

# Managing Low Mood and Depression







**Many students experience symptoms of low mood and depression whilst at University. For some it could be for a short period of time, for others it could be a recurring pattern and for others it could be a long-term diagnosis.**

**Depression and low mood can be triggered by a variety of things such as certain situations, feelings, emotions or events. It can also be unclear what has caused it, and we can sometimes start to believe that there is no valid reason to feel the way we do.**

**It is completely normal to experience periods of low mood, especially as a busy student, however, if the feeling persists or begins to interfere with your ability to do the things you want to do, it is advised to visit your GP to discuss how you are feeling.**

**Over the next few pages you will find some useful tips, suggestions and resources on managing low mood.**

# Causes and Symptoms of Low Mood

*It is important to note that these are just some examples, and the causes and symptoms of low mood or depression are different for different people. People can experience one or many of following causes and symptoms:*

<b>Possible Causes</b>	<b>Common Symptoms</b>
High and persistent stress	Low self-worth
Bereavement	Low motivation
Family/relationship issues	Loss or gain of appetite
Trauma	Lethargy and tiredness
Loneliness	Problems sleeping
Lack of support	Loss of interest
Change of circumstances	Increased anxiety
Persistent low self-esteem	Restlessness
Loss of role	Negative thinking
Unexpected change	Distressing thoughts
Genetics and personality traits	Lack of focus
Major events	Difficulty making decisions
Illness	Feelings of hopelessness
Certain medications	Increased tearfulness
Financial issues	A want to isolate self
Hormonal changes	Unwanted urges
Alcohol and drugs	Physical pain

# Coping Strategies

## **Routine**

When feeling low, everyday tasks can feel like insurmountable jobs, therefore motivation to do them decreases and we slowly slip out of our routine. This can make us feel worse. Having a routine gives you structure and purpose and is something to aim to have even when going through a period of low mood. Each evening, plan for the following day so when you wake up, all you need to do is follow your plan. An example of a daily/weekly planner you could use is found later in this guide.

## **Get up, get washed and get dressed**

Make this your first task and the thing you encourage yourself to do every morning – you will then be ready for whatever the day brings, even the unexpected.

## **Self-care**

Looking after ourselves can easily go out of the window when feeling low in mood. It can feel like it is not important but this is actually not the case. Getting enough sleep, eating properly and regularly, exercising, spending time with others and relaxing – these are just some of the fundamentals that keep us feeling well. Poor self-care can lead to further feelings of lethargy, lack of motivation, poor concentration and poor memory.

## **Positive self-talk**

When low in mood, we can often start to put ourselves down and only focus on the negatives that could come from a situation rather than the positives. This in turn makes us feel worse, and our motivation to do anything decreases further. Try turning any negative or derogatory thoughts you may have about yourself into positive ones. It takes practice and can be hard work but aim to be your own cheerleader!



### **Keep a diary or journal**

Keeping a mood diary can be helpful when you are not sure why you feel a certain way or what causes it. Jot down in the diary every time you notice a change in mood (happy or sad), what was happening at the time, what time of the day it is, who was around you and how intense the feeling was. You may find you begin to notice a pattern to your feelings and also get an idea of what could possibly be improving your mood, therefore finding something you can aim to do more frequently.

### **Distraction techniques**

Distraction is a short term technique, that won't make the problem or issue go away. However, when feeling particularly low or distressed (such as when you are experiencing unwanted thoughts), distraction can help as a temporary escape – it moves your attention to something else whilst giving your body time to alleviate some of the horrible physical reactions associated with feeling low in mood. Try watching TV , listening to music, playing a game, speaking to someone or even looking out of the window and trying to find an object that begins with every letter of the alphabet – anything that focuses your attention, if only for a short while.

### **Open up**

It can be difficult to open up to others when feeling low in mood. This could possibly be because we don't want to be a 'burden' on others, don't feel anyone can help, or don't want to show others how we really feel. Opening up can be extremely helpful as it allows you to get things off your chest and rationalise them in the process. It can help ease isolation and you are far more likely to be offered compassion rather than the rejection you may be fearing.

Whether it is a friend, family member, health professional or academic, try speaking to someone. If you don't know who to speak to, try coming to a drop-in session at the Student Wellbeing Centre, or consider your GP.



### **Seek support**

If you are struggling or feeling quite distressed and feel there is no one you can go to, there are a range of services available for you to access which may help:

Samaritans – 24/7 service run by volunteers. Whatever you are going through, you can call them for free on 116 123.

