

Having a bad day?

Six simple tips to help you through.

From time to time we all have those days when nothing feels right. You might be sad, angry or lacking motivation and even the smallest tasks can seem overwhelming. Whilst 'soldiering on' is a common response, these six simple strategies can be very effective for dealing with negative emotions.

1. **ACKNOWLEDGE:** Simply saying to yourself "I feel really sad right now" or "I'm just having a bad day" can help to reduce emotional reactivity by normalising the feelings as if they are nothing out of the ordinary.
2. **ACCEPTANCE:** Once you have acknowledged how you are feeling, try saying to yourself "I'm having a bad day and that is okay" or "Hard times are a normal part of life, this will pass." This helps to remove any judgment around the situation and will begin to relax the nervous system.
3. **EXPERIENCE:** Don't be afraid to listen to sad music or watch a sad movie. Allowing the feelings to come to the surface, even having a good cry can provide relief. Research suggests that emotional tears excrete stress hormones from the body and crying can stimulate the production of endorphins, the feel-good hormones and our body's natural pain killer.
4. **IMAGINE:** Through images or expressive writing, get creative and think of scenarios that make you feel good. This could be a holiday you are looking forward to, an outing or purchase that you are working towards. Positive possibilities for the future give the brain a goal, otherwise known as a 'preferred outcome' which can help to alleviate feelings of sadness or despair.
5. **GET OUTSIDE:** Nature is a wonderful cure for a low mood. Notice the things you can see, smell and hear. If possible, take your shoes off and feel the ground beneath your feet. A simple walk around the block can be very therapeutic, smile and say hello to a stranger even if you don't feel like it. Animals can also be great for alleviating feelings of sadness or stress. Pets give us unconditional love and are wonderful listeners.

6. **KEEP IT SIMPLE:** 'Back to basics' is the message here. Drink water, breathe deeply, speak slowly, rest if needed and most importantly, be kind to yourself. Telling others "I'm just not feeling myself at the moment" is a perfectly acceptable reason to decline an invitation. A low mood is not the time to be overcommitted, overly social or making major decisions.

Giving yourself permission to experience negative emotions is good self-care. After all, you don't apologise when you're happy, so why feel bad if your mood is a little gloomy? Taking responsibility for your own feelings and using simple strategies to meet your emotional needs will have you feeling better more quickly than fighting or denying them.

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