**Helping Young People Manage Low Mood and Depression**

Feeling low is normal during this unusual time – if this feeling persists for weeks then this could be a symptom of depression.

**Top Tips**

* Accept the way thing’s are – embrace the thoughts and feelings because of this – they’re ok.
* Keep routine or make a new one – your brain tunes into your routine e.g. releases Melatonin at bed time.
* Plan how you intend to structure your day – this can be helpful and you can do it the night before. Include what you need to do and what you would like to do.
* Keep connected with others – virtual or socially distant … this adds normality and being social is good for us.
* Limit social media – remember that social media news is often not based on facts! It is quite negative and a constant remind of the situation. Resist the urge to constantly check social media … it can have a really negative impact on your mood. If you do notice your mood dipping … step away from devices and do something else that interests you.
* Sleeping habits are likely to have changed or become more challenging – go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day … if not it plays havoc with your biological clock and will eventually make getting good sleep more difficult. Try not to worry about sleeping well … accept that it’s not going to be as good at the moment. Also make sure your bedroom is associated with sleep and not being awake and active. If this is not possible then set up a comfy area e.g. beanbag to help you avoid doing all your activities in your bed.
* Eating well and exercising – a good mixed diet and regular exercise are important. We often crave sugary foods to give us a boost when we feel low but this usually results in energy crashes and affect our mood negatively. Exercising safely indoors or outdoors. There is lot’s you can do indoors. Cardio, relaxation or strength based … all of these improve your mood.
* Make time for fun! – with family and virtually. Try new things and get that sense of achievement. Play games, bake, have cinema nights etc. Be silly and laugh!
* Be a role model – young people learn from the people around them … so do and say things in the way you would like them too. Accept difficult feelings and allow them … show that it is ok to have these. Make sure you express them appropriately though. Be open about your feelings and label your emotions … in front of young people – normalising it. Model all the helpful and positive habits mentioned above … also calm behaviour and problem solving. Look after yourself … self-care is key to well-being … it is good to model the importance of self care to children as they need it too.
* Self care and supporting others – self care is key to having the ability to be able to care for others. Don’t feel guilty for putting your own needs first … if you don’t look after yourself you will struggle to support others. Caring for your own needs makes you feel stronger and able to be there for others. Looking after yourself has a positive impact on your child.
* Focus on thing’s we are grateful for – this has an instant positive impact on our own mood. Try to note 3 or 4 things’ you are grateful for every day! … No matter how small these are or how hard it can be on some days – it makes you feel better.

*Just do your best with the situation you are in – it is all you can do! Accept that, embrace it and give yourself a break ☺*

Communication and getting along at home…

* Living with the high’s and lows of other people’s moods can make communication tough.
* When we are low we sometimes miss-interpret what others are saying – assuming a more negative meaning.
* Low mood has a sneaky way of twisting things in our mind and blowing it out or proportion.

Solving problems…

* The way we perceive problems impacts significantly on how we approach them… and this in-turn affects our well-being.
* Having a fresh pair of eyes on a problem can help with putting it into perspective.
* It can be good to try help each other to move past low emotions – solve problems together.
* You may not always be able to tackle the problem but working on solutions together will enhance family connections.

Realise what is really important to you…

* Lockdown is giving us the time to realise what is important to us … what or who we miss etc.

Resilience…

* This is a person’s ability to cope with challenging or difficult situations … it can also be the ability to notice when we are not ok … and being able to tell the difference between what we can and what we can’t control.
* Allow yourself to feel the emotions and seek the right support.
* Get through the situation and then reflect on how you coped and what helped.
* You will also learn new coping strategies for the future.
* Be kind to yourself … this helps you cope.

*“If you change the way you think … you’ll change the way you feel!”*

(this is not easy to do but keep trying and it will have a positive impact)

**Useful Resources…**

**Support for Family**

[NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/support-for-parents/coronavirus-parents-working-from-home/) has tips and advice to help you find balance and create structure if you’re new to working from home with your family.

[FamilyLives](https://www.familylives.org.uk/advice/your-family/family-life/coping-practically-and-emotionally-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/) provide emotional and practical advice on coping during COVID-19.

[Relate](https://www.relate.org.uk/relationship-help/covid-19-advice-and-information) has relationship advice and tips.

**Parenting Tips**

Family Lives provides [online parenting courses](https://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/online-parenting-courses/parents-together/) and [helpful short videos](https://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/parentchannel-tv/).

[MindEd for Families](https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people/) also have short online courses for parents and professionals.

[Safer Internet](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers) and [Thinkuknow](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/) have information about staying safe online (this latter website has resources for children and young people too).

**Supporting young people**

[YoungMinds](https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/supporting-your-child-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/) has plenty of resources for parents and carers.

Anna Freud [have videos](https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus/) for parents/carers, as well as young people and teachers as well as [information around self-care](https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/) (for parents and young people).

[Childline](https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/worries-about-the-world/coronavirus/) has general advice around coping for parents and young people, as well as [tips and activities](https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/calm-zone/) for feeling calm (for young people and adults).

[Partnership for Children](https://www.partnershipforchildren.org.uk/2020/03/Covid-19-Mental-Health-Support-Resources.html) have online resources for parents, carers and teachers around supporting mental health.

[Mentally Healthy Schools](https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/getting-started/coronavirus-and-mental-health/) may be a useful resource for school staff.

**Ideas for child-friendly activities during lockdown**

[Home-start](https://www.home-start.org.uk/activities-for-families) has activities for families.

[Chatterpack](https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home?fbclid=IwAR1pAJjBLvmeRa_JUpSY6ubXSSb0pmkRzYeZtFLcUbKHEjydIIxSAeMPpgM) has lots of resources which can be done at home.

[Guidance from the UK government](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education) with online education resources for home learning.