



Mental Health  
Support Team

Buckinghamshire

# Low Mood in Young People

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Education Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP)

Take  care of  
yourself

# AIMS

**What would you  
like to get out of  
this session?**

# AIMS

1. To increase your understanding of adolescent depression

- including how it may present in young people
- what might keep it going

2. To help you feel more confident supporting a young person with low mood

# OVERVIEW FOR TODAY



1. What is depression and how does it present in young people?
2. What keeps depression going?
3. What is Behavioural Activation (BA)?
4. How you can support young people with techniques from a BA approach
5. How else can you support a young person

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# Defining depression

Depressed mood and/or loss  
of pleasure in most activities.

# HOW COMMON IS DEPRESSION?

**15% of children and young people** will have suffered from a clinically diagnosable depressive illness before 18

Only about **25%** of children and young people with depression are identified and receive treatment

# CAN BE DIFFICULT TO SPOT

Not a uniform presentation

Young person may try to hide it/avoid talking about it

May start gradually

May be difficult for the young person to recognise it

The young person may not be a 'bother' in the classroom

Some symptoms may be synonymous with adolescence

# CASE STUDY

**'Ellie'** is 16 years old, and at school studying for her GCSE's. She feels down most days and cries a lot. Ellie finds it a real struggle to concentrate on homework, and even though she still goes to school and has dance classes twice a week, she feels like she isn't enjoying anything she does. Ellie finds it hard to get to sleep, and often wakes up in the middle of the night. Ellie has lost her appetite since she started feeling low, and only eats when her mum makes her. She thinks she is a failure and things are never going to improve.



# PRESENTATION OF DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS

- Sadness (with or without crying)
- Anxiety
- Temper outbursts and/or violent episodes
- Easily irritated
- Self-critical remarks
- Sleeping too little or too much



# PRESENTATION OF DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS CONTINUED

- Little or no appetite, or eating too often
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Loss of interest in activities usually enjoyed (including school activities)
- Feelings of fear (even if there is no conscious reason)
- Increased use of alcohol/drugs
- Worsening grades and/or missing school



# SEVERITY

## Mild

can cause the young person to feel unhappy, but won't stop him or her from leading a normal life

## Moderate

can have a significant impact and make the young person constantly miserable and low

## Severe

can cause a young person to have constant negative thoughts and feel like s/he isn't able to cope

# Aren't all teenagers depressed?

## CORE SYMPTOMS:

Low mood and/or difficult in getting pleasure from usual activities (nearly every day at least 2 weeks)

**PLUS:** At least 4 additional symptoms

**PLUS:** Difficulties interfere with functioning (e.g school, work, friends, family)



e.g. sleep problems, weight loss/gain, change in appetite, suicidal thoughts, lack of energy, feelings of worthlessness, poor concentration, irritability etc

**In CBT, we often don't know what 'caused' the depression - we focus on what's keeping it going.**

poor concentration, irritability etc

# OVERVIEW FOR TODAY



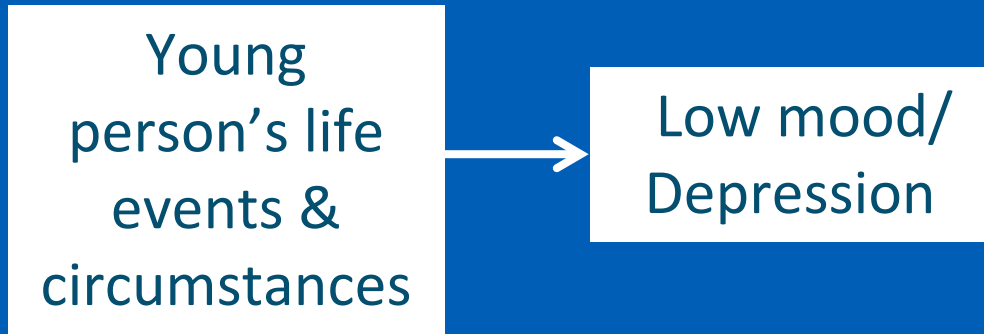
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# THE DEPRESSION CYCLE

