

QUICK FIXES FOR A BAD MOOD

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Moods go up and down. Often they stay neutral. Your brain reacts to so many things. These include its own chemistry, the environment, and your thoughts. All of these affect your mental state. The following may help you recover more quickly from bad moods.

First steps

First, accept the fact that you will feel uncomfortable emotions sometimes. Anger, sorrow, anxiety, guilt, frustration, etc., are normal. So, there's no need to add anxiety about feeling these ways. Here's what you can do:

- **Breathe!** A few slow, deep breaths can work wonders on your brain's response as well as your mood.
- **Stay in the moment.** Thoughts that race ahead with anxiety to the future or look back with guilt and blame tend to worsen your mood.
- **Let it go.** Take a deep breath in and picture the breath wrapping around the negative feelings. As you breathe out, imagine the negative feelings leaving you.
- **Distract.** Take your mind off your discomfort. Organize your desk, read the comics, anything that gets your mind on something else.
- **Confess it.** Talking to a sympathetic listener can help, to a point. Rehashing upsetting scenes might make the bad mood linger longer than it has to.

- **Write it down.** If you have trouble letting go of negative emotions, try writing about what you are feeling.
- **Time out.** If you feel overwhelmed by people, noise, or activity around you, escape for a moment. Take at least a few minutes in a private place where you can focus on your breathing.
- **Get moving.** A brisk 10-minute walk can really boost your mood. Being outdoors will also give you exposure to daylight.

Indulge a little

If possible, pamper yourself a bit to ease tension and lift your mood. See whether any of these suggestions appeal to you:

- Light a lavender candle or enjoy some other soothing fragrance.
- Take a long bath with your favorite scented bubbles.
- Get a massage from a loved one or even a professional masseuse.
- Watch a movie that tugs your heartstrings and have a good cry. Or watch one that gives you a real belly laugh.
- Play your most soothing or uplifting music.
- Spend a little time working on a hobby, playing a musical instrument, or some other uplifting distraction.
- Take a brief nap—perhaps your low mood stems from poor sleep.
- Try a relaxation method such as meditation, yoga, progressive relaxation, etc.
- When your mood is up, start a blessings journal. This is an ongoing list of appreciation for all the good things in your life. Read the journal whenever your mood drops.

The long run

Everyone has high and low moods. It comes with being human. But if you are still bothered with low moods after trying some of the above suggestions, make sure you are nurturing yourself with the following:

- Proper hydration and nutrition. Your diet should be varied and loaded with fiber, antioxidants, and essential vitamins and minerals. Adding

foods that contain omega-3 oils to your diet might improve your mood.

- Adequate sleep
- Regular aerobic exercise and strength training
- Limited consumption of alcohol, caffeine, and refined sugar
- Forgiveness—Holding grudges against yourself or others damages your mood.
- Charity—Helping someone else less fortunate than you is a wonderful mood lifter.

When low moods linger

Don't force yourself to do any of the above suggestions—that's sure to worsen your mood! But if you still suffer low moods, be aware of their frequency, duration, and severity. If you have been feeling terrible and unlike yourself for more than two weeks, see your doctor. Your doctor can rule out physical causes of mood disturbance such as thyroid problems, low blood sugar, etc. Counseling or medication may help if you have symptoms of depression or an anxiety disorder. Even in light of something more serious than a momentary mood drop, the suggestions described here apply as a helpful addition to therapy and medication.

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