

# Improving Your Mood

*Use these tools in the context of your personal exploration of your own peace of mind, as well as with professional support. You may find that aspects of your work or family life cause you upset or anxiety, and support in addressing these issues will help with your overall mood and sense of well-being.*

- Know about depression, be aware of when you are feeling it, and notice what triggers it for you.
- Learn about how it impacts your body and mind, thoughts and feelings.
- Get support. Talk with others about your feelings: it helps!
- Remind yourself you are OK. Sometimes it helps to vocalize, or think consciously about the fact that there is a difference between feeling depressed and life being bad.
- Think of a reassuring and positive short sentence that is reassuring to repeat, an affirmation you can believe in and aspire to.
- Schedule a specific time to go over your worries, consciously explore them, write out your thoughts and fears and ideas. Take them seriously, give them due regard, then move to another activity and let them rest for a while.
- Notice any repetitive thoughts or negative thinking patterns: do you tend to expect the worst? To focus on the negative and not see or remember the positive? To exaggerate the bad? Catch yourself, and work to relieve yourself of this habit.
- Explore what gives you peace and pleasure, and schedule time for these activities each day.
- Explore what makes your life meaningful, and reinforce these activities and aspects of your life.
- Nourish your health:
  - Get adequate sleep, usually at least six to eight hours per day.
  - Eat a balanced, steady diet: usually three balanced meals and three snacks a day, and plenty of water, lead to a more positive mental attitude.
  - Get exercise, working toward 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times per week—every day if possible!—to improve mood and outlook.
  - Cut down on caffeine: caffeine interferes with sleep & can stimulate negative feelings & sensations.
  - Eliminate substance & alcohol use: even a small amount used regularly can make these feelings worse.
  - Stop smoking: smoking can increase irritability and mood instability.
- Learn relaxation tools and techniques: they can be as simple as breathing exercises and listening to peaceful music, or as complicated as yoga classes, meditation practice, progressive relaxation exercises, etc. A simple exercise:

Use slow, deep breaths to reduce upset. Feet on the floor, sitting up straight, count slowly to four as you breathe in through your nose. Breathe deeply into your belly. Then exhale even more slowly through your nose, counting to six or eight. Continue to breathe slowly & deeply, counting each breath for a few minutes, being sure to loosen the muscles in your torso, shoulders, neck, belly with each breath.