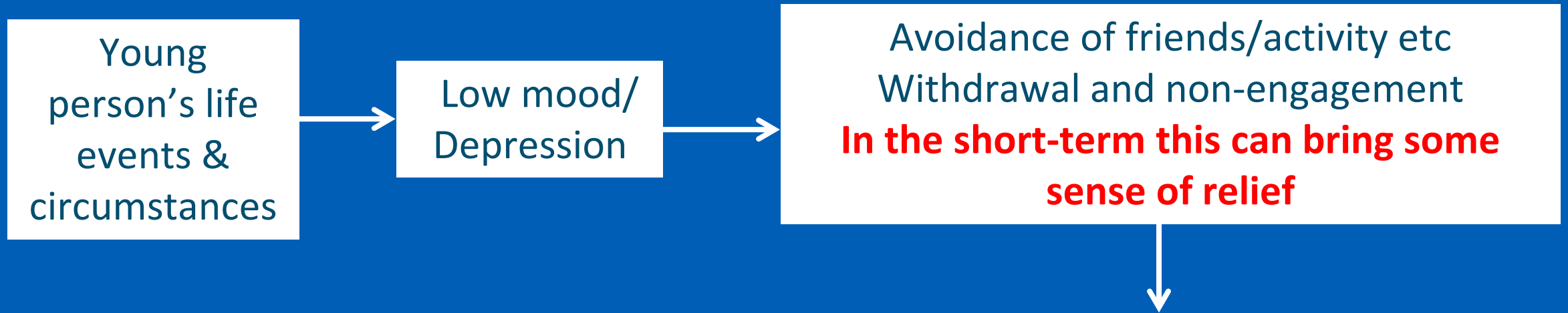
When you feel down or low, what happens?

