Seek additional support if necessary.

There are a number of ways that children and young people can be supported to improve their mood. Suggested strategies that can help to improve mood are:



- Eating a healthy diet
- Getting regular exercise
- Reducing alcohol intake
- Getting enough sleep



## Ways to access support:

Some children and young people may benefit from talking to someone like a counsellor, school nurse or mentor.

Additional support can be accessed through a GP, and if necessary, they can refer the child or young person to their local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) or specialist support. Medication may be prescribed for depression.

However, NICE Guidelines state that anti-depressants should only be prescribed following an assessment by a Child Psychiatrist and young people should be closely monitored (NICE, 2017).

If a child or young person is expressing suicidal thoughts or self-harming behaviours that are getting progressively worse, then support should be accessed as an emergency via their GP or Accident and Emergency.

# Scenario:

Eva has become more withdrawn and is spending less time with her friends. She is not interested in her school work or going to swimming club. When asked if she was okay by her teacher, Eva said that she was not sleeping well, and her appetite had decreased. She stated that she was spending a lot of time at home on her own as she couldn't be bothered to go out. With Eva's consent, this was discussed with mum and Eva agreed to speak to a counsellor.

When Eva was seen by the counsellor she was unable to say what was bothering her at first. But after talking and listening to her, the counsellor understood her parents had separated three years ago and her grandmother had passed away a few weeks previously.

Eva spent time with the counsellor talking about how she was feeling and identifying ways to improve her mood.

Eva agreed to go back to swimming club and to see her friends outside of school at least once a week. Eva started to

keep a diary about how she was feeling to help her get the negative feelings out of her head. After making these small changes Eva started to feel better in herself and her sleep and appetite improved. Eva stated that she felt that she was starting to feel like herself again.

## Helplines:

Childline:

0800 1111

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably):

0800 58 58 58

YoungMinds parents' helpline:

0808 802 5544

YoungMinds help for Young people:

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

[www.thecalmzone.net](http://www.thecalmzone.net)

Health for teens:

[www.healthforteens.co.uk](http://www.healthforteens.co.uk)



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