

Teen Low Mood & Depression - How can I help?



With Dr Sarah-Jane Knight, Clinical Psychologist

Understanding the difference between low mood & depression

The line between typical teenage moodiness and something more serious can be blurry and it's not always easy to know when your teen might need extra help and support. Typically, **Low Mood** is temporary feelings of sadness or unhappiness that can be resolved without intensive therapy. **Depression** is a clinical diagnosis with specific criteria that persists over a longer period of time.

Recognising the signs

Identifying low mood in teens can be challenging, as it can present itself in a number of ways. Some signs to look out for include:

1.

School Performance:

Noticeable drops in academic engagement or performance.

3.

Social Withdrawal:

Lack of interest in friends or activities they once enjoyed.

2.

Physical Changes:

Significant changes in sleep patterns, appetite, or energy levels.

4.

Persistent Changes:

If low mood continues, affecting daily life, consider professional help.

Key strategies for parents

When teenagers exhibit signs of low mood, there are things that parents and carers can do to help:



Avoid Catastrophising:

Refrain from using clinical terms like "depression" prematurely to prevent unnecessary worry.



Supportive Redirection:

Gently guide your teen toward comforting and distracting activities.



Acknowledge Feelings:

Validate your teen's emotions with empathy and understanding.



Encourage Self-care:

Encourage a consistent sleep schedule, promote balanced meals, support regular exercise and ensure your teen has opportunities for relaxation and enjoyment



Model Positive Behaviour:

Demonstrate calm and proportionate reactions to encourage open communication.



Maintain Routines:

Keep regular family routines and boundaries to provide security.



Seeking help & useful resources for parents & teens

If a teen's mood doesn't improve, it might be time to seek additional support through existing resources or, if needed, professional help.

Young Minds

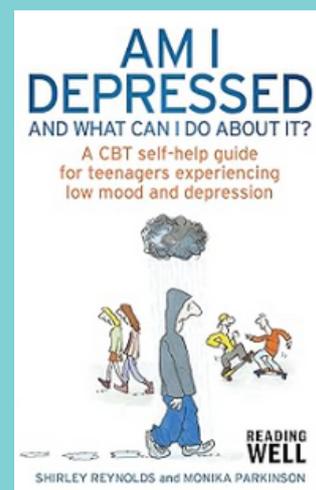
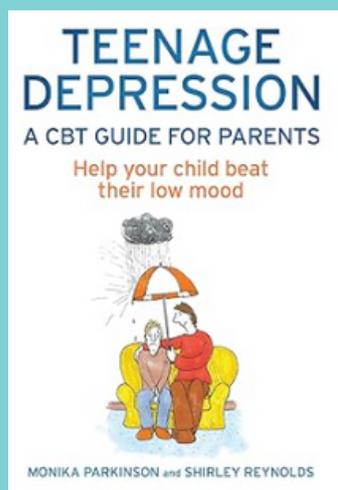
A charitable organisation offering a wealth of information on mental health support for young people.

Local Authority Services

Check your local authority's website for mental health provisions and counselling services in your area.

Books

There are some great accessible, engaging and age-appropriate books available - here are two from Let's all Talk Mental Health regular Dr Shirley Reynolds



Explore Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

Look into CBT resources and programmes that can offer structured support for managing mood.

Remember, it's important to approach each resource with an understanding of your teen's unique needs and preferences. Engaging in open conversations about these resources can help determine the most suitable path forward.

“ LET’S ALL TALK mental health



It’s normal to have periods of fluctuating mood. There’s lots of pressure on our young people. Do what you can to ease that and try not to worry before you have to worry.



Dr Sarah-Jane Knight



There are many sessions on the [Let’s all Talk Mental Health hub](#) for you to view on low mood, depression and related issues, including the talks linked below.



“ LET’S ALL TALK.
mental health



Getting help for Teen Low Mood and Depression

Monday 15th January at 8pm

“ LET’S ALL TALK.
mental health



Negative Thinking Traps
How to help your teen

Monday 25th March at 8pm

[Getting Help for Teen Low Mood & Depression](#) [Negative Thinking Patterns & Low Mood](#)

This factsheet is for advice purposes. Please remember that we’re not offering medical or clinical health services specific to your situation. If you need help, please contact your GP or other healthcare professionals – don’t wait to get help if you or your young one needs it.