**How does your mood affect your behaviour and what effect does this then have?**

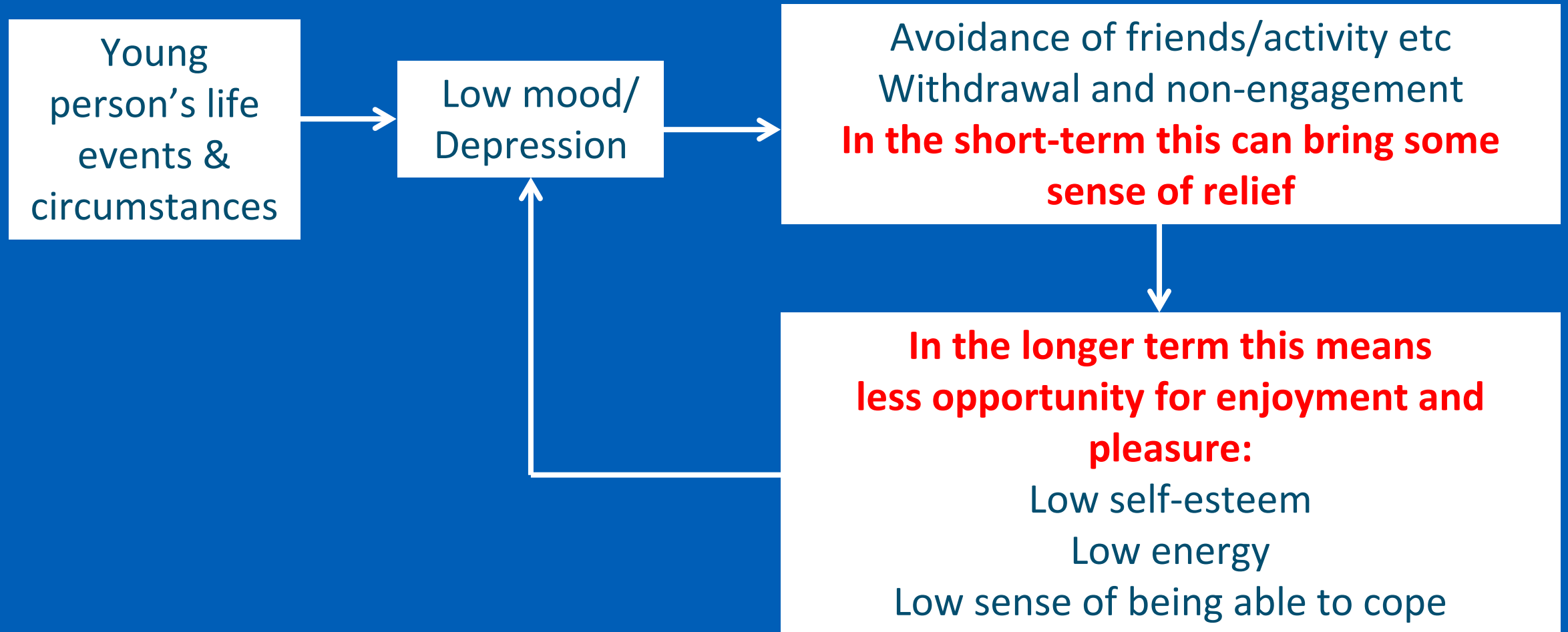
# THE DEPRESSION CYCLE



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# THE DEPRESSION CYCLE



# UNHELPFUL THINKING TRAPS

Mental Filter



Predictions



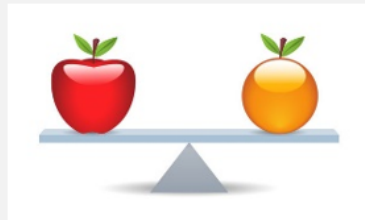
Mind Reading



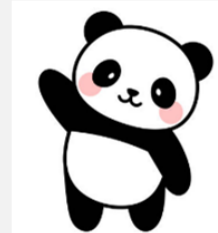
Catastrophising



Compare and  
Despair



Black and  
White Thinking



# UNHELPFUL THINKING HABITS

So, what can we do about our  
unhelpful thinking habits?

**1. Notice**

**2. Question**

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Withdrawal/inactivity is a natural response to feeling low. **However, this plays a crucial role in maintaining low mood.**

Important point is to change behaviour *first*, rather than wait until you feel more motivated and less depressed.

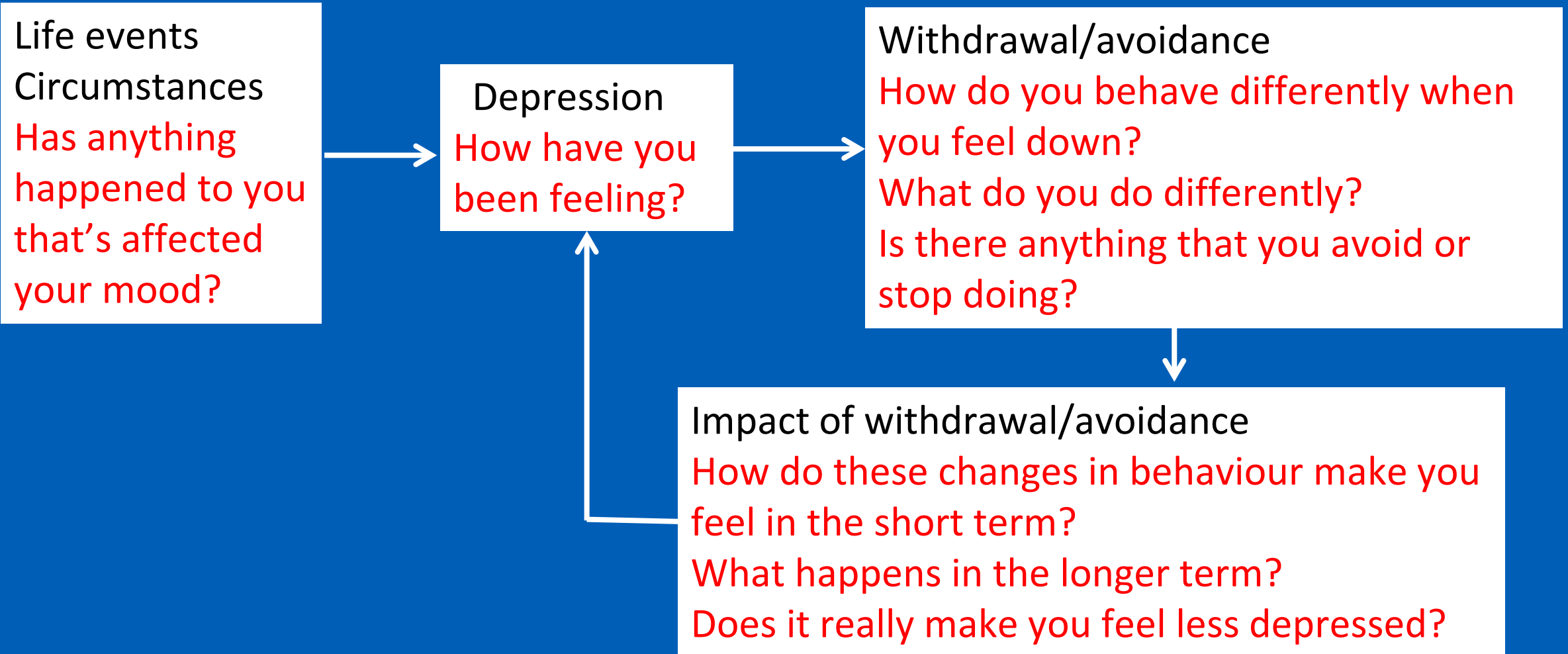
*Sometimes, the key to helping young people change how they feel is to help them change what they do.*

