

SNAPPING OUT OF A BAD MOOD: SIMPLE TIPS TO KEEP YOUR OUTLOOK MORE SUNNY



Grumpy. Cranky. Irritable. These are just a few of the words used to describe how we feel when a bad mood grabs hold of us. Bad moods can happen to anyone, and unfortunately, you may not be the only one affected by yours. Your disposition can be contagious and can even offend co-workers, friends, or family.

It's NO SURPRISE that a sunnier outlook is more productive and healthier than a grumpy one, but did you know that all it may take to slip out of the slumps is just a little push in the right direction? Here are some ideas for a quick "happy fix."

Laugh

Laughter increases the release of endorphins, which improve disposition and give a sense of well-being. The simple act of laughing helps relieve stress and improve things like blood flow and even digestion. "Laugh Therapy" is getting so popular that even the Pentagon is training military families and groups to use it.

Recall happy times

Remembering happy events or memories in life can immediately help lift someone out of a bad mood. Recall your first crush, your old muscle car, your favorite vacation, or your child's first step.

Create

Start a new project or finish one you've been ignoring. Write in your journal, build something, draw or paint a picture, cook a gourmet dish, take pictures, finish that scrapbook you've been working on for years, or write a book or a letter. Find something that you can feel good about accomplishing and just do it! It doesn't have to be perfect; it just has to come from you.

Touch and be touched

Human touch can increase the amount of endorphins, growth hormones, and DHEA in the body, all of which have all been shown to lengthen life span and lower the negative impacts of stress. Researchers have found that patients in a hospital who are touched frequently actually improve faster than those who are not touched. Hug a friend, hold hands, or cuddle up with someone you love.

Indulge

Indulging can be as simple as listening to music, singing your favorite song, or reading a good book. Go out for a nice dinner, or get a pedicure with your friends. Have a piece of chocolate. Cocoa contains phenyl-ethylamine, a compound known to increase your brain's production of adrenaline and dopamine, both of which elevate your mood.

Wake up and smell the flowers

Buy yourself some colorful flowers. One study found that during a five-minute typing assignment, people sitting next to a flowering bouquet were more relaxed than those who sat near foliage-only plants. The smell can be beneficial as well. Don't like flowers? Buy a new bottle of cologne or perfume. When you stimulate the nerves inside your nose, you fire up your limbic system, which is linked with moods and memory. A *Physiology & Behavior* study found that patients in a dentist's office were less anxious and in better moods when the waiting area smelled like orange or lavender¹.

Need a little bit more help to kick start your happy? Here are a few things you can do on a regular basis to mend your bad moods and prevent them from coming back.

Get enough sleep

Some people have difficulty sleeping or finding the time to sleep. Though it can be hard, getting adequate rest is very important for your mood. Being tired can lead to more sadness and irritability.

Set goals

A study conducted in 2006 showed that people who had set goals were less anxious, and viewed themselves more positively. They also found more meaning in their lives than people who didn't set goals. "Setting goals boosts mood by increasing the likelihood of success, which results in better feelings about yourself and life in general," says Jennifer S. Cheavens, Ph.D, author and assistant professor at Ohio State².

Exercise

Go for a morning run, ride a bicycle with your kids, play some tennis, or take the dog for a brisk walk. Regular exercise increases the production of various chemicals in your body. These chemicals are known to improve mood and relieve tension. Exercise reduces feelings of depression and anxiety, and leaves you feeling happier and less stressed. Working out also improves health and helps you look and feel better. This leads to higher confidence and overall self-esteem.

Eat healthy

Eating a well-balanced, healthy diet can be the remedy for frequent blues. Research shows that the following key nutrients may help improve moods and can possibly help alleviate depression: Omega-3 fats, folic acid, B vitamins, folate, and Vitamin D.

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Everyone experiences a bad mood once in a while. Try using some of these techniques to help elevate yours. When your bad mood doesn't seem to go away and you feel stressed, angry, irritable, or hopeless for prolonged periods of time, you may be experiencing a form of depression. In this case, getting help from a doctor or counselor may be a very useful option.

1. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6T0P-4DKJ5KG-5&_user=10&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&view=c&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=fe9e1db593a9700c7b6ba033470b6c51
2. <http://faculty.psy.ohio-state.edu/cheavens/>