

WELL-BEING PART 4: Watching out for signs of low mood in your child, and what to do about it



Mrs Booth - Well-being & Engagement Officer
Mrs Lamb - Welfare Officer

Are you finding it difficult to tell if your child is suffering from low mood? Perhaps they are just a typical hormonal teenager?



The key is to note any CHANGES in behaviour, particularly a child who retreats from social situations or isn't enjoying the things they used to; a child whose normally good sleep has deteriorated and lacks their usual energy; or a child who starts making choices which are not healthy for them.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This year we have come across students using Roaccetane medication for acne and experiencing the side-effects of anxiety and low mood warned of by their GP. If your child is prescribed this, please have a conversation with your GP and keep an eye on your son or daughter's mood. Please also let Mrs Lamb know, so that we can monitor things in school too.

For more information, <https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/isotretinoin-capsules/>

If you are worried about your child, the best starting point is to have a chat with them about things.

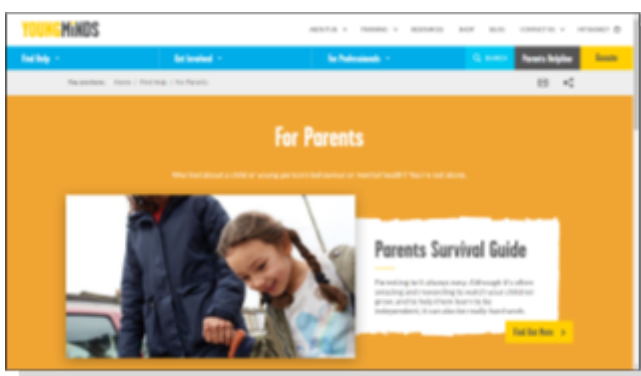

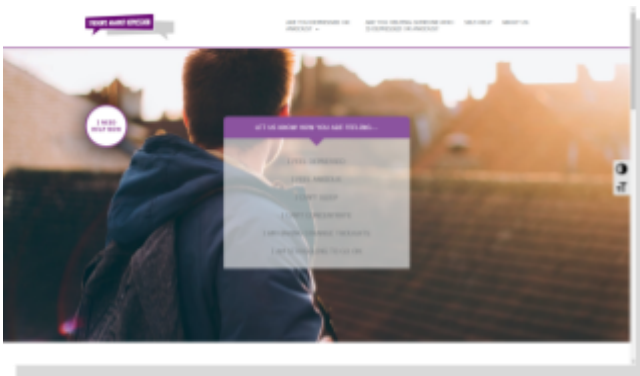
Here are some tips:

- Try to 'park' your own anxieties and allow plenty of time to talk; stay calm and supportive, as this might be hard to talk about
- Give the facts about what's concerning you and try not to make any judgements
- Ask open questions and give them time if they struggle to answer
- Tell them you are here to listen at any time; be available
- If they don't want to talk, ask them if there's someone else they would be willing to talk to
- If what they say is concerning and you are going to contact the GP or school for help with it, keep them in the loop at every stage

Low mood can affect anyone, so try not to point out that they have no reason to be low because they have a great life. This is the thought that plagues most people who suffer from low mood; they can't see a reason or 'trigger' for it. And there often isn't one. However, **here are some strategies which may help:**

- Most importantly, getting moving. Walking, running, sport or activity of any kind, particularly outside in daylight and fresh air, is the best medicine. Of course, this may be the last thing they want to do, so start with small steps!
- Doing something expressive and/or creative so that they are absorbed: such as drawing, colouring books, baking, crafts of all kinds, playing an instrument, puzzles and games.
- Trying to have a healthy approach to eating, drinking and sleeping.
- Choosing to watch something funny which is a distraction rather than scrolling through social media making themselves anxious.
- Doing something helpful for others to give themselves a purpose which takes them outside of their own thoughts: eg. walk the dog or spend time with a pet, visit an older person and make them a cup of tea, or volunteer at a charity shop.
- Connecting with others: yes, this is sometimes through social media, but it's even healthier still to speak to someone in person.
- Thinking of one thing they did well enough each day. It can be something small like making someone laugh or completing French homework. Try to praise these small achievements.
- If their mood drops in the darker months, consider a light box to boost their light exposure and mood. Seasonal Affective Disorder affects lots of people; more information can be found on www.sad.co.uk
- If you are supporting someone with low mood, make sure you look after yourself too and find someone to talk to.

Further useful information can be found here:

<p style="text-align: center;">Young Minds</p>  <p><i>If you think your child or family might need some extra support with their mental health, here is our advice and information about counselling and where you can get help.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.youngminds.org.uk/for_parents</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Charlie Walker Memorial Trust</p>  <p><i>Resources for parents and young people on a range of well-being issues.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">https://www.cwmt.org.uk/</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Student Minds</p>  <p><i>Student Minds works with students, service users, professionals and academics to develop new and innovative ways to improve the mental health of students.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.studentminds.org.uk</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Students Against Depression</p>  <p><i>Students Against Depression is a website offering advice, information, guidance and resources to those affected by low mood, depression and suicidal thinking.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.studentsagainstdepression.org</p>

Although it's worrying to think that 1 in 10 of young people nationally will suffer from poor mental health at some time, providing support early on is the key to better management of any symptoms. Here at NHGS we provide supporting staff who can help with any of these issues at any age, so please feel free to contact Mrs Lamb or Mrs Booth to discuss any worries.

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