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# UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM



# A USEFUL ANALOGY....



# ASSESS THE CURRENT SITUATION

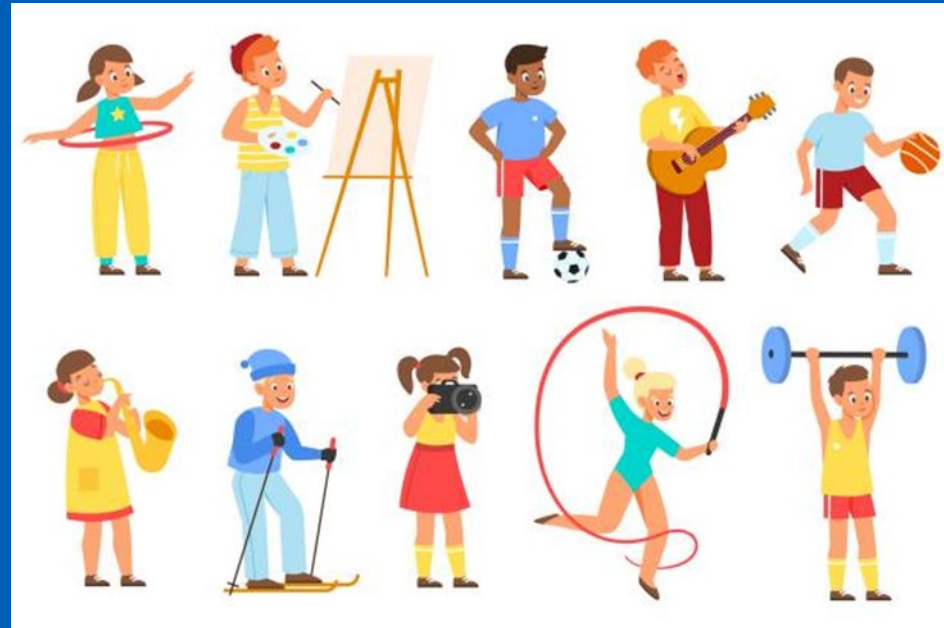
- Talk to the YP about what they are doing
- This can act as a baseline
- It can help the YP realise what they aren't doing

Activity Diary

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Record what you did at each time and rate how you felt from 0 – 10 (with 0 being very unhappy and 10 being very happy).

# THINKING OF ACTIVITIES TO TRY...



WHAT matters to the young person?  
WHO matters to the young person?

