

Supporting a Young Person with Low Mood and Depression

It is normal for us all to have ups and downs in our mood and for us to sometimes feel low. When a young person's mood is persistently low most of the time and is stopping them from doing things they want and need to do they might be diagnosed with a mental illness known as depression.

Statistics:

Depression is thought to occur in around 1-3% of children and young people. Anyone can suffer from depression but it tends to be more common in older adolescents and in girls (www.rypsych.ac.uk).

10 TOP TIPS for supporting a young person with low mood and depression:

- 1 It is OK not to be OK.** Reassure the young person it is OK to feel down sometimes. Sometimes this might be due to a life event or situation which you can support with.
- 2 Encourage talking.** Try not to pressure the young person, but let them know talking can help and that you are there for them. Encourage them to talk to their family too.
- 3 Listen.** You don't need to know the answers, sometimes listening is enough. By summarising, clarifying and asking questions you can explore what might help together.
- 4 Focus on one step at a time.** The young person may lack motivation, help to plan their time and come up with small, achievable, timed goals. Try to be understanding and praise effort.
- 5 Consider general wellbeing.** Sleeping well, a healthy diet, exercising and spending time with others benefits our mental health. Explore if the young person can improve on these.
- 6 Encourage being active.** The young person might not feel like they enjoy the things they used to. Support them to be active. Help them to identify and build on their strengths.
- 7 Find ways to relax.** Support the young person to relax. Help them build a toolbox of relaxing activities they enjoy such as reading, listening to music or colouring.
- 8 Challenge automatic thoughts.** Help them consider negative and self-critical thoughts in more helpful perspectives. It might help to ask what they would say to a friend.
- 9 Practise positive thinking.** Encourage the young person to identify things that have went well and things they are grateful for. This will help to reduce negative thinking.
- 10 Look after yourself.** Supporting others is hard work, try to look after yourself too. Support the young person to also talk to their family, GP and/or school. If you are concerned seek additional help.

Self-help links:

- www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/152-RU%20Sad-June2018-English.pdf
- www.youngminds.org.uk/media/1514/young-minds-depression.pdf
- www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/depression-in-young-people---helping-children-to-cope-for-parents-and-carers
- www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/Depression.asp
- www.moodcafe.co.uk/
- www.handsonscotland.co.uk/depression-and-low-mood/

