

Supporting a Young Person who is Struggling with Low Mood: Parent/Carer Pack

Useful Links and Resources

Young Minds Parents guide to depression and low mood <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/depression-and-low-mood/>

CAMHS Derbyshire Parents guide to depression: <https://www.camhsnorthderbyshire.nhs.uk/depression>

42nd Street: What is depression: <https://www.42ndstreet.org.uk/support/read/what-is-depression>

Action for Children: Boosting children's wellbeing and happiness <https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/mental-health-wellbeing/low-mood-depression/how-can-i-boost-my-childs-wellbeing-and-happiness/>

Action for Children: Helping children cope with their emotions <https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/mental-health-wellbeing/low-mood-depression/dealing-with-emotions/>

Young Minds Parents guide to suicidal thoughts <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/suicidal-thoughts/>

Useful Helplines



Young Minds Parent Helpline

0808 802 5544

from 9:30am – 4pm, Monday – Friday. Freephone.

For support around understanding your child's behaviour, and practical advice for the child or young person's main carer. If you need further help, they'll arrange an independent, experienced professional to call you for a 50-minute telephone consultation within seven days.

For more information <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/>



Papyrus Hopeline

0800 068 4141 or Text 07860039967

Open 9am to midnight all week. Freephone

For support if you are concerned that a young person might be thinking about suicide or for young people who are worried about suicidal feelings.

For more information <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/papyrus-hopelineuk/>

- **If your child is in danger of immediate harm or their life may be at risk, call 999 or visit A&E.**

Extracts taken from Young Minds Parents guide to depression and low mood

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/depression-and-low-mood/>

Going through different emotions is part of life. While it can feel worrying as a parent, it is normal for young people to feel low sometimes, and this can be a natural response to what's happening around them. Often, the passing of time and support from people they're close to can help things feel better again.

When a young person is feeling depressed, however, sadness and low feelings become more overwhelming, persisting over a longer period of time and making day-to-day life difficult.

Knowing that your child is feeling depressed can be incredibly worrying as a parent. But remember that lots of young people go through depression and come out the other side and feel okay again, and that there are things you can do to help them - including providing emotional support, working on practical strategies together and finding the right professional support if they need it.



“ Try not to ‘fix things’ - sometimes you just need to be there to listen.” ”

Rachel, parent

“ Allow your child some privacy but be available for them if they need you.” ”

Kathy, parent

“ Sometimes the time when you least want to be there is the time you most need to be there.” ”

Kathy, parent

“ Try to find situations where your child might be more open and willing to talk to you, such as in the car or on a walk.” ”

Rachel, parent

- Sitting next to them to watch a film/TV.
- Playing on their games system with them.
- Touching their hand/shoulder/back briefly when they are eating dinner.
- Putting recent photos up of you together in every room.
- Visible/explicit memory box of the things they have made, copies of nice texts that they have sent you etc, kept in this special place.
- Spontaneous home disco/karaoke.
- Go swimming and dive for weights together.
- Sing happy, loving songs from another room and change a key word to include their name.
- Co-create a bucket list of manageable mini dates you want to do together and surprise or schedule this in at various moments.
- £5 gift challenge. Each of you has £5 and 1 hour to find a gift for each other, it ends with hot chocolate and gift giving.
- Mutual face painting/make up/nail painting.

Sometimes it can be difficult to feel like a young person struggling with low mood can want to spend time and make positive connections with you. This list suggests ways of offering ‘tolerable nurture’ and can help your child know that you’re still holding them in mind.

From, Beacon House: Connection <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Connection.png>

How can I help my child?

If you are concerned that your child may be experiencing depression, there are lots of things you can do to help.

① Try to open up a conversation about what's going on. 

① Listen and provide emotional support. 

① If they don't feel able to talk to you at the moment, encourage them to speak to someone else – while reassuring them that you'll still be there. 

① Try again another day if they don't want to talk. 

① Think together about whether there's anything in particular that's making them feel this way. 

① Help your child to think about who's in their support circle. 

① Encourage them to think about what they enjoy doing. 

① Help them do the daily things that support our wellbeing. 

① Ask them if they would find it helpful to come up with a plan for the kinds of things they can do when they're struggling. 

① Reassure them. 

6R activities can help young people to manage their difficult feelings, as they have been found to calm the part of the brain that sends us into fight/flight/freeze response.

When you see your child is beginning to struggle to manage their feelings, try suggesting an activity that is:

- **Rhythmic**
- **Repetitive**
- **Relational -something you can do together, or with someone else they feel safe with**
- **Relevant to their interests and age**
- **Rewarding - something they will enjoy**
- **Respectful**

Some examples are, going on a walk or run together, going for a drive together, doing some cooking or baking with actions like chopping and stirring, listening to music with a strong beat, singing, dancing, colouring, playing a musical instrument, trampolining....

If your child is struggling to feel motivated to try these activities, they may need some gentle encouragement. Just doing regular short bursts of 6R activities can be helpful.

Suicidal Feelings

It is important to remember that not all people with low mood will be having suicidal feelings. However, it is important to remain alert to changes in behaviour. Papyrus list some behaviours to look out for:

- changes in behaviour (loss of interest/withdrawal, giving away possessions),
- physical indicators (weight loss, lack of interest in appearance),
- expressing thoughts or feelings (Hopeless, sad, guilty, worthless)
- words/language being used (“I can’t take it anymore”, “Everyone would be better off without me”)

Recent research has indicated that asking a young person if they are experiencing thoughts of suicide can actually reduce the risk of them ending their life. Asking and determining if that person is feeling suicidal gives you the opportunity to explore those feelings further and support them to stay safe.

The most important thing to do to ascertain if someone is struggling with thoughts of suicide is to **ASK!**

If your child tells you they are having suicidal thoughts:

- **Take their feelings seriously.** They may have taken a big risk in telling you, and it's important that they feel heard.
- **Let them know you're really glad they've told you.** This will help to reassure any worries they have about how you will react, or what you might be thinking.
- **Listen and empathise with just how bad things are.** If you can, use their own words to reflect how they might be feeling. Try not to fix or downplay feelings, focusing at first on providing emotional support and letting them talk for as long as they need to.
- **Think together about what's making them feel this way.** Try to get a sense of what they feel has brought them to a place where things are so bad, and whether there are changes that could be made in their lives to help things feel better.
- **Try to get a sense of what their thoughts are like.** It's important to establish whether they have an intent or plan to attempt suicide – for example they might have thought about how, when or where they will do it, or researched methods online. This is the biggest sign that they are at risk of making an attempt, and that you need to seek urgent professional help.
- **Reassure them** that you love them, they're not alone, you can find support together and they can talk to you about these thoughts whenever they need to.
- **After the conversation, seek professional advice about what to do next.**

Remember that while it is incredibly worrying to hear your child talk about suicide, it can be a positive step when they are able to recognise and communicate how they're feeling – as this makes it more possible for them to get help.

If you are worried about a young person with suicidal feelings, you can phone the Papyrus Hopeline on 0800 068 4141. If you feel they are in immediate danger, take them to A&E or phone 999. Remember to inform the school and their GP. The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and School Therapist can work with them and you to complete a safety plan.