

Depression and Low Mood - Easy read information for people in prison

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About this guide



A member of staff or a carer can support you to read this guide. They will be able to answer any questions that you have.

About this guide

- This guide is about depression and feeling low.
- It will tell you the signs of depression.
- It will tell you some things to help.

What is depression?



Sometimes we all feel sad.

Depression is more than feeling sad.

Lots of people have depression, not just people who are in prison.

What is low mood?



When we are stressed, our body sometimes changes the way we think, act and how we deal with things.

Some things we feel can be a sign that we are depressed or feeling very low.

Look at the list below and see if you are having any of these feelings:

- Feeling sad, upset or guilty
 - Feeling nothing or empty
 - Not enjoying things
 - Crying a lot
 - Feeling alone even if you are with people
-
- Getting angry easily
 - Being tired or restless or not being able to sleep
 - Changes in how and what you eat
 - Feeling like you hate yourself
 - Feeling like there is no point to anything





- Having upsetting thoughts
- Taking things out on others
- Not being bothered about anything
- Not being able to make a choice

If you have lots of these feelings, you might be feeling depressed or have a low mood.

How can I understand these feelings?

When you are feeling depressed you might have sad or upsetting thoughts about yourself.

You might have bad thoughts about what is happening around you or what will happen in the future.



Everyone has sad thoughts.

When you are not depressed, it is easier to deal with sad thoughts.

When you are depressed, sad thoughts can pop into your head out of nowhere and can upset you for no reason.

The more of these thoughts you have, the worse you feel.



Depression changes how you think



When you are depressed, the way you think changes... the way you think makes you feel worse.

You may think:

- things are much worse than they really are and that everything will have a bad ending.
- about one bad thing that has happened to you and that this will happen again and again.
- about the one little bad thing that happened when everything else went well.
- that everything is your fault and that people 'have got it in for you'.
- that people are thinking bad things about you.



It can help if you write down or draw the times you have thought like this and what happened to make you think this way.



How can I help myself?



Now that you know that the way you think can make you feel worse, you can start to look at what you can do to feel better.

Here are some things which help people.

Making a daily plan

You could make a **plan** about what you will do each day.

If you are depressed it can be hard to think about what you want to do.

If you are in prison, it can seem hard to plan how you will spend your day.



Some prisoners have tried making a list of things to do, like:

- Reading
- Exercising in your cell or a gym if there is one
- Learning yoga
- Going to classes



It can be helpful to tick things off your list as you do them. You don't have to do everything every day, start off slowly and build up to things.

You could draw out a diary to help you with this.

When you have filled in your diary or ticked off the things on your list, you could mark next to the things which you enjoyed doing and which things helped you feel like you had done something really well.



You should try to put some time to one side each day to do something you like, such as listening to music or watching a TV programme if you can.



Thinking about feelings and thoughts



When something happens how we feel about it is really important.

Sometimes the thoughts we have about something can make us really depressed.



If we can change how we think about something this can help us to start to get better.

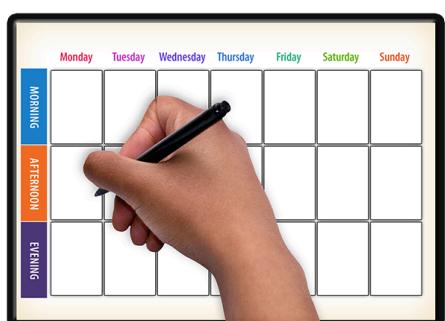


Try to balance thoughts out

If you have a bad thought, balance it out with a good thought. For example, if you think people are ignoring you, balance it out with, remembering that your friend said they missed you when they visited last time.



You could also do this by writing things down or drawing pictures to help you remember.



Try to remember good things

When you are depressed, you might forget good things. It can help to write or draw in a diary to remember things that have gone well or made you feel good.

Take small steps to sort things out



Sometimes things just get on top of us and everything can become too much. You need to take things one step at a time.



You could write or draw a list of things that you need to do to finish a task, then do one thing at a time.



Ask a friend or someone you trust to help with a problem – what would they do?

Think about what things you have done in the past that might help.

Try to stop thinking about yourself in a bad way

You could try to think about what you would say to a friend if they felt the same way that you do.



Get help when things are tough

Most people go through bad times in their life because of things that happen to them, like losing a loved one, going to prison or being very ill.

Most people get through the bad times, but it is important to **get help** if you need it.



You can talk to your case officer or ask at the Healthcare Centre if you can talk to a counsellor.



Some people who can help you



MIND

Telephone: [0300 123 3393](tel:03001233393)

MIND helps people who have depression and other mental health problems.



PACT – Prison Advice and Care Trust

Telephone: [0808 808 2003](tel:08088082003)

PACT helps prisoners and their families.



Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Groups (POPS)

Telephone: [0161 702 1000](tel:01617021000)

POPS helps families of prisoners.



Prisoners Advice Service
Telephone: [0207 253 3323](tel:02072533323)
PAS helps prisoners with their problems.



Samaritans

Telephone: [116 123](tel:116123)

The Samaritans are a telephone helpline for people who are very unhappy or are thinking about hurting themselves. You can phone them to talk to someone. They won't tell anybody what you say to them.

Acknowledgement



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