**GIVE**



**KEEP  
LEARNING**



**BE ACTIVE**



**TAKE  
NOTICE**



**CONNECT**





# SCHEDULING ACTIVITIES

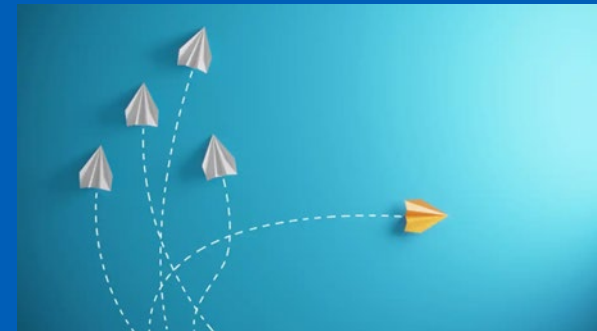
- When will YP do activity (day and time)?
- Who will they do activity with?
- Where will they do the activity?
- Can you predict any barriers?
- Write it down.

Start with the  
easiest activities

Break things  
down into smaller  
tasks

# REVIEW PROGRESS

- Has there been any **impact** on mood?
- Are there been any **barriers**?
- Does anything make them feel better in the short term but worse in the long term?
- Think about referral if necessary



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# LOW MOOD & EXERCISE



The NHS says that young people need an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity a day

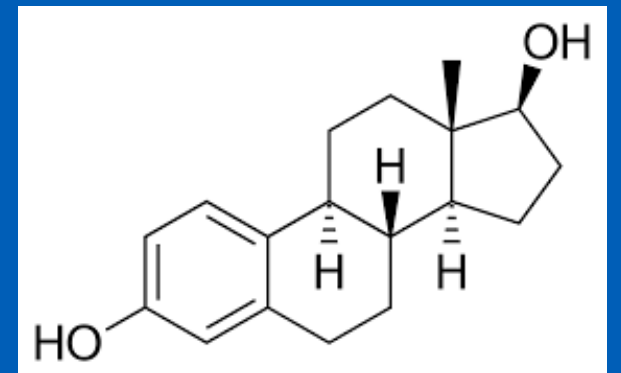
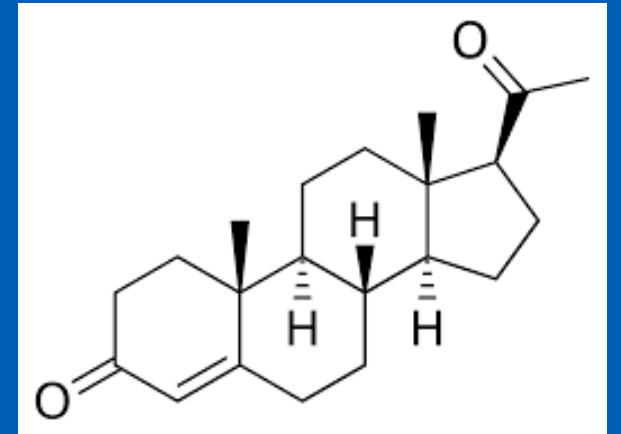
- **Reduces risk of depression**
  - Stimulates nerve cell growth in the brain
  - Releases feel good endorphins
- **Boosts energy**
- **Improves attention**
- **Increases confidence**
- **Improves sleep**
  - Reduces time it takes to fall asleep
  - Reduces daytime sleepiness
- **Reduces anxiety and stress**
  - Decreases muscle tension
  - Distraction
  - Increases anti-anxiety neurochemicals
  - Activates frontal regions of brain



# LOW MOOD & HORMONES

The extremes of emotion that teens go through are *partly* due to hormones.

- Boys are coming to terms with large quantities of **testosterone** surging through their bodies
- Girls have to cope with the mood swings that accompany **oestrogen**.



