

Low Mood - Weathering the Storm

Hitting a run of storms, one hunkers down, waiting it out. Why, you may ask, does it feel so stormy? What's the reason? Sometimes in life when low mood hits you, you can find yourself wondering exactly the same thing. Why do I feel this way? Is this how it will be from now on – or how long exactly is this going to last? Is this how I will feel from now on – is this depression?

You are not alone in feeling frustrated or even angry with yourself for feeling low. What can make people even more frustrated with themselves is when the cause doesn't seem obvious. A quick review of their lives reveals a decent enough job they (usually) like, a loving partner or family perhaps, and only the usual money worries. This simply makes things worse surely – as the 'fault' seems an internal one. And "why can't I just be happy!"

Sunshine and happiness seem a long, long way away, and how do you even start to feel better.

If you've ever received the advice about not tensing your body against the cold weather, that relaxing and walking will warm you up just as well - then one place to start would be to say don't get angry and tense at yourself for how you feel. What would happen if you relaxed a bit, accepted that this is your weather – at the moment – and like weather, the certainty is things will change. Once you begin to relax, it can sometimes feel easier to see life with more clarity.

Happiness is just such a lovely, big, round yellow word, and just as we can be amazed at how quickly the sun can come out after a shower – producing the most amazing of rainbows – so perhaps we don't need any really big reasons to feel happy – or that it can arrive easily and simply, by just letting moments happen. Focusing on the here and now helps. Taking time to notice beautiful things around you, spending time with people that make you feel good, focusing on the small things. Don't expect the big clouds to lift immediately. Be patient and kind to yourself. Any damage caused by your storm really can be patched up, and you won't drown. Give yourself the help you need.

Talking to a professional can help get you warmed up into some healthy thinking patterns that can support your mood. Counselling could help you review your life and enable you to identify any particular persistent 'black cloud' thoughts. Are they telling you something? Introducing CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) can also help one to check in with what these automatic negative thoughts are – as well as practice alternative and helpful thoughts between sessions. Counselling may feel like it is just about 'talking', but it can offer so much more. As you become more aware of how you feel, your creativity around how to address behavioural change can increase. Subtle changes in behavioural, cognitive, social and emotional activation can create the most beneficial of changes. Understanding the mind-body connections can also help you support your mood. Kick start your day with a hug – or a series of hugs – which delivers a decent kick of feel good oxytocin to your system. Walking it out at the local park can help boost your flagging vitamin D supplies, and promote serotonin production. As your sympathetic and parasympathetic systems work in opposition, as you relax more and more, your system is not producing cortisol or noradrenalin.

Until one day, you will feel the season change. You will feel it in your heart, a big, warm yellow hum, and you will be taking your jacket off, kicking back and smiling back at that big, ole sun.