

Emotions and healthy minds



TIPS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Do you understand what you're feeling and why you're feeling it?

Do you need some tips on how to manage bad moods? Read on...

From the moment we arrive in the world we express emotion; how we feel. Babies and young children usually express emotion very openly but haven't yet developed the ability to name an emotion or say in words what they want or need. Parents tune into their children's emotions and help them express them so that they're soothed and happy.

As we grow up, we get better at understanding and expressing how we feel. We also start to understand and respond to the emotions of others. This is sometimes referred to as 'Emotional Intelligence'.

Sometimes though, things don't go to plan and it becomes hard to understand and say how we feel.

Looking after yourself during difficult times

If you or your family have gone through some difficult or stressful times it can be confusing and hard to understand, express and respond to emotions.

Emotions that are usually felt mildly can sometimes be felt and experienced very intensely. It's important in these times to remember that there are no good or bad emotions but, rather, healthy and unhealthy ways of expressing them.

It is not healthy or safe, for example, to express anger so that people feel scared of you. However, it's also not healthy to let anger fester inside of you and not express it. These websites provide more information about how to express anger safely:

- **headspace:** [headspace.org.au/young-people/what-is-anger-and-its-effects-on-mental-health](https://www.headspace.org.au/young-people/what-is-anger-and-its-effects-on-mental-health)
- **ReachOut Australia:** [au.reachout.com/articles/8-ways-to-deal-with-anger](https://www.reachout.com/articles/8-ways-to-deal-with-anger)
- **MensLine Australia:** [mensline.org.au/how-to-deal-with-anger/managing-anger](https://www.mensline.org.au/how-to-deal-with-anger/managing-anger)

Keeping your mind healthy

Scientific research (Doidge, 2007) tells us that the brain and mind are truly 'plastic'. That is, they're changeable through experience and there are activities that we can practice that give us better opportunities to keep our minds healthy.

We do exercises and go to the gym to keep our bodies healthy, so it's important to also keep your mind healthy with mind exercises!

Exercising your mind

Create some regular moments in your day where you tune into yourself, for example, when you're on a train or bus on your own or doing the washing up.

Spend 3 to 5 minutes noticing your thoughts and feelings and start practicing some regular reflection.

So how do you do this? Try this mindfulness activity.

Activity

- First of all, turn off your mobile!
- Ask yourself what you are sensing in your body right now. How are your muscles feeling? Can you sense your heart beating? Tune into your breathing.
- Close your eyes and see what images come up.
- Focus on what you are feeling – your bodily sensations, your thoughts and memories. What are you noticing around you?
- Focus on your thoughts – what are you thinking?

You don't have to put words to this activity, as just the time you take tuning into yourself helps you to become more aware of your feelings and emotions (adapted from Siegel, 2014).

Relationships Australia
VICTORIA

Bad moods

Okay, so you've just noticed that a bad mood is visiting you. Perhaps someone like your mum or dad has 'kindly' pointed this out to you!

Maybe you don't mind so much if it sticks around, in which case, why not take you and your bad mood away to your room for a while and stew?

However, if your bad mood doesn't suit the activities that you have planned for your day, it might be time to try and move it along.

Feelings, emotions and moods come and go every day. It's important not to allow your feelings about your moods to get in the way of you moving through them.

Six tips for dealing with bad moods

1. **Tune in and check on yourself.** Practice the mindfulness activity on page 1. Is there an emotion that is sitting behind your bad mood, like anger or sadness? Has there been a situation in your day that has upset you? Do you need to notice and acknowledge this for yourself?
2. **Name what you are feeling.** There is now evidence that naming an emotion calms the mind and body down. This process has been called 'Naming it to tame it' (Siegel, 2014).
3. **Accept that this is the feeling you are having right now.** You don't have to struggle with it, control it or push it away. It's not going to be a permanent state that you're in. Don't judge yourself for experiencing this feeling. Remember this is just the feeling that is visiting you at the moment.
4. When you've noticed, named and accepted your mood, **have a think about what you have to achieve in your day.** Is this the best mood for these activities? If, for example, you have to study and you're feeling grumpy/irritable, is it a good idea to allow this mood to stick around all day?
5. **Drinking a glass of water, stretching, jumping up and down, getting some fresh air, doing some exercise and moving around the room** are all ways of shifting a mood.
6. **Encourage yourself with positive self-talk.** 'Okay, I've done this before, I can do it again!'

Need more help?

If you're concerned that big, strong, intense emotions visit you frequently and tend to stick around all day, remember that you don't have to deal with things on your own.

The chances are that your parents or carers have noticed this too and are just as concerned as you are. Let them help you to get help.

You can start by talking to a trusted adult such as a parent, carer, family member, teacher or school counsellor and telling them how you're feeling.

If you feel unsafe at any time, call 000 (triple zero). For 24/7 support, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.

To make an appointment to chat to one of our counsellors, visit www.rav.org.au/counselling

To find other organisations that can help, visit www.rav.org.au/resources/youth-services

About us

Relationships Australia Victoria has over 70 years' experience providing family and relationship support services across Melbourne and Victoria.

We are committed to providing safe, inclusive and accessible services for all people.



We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways of Australia and we support Aboriginal people's right to self-determination and culturally safe services.

We recognise the lifelong impacts of childhood trauma.

We recognise those who had children taken away from them.

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