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Apps for Mood-Tracking: A Professional Reviews the Products

MOOD DISORDERS

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About this Professional
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Comparison of mood-tracking apps: Mood Tracking Journal and Diary, Moodlytics, eMoods Bipolar Tracker, and Mood Tracker

Intended Purpose

Keeping a mood diary can be a valuable component of treatment for psychological disorders including bipolar disorder, major depression, and anxiety. Mood tracking apps provide a systematic and portable means of rating mood symptoms over time, and allow the user to better understand how emotional states vary with thoughts, behaviors, and experiences.

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The programs reviewed here are not intended to replace professional mental health treatment, nor do they include tools for symptom management. Data can be easily shared with a mental health care professional so as to enhance the psychotherapy experience.

Symptom Ratings

Mood Tracking Journal and Diary is the simplest and most flexible of the mood tracking apps reviewed here. Mood states are entered freely, without a menu of mood options to choose from, and are rated on a scale from 1 (best) to 5 (worst). Each entry includes additional space for comments.

A positive attribute is that mood entries can be logged as frequently as desired. Mood entries are depicted along a timeline with the most recently rated moods listed, those more frequently reported in larger font than those less frequent. This format allows for continuous self-analysis of mood fluctuations over time. There is no reminder setting for this app and it is therefore incumbent upon the user to log moods consistently.

The free version of Mood Tracking Journal and Diary is public, allowing all other users of the app to view mood ratings. An anonymous username will protect privacy while still allowing individuals to give and receive feedback and support to other users, if desired. A solely private mood tracking experience is available with the upgraded version ($0.99).

While the flexibility of Mood Tracking Journal and Diary may be preferred by some, the open-ended nature can be a disadvantage to others, particularly individuals who experience difficulty labeling mood states, and those who desire more guidance in when and how to log moods.

Moodlytics is also flexible, but offers a more in-depth, guided mood tracking experience. Features of Moodlytics allow the user to gain insight into when and why different mood states occur, and provides the option to set and track specific mood related goals. A wide range of moods are depicted as colorful and expressive emoticons, which can be changed, added or deleted based on personal experience or preference. Additional prompts are provided to log the length of time a mood has lasted, the reason associated with a mood (e.g. family, work), a specific person or picture. There is an option to write free-form notes to elaborate further.

Moods can be rated as frequently as desired so that changes in mood state can be recorded as often as needed. Alternatively, the user can schedule reminders to rate moods on selected days of the week, between a start and end time, and with what frequency.

The main drawback of Moodlytics is that there is no option to rate the severity of a mood state, which may be a disadvantage to those seeking to understand how specific symptoms may fluctuate over time. Individuals who use Moodlytics as a therapeutic tool might benefit from the unique feature to log one or more personal goals, which can be tracked by the user. Goals can be mood related or otherwise (e.g. exercise daily). The upgraded ($1.99) version of Moodlytics features "MoodSensed Goals", which automatically monitors goal progress based on mood ratings made over a designated period of time. Mood goals are tracked with respect to frequency and duration of a mood state, but not severity.

eMoods Bipolar Mood Tracker is a more specialized app, specific to bipolar disorder. Each entry consists of ratings for depressed and elevated mood, irritability and anxiety, rated on a 4-point continuum (none, mild, moderate, severe). The presence/absence of psychotic symptoms is entered as well. Behavioral data include the number of hours of slept the night before, whether verbal therapy was received, and a checklist of medications as entered by the user.

Symptom ratings are made once daily; a reminder is provided at a programmed time. Although ratings can be edited over the course of the day, only the last entry will be saved. This may limit the utility for some individuals who may experience more frequent shifts in mood.

eMoods Bipolar Tracker is most helpful for tracking the core symptom features of bipolar disorder, and for capturing a general pattern of positive or negative mood states. Limitations are that each mood rating is one dimensional and is therefore not specific to the type of depressed or elevated mood symptoms experienced. Additionally, there is a minor degree of customization of this app. Whereas other apps allow the user to edit mood tracking features, eMoods Bipolar Tracker does not provide the option to add symptoms (e.g. appetite increase/decrease, impulsivity) or behaviors (e.g. substance use) that may be of interest and therapeutically relevant. A notes section does allow the user to log such experiences, although those symptoms will not be quantifiable if specific symptom tracking is of interest.

