

What can I do if I FEEL WORRIED OR LOW?



Sometimes people can feel worried or low when they, or someone they are close to, have a physical health condition. Having a health condition can have an impact in lots of different ways, for example not feeling well enough to do the things you enjoy doing, like playing with friends. However, there are many things that you and those around you can do to help.



When you feel worried or low, you may stop doing some things you enjoy, such as taking part in school and it can help you feel better to start doing the things you like.

This toolkit will give you information about some of the symptoms of feeling worried and low. The toolkit will also show you some techniques that you can use to help you improve your mood and help change how you feel.

Why might you feel worried?

Feeling worried is a basic emotion and one that makes us human. Worry can be helpful; worrying about doing badly in a test can help you to study more. If you were too relaxed all the time, then it would be hard to get things done! However, worry can also be unhelpful, you can even start to feel worried about feeling worried.

If you feel worried, you might get butterflies in your tummy, your heart might start to beat faster and your palms might become a bit sweaty.

Why might you feel low?

Everyone can feel sad at times. Sometimes you might feel really sad or sometimes just a bit sad. The feeling of sadness can stay for a while or sometimes it's just for a moment. Feeling low and sad is a normal human emotion and is often just a reaction to a situation.

If you feel, low you might experience negative thoughts about yourself, you might have trouble sleeping or maybe you might not get so much enjoyment out of things you used to like doing.



If you're feeling worried, there are at least three things you can do:

1

Figure it out – sometimes you know immediately what you are worrying about and what's making you feel low. Other times it might be harder to put your finger on what it is. Maybe try talking through what is worrying you with someone you trust, be it mum or dad, a teacher at school or a close friend.



2

Think of ways to make it better – learning how to stop worry thoughts can help. When a negative thought pops into your mind, try to imagine what you might say to a sibling or friend who had this thought. Relax. Do activities that help you relax, that could be reading your favourite book, jumping around outside or doing something crafty. This will help calm your body and mind and hopefully help ease your worries and feelings of butterflies. Sometimes just taking really big, deep breaths can help reduce our worries.

3

Ask for help – feeling worried might make you feel lonely. Telling someone what is worrying you can often help to make you feel better, since the worry is shared and you are no longer alone. Often the person you have spoken to will try and think of ways to help you.



If you have been feeling low for a few weeks or more and it's been getting in the way of what you want to do, then it may be helpful to try some of the strategies below:

- 1 Keep a diary or log of times when you're feeling sad and happy. This can help you figure out what makes you feel sad or happy. Keep the ideas to hand and then when you notice you are feeling low, you can use them to try and improve your mood.
- 2 Often if you feel low, you might also feel tired and have less energy to do fun activities. This can often lead to feeling even lower. Try to break this cycle by doing something active – this could be going for a short walk, getting outside for some fresh air or listening to a favourite song.
- 3 Make a list of enjoyable and soothing activities that you can use when you feel low. Keep the list somewhere you can find it, so that when you feel low you have some ideas to hand. This can help you to act sooner, when you first notice that you are feeling low, which may help you improve your mood more.
- 4 If you feel low, sometimes negative thoughts can enter our minds, such as 'I'm not fun to be with'. Write down the negative thought when it comes into your mind and ask yourself a few questions about the thought:
 - "Is this thought a fact?"
 - "Is it true in all situations, all of the time?"
 - "Am I 'mind reading' others based on how I feel?"
 - "What would I say to mum or dad or a close friend if they were in the same position as me?"

Often negative thoughts aren't that accurate or helpful. Quizzing your negative thoughts is a great way to help manage unpleasant negative thoughts and to help improve your mood.

- 5 Speak to someone you feel comfortable with; this may be family or friends or someone at school. Talking through your difficulties can help you feel relief and improve your mood. The person might even be able to help you quiz your negative thoughts using the above questions.

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

Please talk to the play specialist, clinical nurse specialist and clinical psychologist if you are worried about your mood and would like some extra support. The nurse looking after you will be happy to contact them for you.

<http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/for-children-and-young-people/feeling-sad.aspx>

<http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/for-children-and-young-people/feeling-worried,-frightened,-stressed-or-worried.aspx>

<http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/for-children-and-young-people/relaxation-for-children.aspx>

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/parentsandyouthinfo/youngpeople/worriesandanxieties.aspx>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/anxiety/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/>



These toolkits have been written by NHS clinical psychologists and neuropsychologists working for University Hospitals Bristol. They have been co-designed with service users and healthcare staff. These toolkits are only intended to provide general advice and information. Please discuss your individual needs with your doctor or specialist nurse. If you would like more information about psychology services please go to:

<http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/support-for-patients/psychological-health-services/>

We would like to thank patients and other healthcare staff for their contributions to this toolkit.

For access to other patient toolkits please go to the following address:

<http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/support-for-patients/psychological-health-services/resources/>

For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please email patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk

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