

Wellness Wednesday



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8 Quick Ways To Snap Yourself Out Of A Bad Mood

You can't expect to be in a good mood all the time, but there are things you can do to feel better when you're down.

Moods are a part of life, and while it's normal to feel down sometimes, it is never pleasant and likely isn't how you want to feel all day.

While you can't just tell yourself to feel better, you can change the thoughts and behaviors that help influence your mood, according to Ruth Ellingsen, a clinical assistant professor in the psychology department at the University of Oregon.

The first step in turning your bad mood around is identifying what kind of mood you're in, Ellingsen explained.

"It may sound simple but it really involves being mindfully aware of our current state," she said. It's fairly common to ignore our emotions as we go through our daily lives, which makes it pretty impossible to improve your mood, Ellingsen added. How can you feel better if you don't know how you're feeling?

To determine your mood, Ellingsen said that she recommends doing a feeling temperature check using what is known as a feeling thermometer. She said a feeling thermometer has four zones —green (which represents comfortable feelings or a good mood), yellow (which is the next level up on the thermometer, indicating you may feel a little tired, for example), orange (which is another level up, so nervous or frustrated) and red (which is very uncomfortable — like feeling sad, angry or another negative emotion). This easy resource to determine your mood is an excellent tool for measuring your feelings.

Once you're aware of how you're feeling, you can figure out what to do about it and take steps to control your mood before you hit that red zone, which, she said, is an emotional state, and it's hard to snap out of it.

But if you're in the yellow or orange zones, you can easily employ some strategies to turn your mood around. Here are some ways to do so.



Try breathing exercises.

"The one thing that's at all of our disposals is using our 'breath' to get out of a bad mood," said Gregory Sullivan, the program director of the positive coaching and athletic leadership masters program at the University of Missouri.

He recommends trying one of two breathing exercises the next time you feel down. One option is the "physiological sigh," consisting of two quick inhales followed by one long exhale.

"What that does is it removes carbon dioxide from our body and makes us feel a little bit more relaxed," Sullivan said.

This double inhale increases the lung's ability to fill with air and reduces the amount of carbon dioxide in the body, Andrew Huberman, a professor of neurobiology at Stanford Medicine, told the school's podcast. According to Huberman, increased levels of carbon dioxide activate our body's stress response, so being able to push out carbon dioxide also decreases our stress.

And, Sullivan added, breathing impacts the body's vagus nerve and "takes us out of that fight, flight or freeze mentality." So, that long exhale helps you relax.

You can also try the 6-7-8 breathing exercise, which is breathing in through your nose for six seconds, holding your breath for seven seconds, and then exhaling for eight seconds, he noted.

When it comes to breathing exercises, Sullivan said they allow the body to control the mind rather than the mind controlling the mind. And "it shifts our focus away from what may be troubling us," he added.

Turn to fitness.

You've likely heard many times that exercise is good for your mental health, and the same goes for its impact on helping you get out of a bad mood, according to Sarah Sarkis, an executive coach and senior director of performance psychology at Exos, a corporate wellness company.

"Move your body for 15 to 20 minutes," Sarkis said. "You will get a shot of endorphins and adrenaline, which can help us quickly shift perspectives."

When you're not feeling your best, turn to a favorite fitness routine like running, yoga, tennis or indoor cycling. If you're in a bad mood, you won't want to put more pressure on yourself by doing a workout you don't like.

Focus on others instead of yourself.

"Shifting your focus away from yourself is a great way to lift your spirits," Sullivan said. He added that one of the earliest contributors to positive psychology, Chris Peterson, stressed the importance of other people when it comes to your mental health. Helping or building relationships with others will only make you feel better (and help kick that bad mood).

"The simple thing would be deciding that during the day you're going to do some random acts of kindness or ask a coworker if they could use some help," Sullivan said.

So, if you find yourself in a bad mood, you could try reaching out to a friend who is going through a tough time or donating items to an organization that needs support.

Spend time outside.

Study after study has found that nature is good for your mental health — spending time outside can lower stress levels, lower anxiety and, generally, just put a smile on your face.