Kooth – Online counselling and anonymous online support for young people aged 25 or under. Check website for opening times at: <https://kooth.com/>.

HOPEline - Confidential support and advice service for young people under the age of 35 who may be having thoughts of suicide or anyone concerned a young person may be having thoughts of suicide. Call: 0800 068 41 41, Text: 07786209697, Email: [pat@papyrus-uk.org](mailto:pat@papyrus-uk.org). Check website for opening times.

Online self-help material – there are various websites that are packed full of useful self-help information for depression and low mood. Have a look online at [getselfhelp.co.uk](http://getselfhelp.co.uk), Moodjuice and Moodgym.

Single Point of Access - Single Point of Access (SPA) service provides a first point of contact for people wishing to access mental health services in Lincolnshire. Staffed by fully qualified and skilled healthcare professionals 24/7. Contactable on 0303 123 4000.

If you feel you can no longer keep yourself safe, you need to call 999 for support or attend A&E.

### **Don't do nothing**

It can be extremely difficult to seek support or actively try to change your routine when feeling depressed, however, doing nothing allows the feelings to intensify and get worse.



# My Weekly Planner

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<i>Morning</i>							
<i>Afternoon</i>							
<i>Evening</i>							



# Useful Resources



In collaboration with WHO to mark World Mental Health Day, writer and illustrator Matthew Johnstone tells the story of overcoming the "black dog of depression". Click the video to watch.



In this talk, Jake shares his insights into living with depression and how connecting to and opening up to a wide online community has affected his relationship with depression.

STUDENTS AGAINST DEPRESSION  
.ORG

Click [HERE](#) to for information on understanding depression and the changes you can make. This website is specifically aimed at University students



Click [HERE](#) to read Helen's blog about the challenges of getting a university degree while struggling with depression

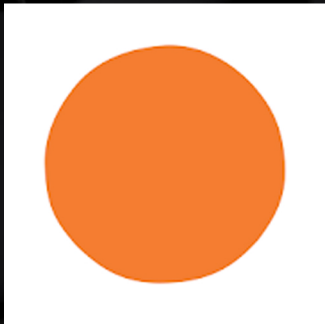


Click [HERE](#) for information and guidance on Student Mental Health, available on the NHS Choices website.



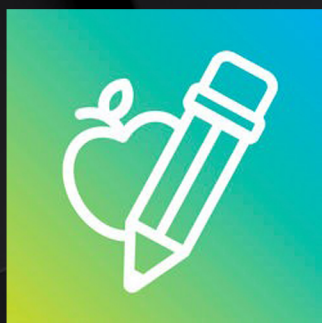
Click [HERE](#) to be taken to Blurt's website. Blurt is dedicated to the understanding and awareness of depression, and the website is packed full of useful self-help information and resources.

# Useful Apps



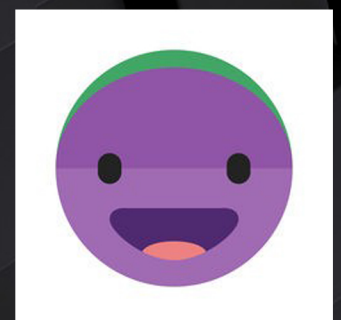
**Headspace (free) - Headspace is a comprehensive meditation app, with guided and unguided meditations to help you through all phases of your life. The free app offers ten sessions, however there is an optional in-app subscription which allows you to access many more hours of extra content. Available on iOS and Android.**

**7 Cups: Anxiety & Stress Chat (free) – This app allows you to talk to trained active listeners who can offer you 24/7 emotional support when feeling sad, lonely or stressed. As well as this, the app offers new coping skills for you to learn. Optional in-app purchases available. Available on iOS and Android.**



**Student Health App (free) – Previously named ESC Student, this app is specifically tailored for young adults and provides information on both physical and mental health, offering self-help guidance and advice on when professional support is needed. Available on iOS.**

**Daylio (free) – This app allows you to record your mood along with what activities you have been doing. With an added notes section you can also record time of day and who you were with at the time. It can assist you to keep track of your mood and notice anything you may be doing to that is helping or making things a bit more difficult. Available on iOS and Android.**





# **Drop-in:**

**Monday-Friday between 12-2pm  
Thursday (term-time) between 5-7pm**

**Tel: 01522 886400**

**Email: [studentwellbeing@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:studentwellbeing@lincoln.ac.uk)**