

# Managing mood with ADHD

Many people with ADHD experience low and fluctuating moods. A low mood can significantly affect concentration and behaviour, whilst mood swings might make it difficult for you to regulate your feelings and make you feel out of control, as you may act emotionally, saying and doing the wrong things.

## Helpful information and strategies

### Depression in ADHD

People with ADHD may be more prone to depression as they may:

- Experience more adverse events
- Have more problems with relationships
- Have negative beliefs about themselves
- Have poor sleep
- Have poor coping methods



### Thought challenging

**Notice your thoughts:** writing them down can be helpful.

**Challenge your thoughts:** notice any cognitive distortions that may be happening (e.g., jumping to conclusions, 'all or nothing thinking', over-generalising, catastrophising). Try to put the thought into perspective.

**Replace negative thoughts with balanced, realistic ones:** write down the more positive thoughts.

**Challenge thoughts using questions such as:** 'what is the evidence for these thoughts', what would someone else think about that', what is the worst possible outcome?'. Sometimes it helps to replace thoughts with compassionate ones.

### Core beliefs

Our core beliefs affect how we interpret information. Try to identify your core beliefs and rules for living. These could be related to your diagnosis and what people have said to you in the past. Although our core beliefs are well entrenched, we can learn to challenge our thoughts and re-appraise situations.

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## What helps with mood swings?

- Make a record of your moods and ask your friends / family to help you notice them
- Work out what the triggers might be. It could be that something happens that sets off a thought or activates a difficult core belief
- Use self-talk, thought challenging, exercise, creative hobbies, mindfulness, and other relaxation exercises

## How to help build feelings of self-worth

People living with difficulties can face judgment from others causing them to develop a negative view of themselves and their capabilities. Learning to reframe these views and believe in your worth can help make you more confident in your abilities and more productive.

Here are some tips to help:

- You might try keeping an affirmation journal in which you write out positive statements. The idea is to practice uplifting self-talk about who you are and what you are accomplishing.
- Aim to keep tiny promises to yourself. This might be making your bed, walking around the block, or replying to an email. The particular promise doesn't matter — the idea is to build confidence in yourself.
- Try to embrace your strengths. Lean into your passions and pursue the things that make you feel best.
- Remind yourself that your worth is not defined by your productivity. Be gentle and understanding toward yourself, even when you are unable to achieve a goal.
- Rather than attack yourself can try to shift your perspective to how you would think about someone else in the situation. How would you understand them and show warmth and kindness to them?

## Top tips

1. Practise saying 'no' – do not take on too much, or more than you can realistically manage
  2. Aim for structure and good habits – but try to be flexible
  3. Spend time with those who love and support you, even if you want to hide away. Not all people are good for us. Try to identify people who make you feel good about yourself
  4. Make time for yourself
  5. Identify what you can control, not what is beyond your control, and focus on that
  6. Notice your qualities and strengths and remind yourself of these as much as possible
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## If you are in a crisis

Have a safety plan ready to help prevent or manage a crisis. Think:

- What are my triggers? What are my warning signs?
- Who can I talk to? How can others help?
- What has helped me in the past? What makes life worth living?
- How can I make my environment safe?
- What can I do for myself? What are my strengths?

## Urgent mental health support

- Berkshire Mental Health Crisis Team: Call 0800 129 9999
- Sane Line: Call 0300 304 7000 (lines are open 4.30pm-10.30pm every day)
- Samaritans: Call 116 123 (lines are open 24 hours every day)
- Shout: Text 'SHOUT' to 85258
- Out-of-hours GP: Call the NHS 111 service