“Nature can be medicine if we use it that way, and getting outside and changing your perspective can sometimes shift your mood rather quickly,” Sarkis added.

She said that adding music to your time outside can be even more beneficial and can “interrupt the cognitive loop that gets set very quickly once we are ‘in a bad mood.’”

Practice gratitude.

“The most powerful and helpful of all positive emotions is gratitude — being grateful just makes us happier,” Sullivan said, “and being happy and in a bad mood is certainly incompatible behavior.”

To tune into your inner gratitude, think about two or three things in your life for which you’re grateful, he said. These don’t have to be big things, they can be something simple like the smell of a new candle or the weather.

You can practice gratitude at the beginning or the end of the day, though Sullivan said he prefers to do it to close out his day.

“Thinking about gratitude, it helps me sleep,” he said. Bonus: Sleep is an important tool for avoiding bad moods.

Stay in the moment.

“Oftentimes when we’re in a bad mood, we are ruminating about something that happened in the past, or we’re worrying about something in the future,” Ellingsen said.

“Experts believe that about 90% of the things that we worry about never happen,” Sullivan explained. So, most of those worries contributing to your mood are usually pretty pointless.

“We can very intentionally do something behaviorally to bring ourselves to the present moment, whether that’s deep breathing or just tuning into our senses to really bring ourselves away from what we’re worrying about,” Ellingsen stated.



In other words, practicing mindfulness in these moments is a good idea, which can mean doing the breathing exercises mentioned above or trying out meditation.

Sullivan added that another way to get rid of worrisome thoughts about the past or future is to argue with yourself. So, say you are nervous about an upcoming conversation with your boss. Instead of giving in to those thoughts, question why you feel that way. On top of that, remind yourself of the previous talks with your boss that went well. This may help calm you down.

If you're upset, grab an ice pack.

According to Ellingsen, you can do things that act on your body's chemistry and kind of trick yourself into being calm. "One thing that is actually quite effective, particularly if you are really angry ... is to literally cool down your body, so taking an ice pack and putting it on your forehead," she said.

There is something about the physical cooling effect that brings on a sense of relaxation, Ellingsen added.

Focus on your muscles.

Ellingsen said you could also try progressive muscle relaxation to help better your mood. For this, you practice tensing and then relaxing certain parts of your body — so, you can start by making a fist and then relaxing or shrugging your shoulders up high and then letting them go, she said.

"Again, that can trick your body into relaxation mode," Ellingsen noted.

And don't discount your unpleasant emotions — they're normal.

"While snapping out of a bad mood may be really helpful in the short term, learning to accept our emotions, both positive and negative, might be the better strategy in the long term," Sullivan said.

"Positive psychology is the study of well-being, and while being happy is part of well-being, well-being doesn't mean that we're happy all the time," he added.

According to Sullivan, a key aspect of well-being is the ability to accept the full array of human emotions — from excitement and joy to boredom and pain. "It's also important to note how ephemeral our emotions are; they come and go," Sullivan said, "knowing that is a huge step in dealing with a bad mood and negative emotions." Meaning even if you do feel upset, you won't feel that way forever.

What's more, Sullivan said we are genetically predisposed toward negativity, which goes back to our caveman ancestors who used negativity to stay safe from real threats. To an extent, this still keeps us safe today, "but at times, we can be overwhelmed by that negative bias. It's important to find a level of emotional harmony, and that's where positive psychology and the interventions that have been created through research can really help with that," Sullivan said.

In the spirit of listening to your moods, Sarkis added that "moods don't have to hijack your day if you practice ... how to move through your moods in an emotionally healthy way." This can mean following some of the practices above, like breathing exercises, fitness and general mindfulness, to better equip you for all of the moods — unpleasant and not — that come your way.

While it's normal to be in a bad mood occasionally, you should be aware of certain warning signs.

Simply snapping out of a bad mood is not a reality for some people. "Moods can also be influenced by other psychological factors such as the diagnosis of a mood disorder," Sarkis said. Suppose you feel sad for most of the day for at least two weeks. In that case, it is worth talking to a therapist, Alayna L. Park, an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Oregon, previously told HuffPost.



