



CONCERN:EAP

Healthy & Resilient You



Good News about Bad Moods

Moods clearly have influence over our lives and can leave lasting imprints on physical and mental health. But, did you know that both positive and negative moods have a specific function in our lives, helping us to learn from experience and adapt our behavior?



The idea that even negative moods serve a greater purpose is something of a new discovery. It runs counter to the popular “Don’t Worry, Be Happy” school of thought, suggesting that instead of immediately shaking off a bad mood, we may want to take time to learn what the mood is trying to tell us.

Read on for some different takes on managing mood. And, for more useful tools and content, visit the **Lift Your Mood** Toolkit in the Resilience Hub™ at concernresiliencehub.com/toolkit/lift-your-mood. (First-time visitors may need to login with their company code.)

Do Worry...Then Be Happy

Experts have linked positive mood and emotions to improved physical and emotional health for years. New research indicates that negative moods may also be beneficial to our wellbeing.

A study at the University of New South Wales, Australia, demonstrates that periods of low mood can increase attention, boost short-term memory, and enhance communication skills. According to researcher, Dr. Joe Forgas, mild or temporary bad moods serve an important purpose by teaching us to cope and adapt resilience to challenging situations.

Perspective can be a useful tool to help make a bad mood more productive and less debilitating. Try using mindful observation to better understand where a mood originated, what you can learn from it, and how to constructively apply those lessons.

Steps	Example Scenario 1	Example Scenario 2
Step 1: Think back to when your mood began to identify the trigger.	Unsolicited criticism about work performance triggered an irritated mood.	A reminder of a lost loved one triggered a sad mood.
Step 2: Consider what the mood may be trying to tell you.	Are you smarting because the criticism was justified and hit close to home, or because it was unfair or inappropriate?	Did it bring up unresolved emotions? Have you taken time to mourn?
Step 3: Consider constructive actions.	Change may be called for. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criticism was accurate – What can you do to work on the issue and turn performance around? • Criticism was unfair – Can you let your resentment go or speak with your criticizer about how and why their approach was inappropriate and hurtful? 	What can you do to process these memories in a healing way? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall memories of your lost loved one from a place of gratitude: <i>I'm happy to have known them. I was lucky to share fun times with them.</i> • Put on a sad song and have a cathartic cry. Acknowledging loss and allowing related emotions can help promote healing.

Can't break out of a funk? Breathe in to it.

Being in a low mood every now and then is a normal part of life's ebb and flow, and, as you've seen, can even help us to adapt and build resilience. However, if you experience frequent or extended low moods accompanied by negative or self-defeating thoughts, you may be stuck in a rumination loop.

Rumination loops happen when uncomfortable emotions or self-judgment replay in our heads to the point that we get drawn further into a bad mood instead of letting it naturally pass. The practice of mindfulness can be a good technique for breaking a rumination loop because it encourages us to observe and relate to our thoughts, feelings, and emotions as they arise without judgment.

Meditative breathing is a cornerstone of mindfulness and a good place to start on your mindfulness journey.



A Mindful Breathing Meditation

1. **Sit or lie comfortably**
2. **Focus your attention** on either your nose or your abdomen and begin slow, deep breathing
3. **Breathe in** – acknowledge the breath entering your body
4. **Breathe out** – acknowledge the breath leaving your body
5. **Continue breathing** – each time your mind wanders away from your breath, think calmly to yourself—wandering—and gently bring your focus back to your breath entering and leaving your body.

If you practice this technique regularly for **10 to 30** minutes a day, you'll tend to feel more peaceful and clear, and find it easier to remain in the present. This can help you adjust your mood if it strays into a rumination loop. As with the breath, just think calmly to yourself— ruminating — and gently steer your thoughts back to a more constructive path.

Like any skill, mindfulness meditation becomes stronger with repetition. With enough practice, it could even become second nature.

This newsletter is intended for informational purposes only, and should not be used to replace professional advice.

If a negative mood persists and impacts your wellbeing, consider calling CONCERN for additional help and support.

Call: 800.344.4222
www.concern-eap.com



Our **actions**, **feelings** and **thoughts** all connect, working together to influence our moods. Changing one affects the others.

For example, taking positive action can be an easy way to lift your mood. When you do something pleasant, the activity usually makes you feel better. And feeling better can lead to more positive thoughts and a brighter mood.

A positive action can be anything that brings you joy or helps you feel like you've accomplished something.

- Try to pick activities that are inexpensive, quick, and easy. They can be physical or mental, social or solitary, old favorites or something entirely new—as long as you enjoy them.

For an extra boost, it helps to plan an activity you will truly look forward to, enjoy while you're doing it, and happily remember afterwards.



Example in Action: Anticipate the Awesomeness

- Plan a positive activity.
- Use visual cues to remind yourself of the activity by writing it on a calendar or posting it as an event on social media.
- Focus on what's enjoyable about the activity—laughing with a friend, enjoying your favorite actor in a movie, checking something off your to-do list.



Example in Action: Savor Everyday Activities

- Be mindful of moments that feel good. Notice the details and focus on your senses to amplify the positive feelings.
- Look for these moments in ordinary events. Stop to feel the warm sun on your face. Hold a door for someone who appreciates it.
- Remember how you feel during these moments and recall them whenever you need a boost.



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