# LOW MOOD & HORMONES

## Tips for Coping:

- Clear and consistent boundaries
- Listening and not interrupting
- Allowing them to learn from their own mistakes – as long as they are safe
- Talking calmly and directly to them if you have concerns
- Allowing them to have their own space and privacy



# LOW MOOD & TIREDNESS

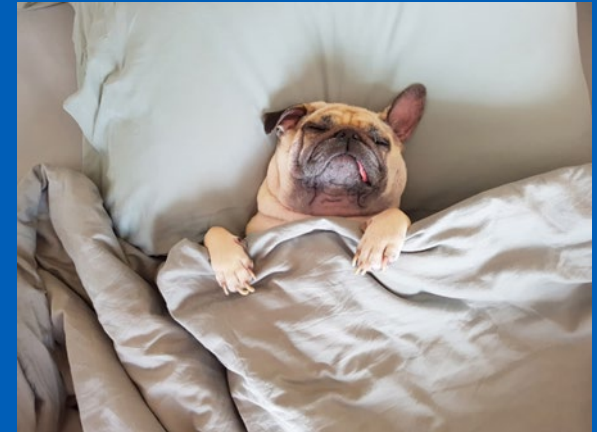
**6 to 12** years old need **9 to 11** hours sleep.

**13 to 18** years old need **8 to 10** hours sleep.

Young people may be staying up late:

- chatting to friends
- doing homework
- using social media
- or playing video games

Low mood can be caused or exacerbated by tiredness.



# TECHNOLOGY & SCREEN TIME

There is currently **no** definitive evidence that increased screen time is associated with low mood.

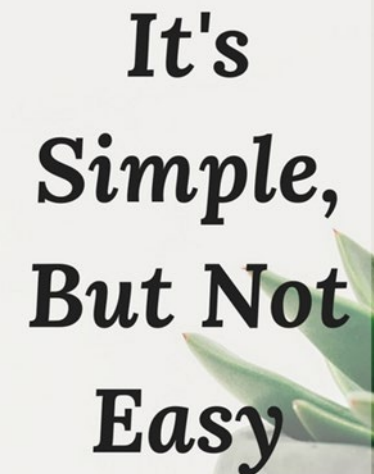
However, screen time can...

1. Affect sleep
2. Lead to unhealthy comparisons
3. Overstimulate



# IDEAS TO MANAGE SCREEN TIME

- Device free mealtime
- Only to be charged in the living room
- Not to be used one hour before bedtime
- Encouraging alternative activities
- Keeping the computer in a common area
- Setting a good example



***It's  
Simple,  
But Not  
Easy***

# REFERRALS



If you feel your child needs specific mental health support above what is already offered by Student Support Officers, then please use the following emails to contact support within the school:

## **Great Marlow School**

Karen Craig - [kcraig@gms.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:kcraig@gms.bucks.sch.uk)

Sheryl Paul - [spaul@gms.bucks.sch.uk](mailto:spaul@gms.bucks.sch.uk)

## **Sir William Borlase's Grammar School**

[safeguarding@swbgs.com](mailto:safeguarding@swbgs.com)

They can refer you to us (Mental Health Support Team).

# CAMHS

**Child and Adolescent  
Mental Health Service**

- Referrals for higher level and more persistent mental health needs
- Urgent referrals: Single Point of Access (SPA): 01865 901 951 (8am–6pm, Monday to Friday)
- Less urgent referrals:  
[BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk](mailto:BucksCAMHSSPA@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk)

# SUPPORT FOR ADULTS

## Healthy Minds:

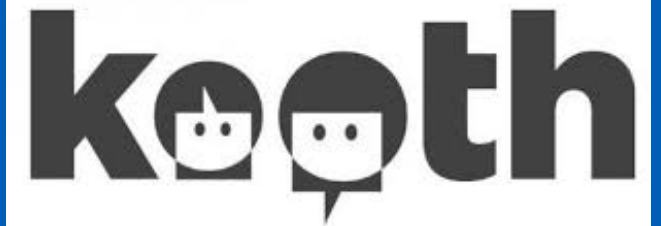
<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/healthymins/>

*Free* support for adults in Buckinghamshire

They offer courses, groups, online support, one to one support, support with long term health conditions, and employment support



# USEFUL RESOURCES



## MHST - Parent Training/Workshop





Mental Health  
Support Team  
Buckinghamshire

**Any Questions**