SKILLET FRENCH ONION CHICKEN



335 Calories | PREP TIME: 10 mins | COOK TIME: 45 mins | TOTAL TIME: 1 hr
YIELD: 4 | COURSE: Dinner | CUISINE: American

INGREDIENTS

4 boneless skinless chicken cutlets (16 to 20 ounces total)
2 teaspoons olive oil
2 medium yellow onions thinly sliced
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
½ teaspoon dried thyme or 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
3 ounces Gruyère cheese coarsely grated (about 1 cup)
½ cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon kosher salt
pepper to taste
½ teaspoon paprika
2 teaspoons unsalted butter
½ cup chicken broth

If you love caramelized onions and melted cheese, you will love this Skillet French Onion Chicken, a great way to jazz up chicken breasts!

In this easy skillet recipe, thin chicken breast cutlets are cooked and topped with caramelized onions and melted Gruyère cheese which results in a flavorful, rich tasting meal.

Sides are endless!

This recipe is very versatile and works well with a variety of sides. Some ideas include rice, a big salad, broccolini, asparagus, orzo, sweet potatoes or roasted radishes.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 piece, Calories: 335 kcal, Carbohydrates: 16.5 g, Protein: 33.5 g, Fat: 14.5 g, Saturated Fat: 6 g, Cholesterol: 111.5 mg, Sodium: 570.5 mg, Fiber: 1.5 g, Sugar: 9.5 g

Source: Skinnytaste.com



INSTRUCTIONS



- In a large nonstick skillet heat the oil over medium heat.
- Add the onions and 1/4 teaspoon salt, increase to medium-high, and cook, stirring frequently, until they start to brown around the edges.
- Turn the heat to medium-low and add the balsamic vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, and thyme. Continue to cook, stirring occasionally, for 20 to 25 minutes, or until the onions are very tender. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of water to deglaze. Set aside and wipe out the skillet.
- If the chicken is not uniformly thin, place it between two sheets of plastic wrap and pound with a meat tenderizer or the bottom of a heavy pan until thin but still intact. Season to taste with 1 teaspoon salt and black pepper and set aside.
- In a wide, shallow bowl, whisk together the flour, pinch of salt, and paprika.
- Set a large nonstick skillet over medium heat and melt 1 teaspoon butter.
- Dredge two of the chicken cutlets in the seasoned flour, then shake off the excess and lay them side by side in the pan.
- Cook the chicken for 3 minutes, or until lightly browned, then flip and cook for 3 more minutes. Set aside on a dish and repeat with the remaining butter and chicken. Set aside.
- Combine the broth and 1 tablespoon of the flour mixture and mix, add it to the skillet and whisk on low heat, 1 minute, until it thickens. Toss the rest of the flour out.
- Return the chicken to the skillet, top with onions and cheese and cover. Cook low 3 to 5 minutes, until the cheese is melted and bubbling.

FEATURED EXERCISE

<https://www.self.com/gallery/beginner-kettlebell-moves>Featured Exercise ► **Single-Arm Row** ✓» **Do it:**

The single-arm row works your back and biceps. Plus, because it's a single-arm move, your core will also need to fire to keep you stable.

- Stand with your feet hip-width apart, holding a kettlebell by the handle in your right hand with your arm at your side, palm facing towards your body. Step forward about two feet with your left foot, and rest your left hand on your left quad. This is the start-ing position.
- With your core engaged, hinge forward at the hips, push your behind back, and bend your left knee, making sure you don't round your shoulders. (Your hip mobility and hamstring flexibility will dictate how far you can bend over.)
- Gaze at the ground a few inches in front of your feet to keep your neck in a comfortable position.
- Pull the weight up toward your chest, keeping your elbows hugged close to your body, and squeezing your shoulder blade for two seconds at the top of the movement. Your elbow should go past your back as you bring the weight toward your chest.
- Slowly lower the weight by extending your arms toward the floor. That's 1 rep.



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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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to see a
CHANGE
if you don't
make one.

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