

COPING STRATEGIES

TALK TO US

OFF THE RECORD

IMPROVING YOUR LOW MOOD

Sometimes when you're feeling low it can be difficult to think that anything can be done to help. There are a number of coping strategies that can be used to lift your mood and reduce any tension and stress.

- **Keeping active**

When you're feeling low or depressed, it is easy to 'shut down' and 'shut off' from the people and things that lift you. Whether its playing sport, having a nice bath, making a regular phone call to a good friend, going out for a walk or simply getting out of bed, opening the curtains and getting dressed. Many people find that keeping themselves busy with something manageable, achievable and having a routine can help.

- **Face what's avoided**

For some people their low mood and anxiety can be connected to something they are finding difficult to face. Avoiding only prolongs difficulties and usually makes the situation worse.

Every time I am happy something bad happens

INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

Everyone has intrusive unwanted thoughts. What differs is how we react to them. Unwanted intrusive thoughts can become overwhelming when we take them to mean something and feel the need to do something with them. Practice telling yourself "thoughts are just thoughts." Try not to worry about acting on your thoughts. Accepting that unwanted, intrusive thoughts are part of everyone's experience, can reduce their effect. Evidence suggests that the more we try and suppress or forget a thought, the more it will return.

FEELING ANXIOUS AND WORRIED

When we feel particularly anxious, worried or tense our body can show symptoms of our mental distress. For example, upsetting thoughts can trigger physical sensations of panic. Once you've ruled out any underlying medical conditions with your GP, it can be helpful to observe and reflect on any thoughts and images that comes into the mind before a physical sensation that you associate with low mood or anxiety. Relaxing by listening to music, eating good food, exercising, reading, meditation / mindfulness or even muscle relaxation can help to relieve symptoms of stress and worry.

TALKING BACK TO NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

If we think we are depressed then we can start to feel depressed. Having negative thoughts can create the feeling of moving in a downward spiral. If you are getting negative thoughts, challenge yourself to see the whole picture. Ask yourself: "what evidence is there really for these thoughts?" "Are they reasonable?" Talking back to the thoughts with a more positive alternative view can feel uplifting. If your thoughts are reasonable, consider what small, achievable and justified actions you can do to take care of yourself. Log negative experiences. Explore their triggers, the underlying feelings, and think about alternative ways of responding, as these can all help to make situations feel more manageable. A journal or memoir and diary App can generate more balanced thinking, feeling and behaving.

Having a thought does not make it true