



Top tips for managing low mood

#WellbeingStMarys

Techniques



Do the opposite:

When you feel low, even getting up, washed and dressed can sometimes feel overwhelming. Try to push against this impulse, just a little at a time. You could be surprised at the results!

Meditate:

Studies show that 5 to 10 minutes of mindfulness a day can have a long-term impact on reducing low mood. Look for videos on YouTube or maybe give the [Headspace](#) app a try.

Gratitude list/jar:

Try keeping a list of things you are grateful for – it can even be something as simple as the smell of coffee – and create a personal library of memories and reminders to help lift your mood.

Switch off social media:

Social media can be both a blessing and a curse: it's a wonderful way to connect with people, but can have a detrimental effect when comparing others' carefully curated lives to your own.

Remember that social media only shows you what others want you to see.

Exercise & nutrition



Keep on moving:

Endorphins are nature's antidepressant, and exercise is one of the best ways to get them flowing. Exercise can also aid sleep, raise your energy levels and keep your heart healthy.

Choose an exercise that you enjoy. If it's difficult to motivate yourself, ask a friend or family member to be your exercise buddy, or listen to music, an audiobook or a podcast while you're exercising.

Mood-boosting foods:

Did you know that kiwis, bananas, sour cherries, pineapple, tomatoes and plums are all naturally high in the feel-good chemical serotonin? Foods such as turkey, fish, chicken, cottage cheese, nuts, eggs and beans are also high in the amino-acid tryptophan, which converts to serotonin.

Studies also show that Omega 3 – found in nuts, seeds, plant oils and oily fish – supports the reduction of low mood, among other health benefits.

What a great excuse to treat yourself to a mood-boosting meal.

Self-care



Check your health: Low mood can be a symptom of a physical health issue; eg, hypothyroidism, polycystic ovary syndrome, chronic pain and low levels of Vitamin D and Zinc. If you are concerned, speak to your GP.

Natural light: Sunlight is a natural mood lifter! Create as much natural light as possible by throwing open the curtains and get the day off to a fantastic start!

Rest up: Resting is essential to maintaining good mood. Central to this is a good night-time routine, including sleep hygiene methods such as turning off screens an hour before bed and winding down with calming activities or a relaxation technique.

Animals: Spending time with animals can help to calm the nervous system and divert focus onto something else. Animals give great hugs too! If you haven't got a pet of your own, ask a friend if you can borrow theirs.

Nature: Being in nature, or even viewing scenes of nature, has been shown to reduce anger, fear and stress, while increasing pleasant feelings. Exposure to nature also has physical benefits, helping to reduce blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension and stress hormones. Even a houseplant can significantly reduce stress and anxiety.

Stress: Find ways to reduce your stress levels. Think about what makes you feel overwhelmed and, to paraphrase Eckhart Tolle, if something isn't working, ask yourself whether you can either 'leave it, change it, or accept it'.

Enjoyment: Find something that you enjoy doing and make time to schedule it into your day. It can be something as simple as completing a jigsaw, talking with a friend or repotting a plant.

Self-esteem: Self-esteem can take a battering when we feel low. So it's important to try out different ways to increase your esteem, like spending time with those who make you feel good about yourself.

Self-expression



Talk: Talking is key to reducing low mood. Speaking to trusted family and friends or colleagues can help when we're struggling. If this isn't an option, there are lots of helplines available, with specially trained people on the other end of the phone who you can talk to (see below). If you would like try counselling, we have a team of counsellors at St Mary's who offer short-term counselling (4 sessions per academic year). Take a look at the [Wellbeing pages](#) on the University's website to find out more and fill in the [online self-referral form](#).

Journal / writing: Writing is a really great way of getting your thoughts and feelings out of your head. And you don't need to self-regulate, as no one has to read what you have written.

Sing: Singing is known to have a proven beneficial effect to mental health. Pop on your favourite tunes, or you could even join an online choir, and sing your heart out!

GP: If you notice that your low mood is getting worse, and that it is starting to affect your functioning and daily life, contact your local doctor's surgery to speak to your GP.

Most of all, be kind to yourself!

Helplines/websites:

giveusashout.org – text 'shout' (free) to 85258 for help with anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, relationship problems, bullying or if you're feeling overwhelmed

papyrus-uk.org – confidential support for under-35s at risk of suicide, and for anyone who is concerned

togetherall.com – 24/7 online community for those who are stressed, anxious or feeling low; includes self-guided courses and resources

samaritans.org – call 116 123 (free) or email jo@samaritans.org to talk to trained responders who are available 24/7

hubofhope.co.uk – database of mental health charities and organisations across Britain that offer mental health advice and support