Mood Tracker on Medhelp.org is a web-based program providing a multitude of tracking options for mental and physical health. Users can create a personalized profile online, which can include personal and diagnostic information (e.g. bipolar, cyclothymic, dysthymic or major depressive disorders), as well as log status updates, journal entries, and posts to the Medhelp community. Specific trackers can be added to customize the user's experience of the website.

The Mood Tracker is recommended to create a detailed mood journal. While additional trackers, such as Addiction Recovery or Anxiety/Panic, may also be useful to support wellness and recovery, many users will find the Mood Tracker to be inclusive and sufficient. Within the Mood Tracker, there are 4 tools: measurement, symptoms, treatment, and events. The measurement tool captures a general mood state on a continuum ranging from manic, to okay, to depressed. The symptoms tool features an alphabetized menu of relevant mood specifiers, ranging from agitation and anger to violent impulses and worry, from which the user can select to better characterize mood states. The treatments tool includes a list of medications and therapies from which to choose, if relevant. Finally, the events tool includes several pertinent options such as substance/alcohol use, family, health, and relationship issues.

Entries can be made as frequently as desired and are plotted by day and time, providing a snapshot of the user's complete mood experience. While the Mood Tracker itself offers an organized and comprehensive means of logging detailed mood information, the structure and content of the overall website detracts from the user experience. The environment can be overwhelming, given the number of options and extraneous features, as well as advertisements. Navigation during setup and in logging daily experiences is not intuitive and can be confusing. Another drawback is that there is no mobile app for the Mood Tracker and users' profiles on the website can be viewed by all other account holders.

Tracking and Reporting Options

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Mood Tracking Journal and Diary provides a continuous plot along a timeline to instantly view patterns in moods. Users can invite a mental healthcare professional to view the profile, or can export a report to view on a computer.

Moodlytics provides several options to help the user understand the influence of people, surroundings, time and other factors that impact mood. In addition to providing a personal goal tracking option, Moodlytics can list or graphically depict the most frequently rated moods, associated experiences or people, and quantify time spent in positive, negative, or neutral mood states. Exporting a mood profile report to PDF is not available with the free version of Moodlytics, but is included with the Pro Pack, available for $1.99.

eMoods Bipolar Mood Tracker depicts daily mood ratings in list form and provides a color-coded graph of depressed, elevated and anxiety mood severity ratings. The graph also indicates on which day medications were taken. A summary file organizes mood ratings in 3 ways – table, graph, and list of daily notes. The full summary can be emailed and saved as a PDF. Alternatively a CSV file can be generated, which organizes daily data into a table, suitable for a database program (e.g. Excel). eMoods Bipolar Tracker does not include any analytical tools, although the data summaries may be helpful to visualize fluctuations in basic mood states over time.

Mood Tracker on Medhelp.org provides a comprehensive summary of mood entries. General moods are depicted in such a way that frequency of positive or negative mood states as well as day to day fluctuations in mood are easily viewed. Color coded symptoms, treatments, and events are also shown on the days in which they were selected. Most commonly reported symptoms and an assessment of average mood over 7, 30, and 90 days are also listed. The report can be printed or emailed so as to be shared with a mental health professional.

Price

App prices vary by select features. All basic functions are provided for free.

Mood Tracking Journal and Diary has a free public version where others using the app can view and comment on your mood entries. The upgrade, available for $0.99 provides the option to keep the diary private.

Moodlytics includes all essential mood entry, goal-setting and tracking features for free. The upgraded version, for $1.99, allows the user to set and track Moodsensed goals for an even more customized experience, as well as the ability to export a PDF report of mood experiences and goal achievements.

eMoods Bipolar Tracker includes all mood tracking and reporting options for free.

Mood Tracker through Medhelp.org is free.

Available Platforms

Mood Tracking Journal and Diary and **Moodlytics** are available for both Android and iOS mobile devices. The apps work equally well using either platform.

eMoods Bipolar Tracker is an Android based mood tracking app and is not available for iOS at this time.

Mood Tracker, offered by Medhelp.org, is accessible online only.

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Product details and where to get the products:
Mood Tracking Journal and Diary
Moodlytics
eMoods Bipolar Tracker
Mood Tracker

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