

Managing Moods

Moodiness

Remember, all people go through periods of 'moodiness' from time to time. This might mean you feel irritable, frustrated, gloomy or sad. You might not feel low **all** the time, but fluctuate between low and regular moods for no obvious reason. You may find yourself 'snapping' at someone you care about.

While moodiness or being moody may be unpleasant for you and those around you it should not cause you long-term troubles. If you start to notice that you are feeling very low, unmotivated, and lacking interest in the things you usually enjoy for long periods of time it may be possible that you have depression. If this is the case, seek help from your GP or the counselling centre.

Moody? Take a step back

Think about what is going on in your life at the moment? Are you looking after yourself? Are you getting enough sleep? There may be simple aspects of your life that you can change to improve control over your moods. Many things can trigger moodiness including:

- Tiredness: sleep deprivation and over-sleeping leaves you very vulnerable to moodiness. If you are feeling anxious or stressed, you may be sleeping too little or too much. Try to keep regular sleep patterns. If you have trouble getting to sleep try relaxation techniques (see our sleep handout).
- Diet: are you eating enough to fuel your mind? Are you eating so much you feel tired or guilty? Try to eat breakfast, followed by healthy and regular meals. Don't let your mood dominate your food choices.
- Caffeine: remember that too much caffeine can cause and amplify feelings of anxiety. Try replacing every second drink with water.
- Physical activity: is increasingly being recognised as a key to managing moods. Next time you feel angry or frustrated, try letting it out with vigorous exercise. If you're feeling tired or low, stretching or yoga might be worth a try (though vigorous exercise often helps to re-energise too).
- Medication: some forms of medication have side-effects that impact on mood. If you are concerned about this speak to your GP.
- Hormones: try charting your moods and keep life as easy as possible when you know your mood might be vulnerable to hormones.
- Drugs or alcohol: it is common to seek pleasant experiences through drug or alcohol use when feeling low. Unfortunately, drug and alcohol use (especially excessive use) can increase vulnerability to mood swings and depression. If you suspect this to be causing you troubles, monitor your moods both during and after use.
- Unwell: being tired and sick leaves us all irritable. Take some time out and let your body recoup.
- Taking too much on: sometimes this is inevitable when balancing study, work and life.

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What else is going on?

It is perfectly normal to be a bit moody when life becomes busy or difficult events happen - this is likely to mean that you are feeling a bit anxious or stressed. Remember that feeling low or unhappy can lead you to interpret events, interactions and situations more negatively than when happy. If you find yourself thinking negatively about everything and reacting badly, reflect on this and remind yourself that it may be because you are feeling low.

5 Ways to Manage Your Moods

1. Figure out your triggers for moodiness: are you irritable when you are tired, stressed, hungry, hung-over. Address these triggers by:
2. Looking after yourself! Eat, sleep, exercise, relax etc.
3. Do something you enjoy: go for a walk, see a movie, music etc.
4. Identify and feel your emotions when they happen. But don't let them control your behaviour negatively if possible (e.g. go for a walk instead of yelling at someone when angry). If you do let them control your behaviour – assess the consequences (both positive and negative).
5. Let the people close to you know that you are feeling moody. Ask them to be patient with you. Talk it out if you have something on your mind.

If these things don't help, remember you can talk with your GP or visit the counselling centre.

Want more Info?

General:

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedcommons/

Diet:

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/food-and-mood/about-food-and-mood/

Physical activity:

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/default-source/factsheets/exercise_depression.pdf

Drugs/Alcohol:

www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/864068/Alcohol-and-Drug-Abuse.pdf

Worried that you have depression?:

www.anu.edu.au/students/health-wellbeing/mental-health/recognising-depression