

How to help if your child is experiencing low mood/depression



What is low mood/depression?

Feeling sad is a normal reaction to everyday life experiences. However, when these feelings continue and begin to interfere with a child's enjoyment of life, he/she may be feeling depressed. In its mildest form, depression can mean a child feels low.

This may not stop a child from leading a normal life but makes everything harder to do and less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make a child feel suicidal. Depression can be caused by lots of things such as life experiences, family history, bullying, feeling like he/she has a lack of support, or it may even run in the family.

What you might see in your child

Your child might display or experience different behaviours, signs, and feelings such as:

Feeling: worthless, hopeless, moody, guilty or helpless.

Behaviours: tearful, irritable, withdrawn, avoiding friends and family, lack of interest in appearance, difficulty in concentrating.

Thoughts: 'I don't deserve any help', 'what's the point?' Dismissing the positives, negative thinking patterns, including not wanting to live anymore.

Physical signs: tired, eating changes, changes in sleep pattern, aches & pains, slowing of speech.

How you can support your child

1. Break things down into small steps and celebrate when achieved.
2. Encourage your child to exercise regularly and keep an eye on diet, avoiding sugary/fatty foods and stimulants.
3. Gently encourage your child to continue to do activities previously enjoyed - even if the enjoyment has lessened.
4. Try to identify any factors that may be contributing to your child's low mood such as environmental issues, age-related physical illness, friendship issues, etc.
5. Help your child to identify a trustworthy adult to talk to.
6. Help your child to identify and access a safe place.
7. Encourage your child to be around people who are caring and positive. Both negative and positive thoughts are contagious.

If your child is still giving you cause for concern, you may wish to discuss with your school or your GP.
Or, visit www.liverpoolcamhs.com/need-advice