



APPRENTICE'S GUIDE TO LOW MOOD AND DEPRESSION

What's under the bonnet?



We all know that a car can look really good on the outside but that doesn't mean that all is well. Or it can be a bit old and in need of a fix up or service and work absolutely fine.

It can be the same with people. We often put on a brave face and pretend everything's OK when really there's lots going on beneath the surface that isn't working or is about to go wrong.

What are the warning signs?

THE WARNING LIGHTS

Feeling isolated and unable to relate to other people.
Feeling negative, guilty, worthless and down on yourself or empty and numb.

SPEEDING

Taking risks.
Using drink, drugs, cigarettes, gambling etc to cope.

WHAT'S UNDER THE BONNET?

Not firing on all cylinders

Feeling lethargic and lacking in energy, avoiding social events and activities you usually enjoy, loss of libido.

Finding it hard to get started

Feeling demotivated, no 'get up and go'.

Flat battery

General lack of interest in things, poor concentration, no 'get up and go,' difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much, feeling tired all the time.



BODYWORK AND SCREEN WASH

Stopping caring about what you look like, not bothering to wash so often or neglecting your health eg not visiting the doctor or dentist if you need to. These could all be signs of low mood or depression.

This is something that might be easier to spot in others – although it's important not to jump to conclusions. Some people (and cars) can look a bit scruffy and be perfectly ok.

FEELING DEFLATED

Feeling flat, tearful or down can also be a typical symptom of low mood or depression.

EMPTY FUEL TANK

Running on empty is not good for you or your car. When we are low in mood or depressed, we often neglect ourselves, don't eat properly or stop doing the things that keep us well.

CLUTCH SLIPPING

Difficulty speaking, thinking clearly or making decisions.

Don't ignore the warning lights


If you recognise any of these signs in yourself you might be suffering from low mood or depression. Don't ignore it. Things might just get worse and then become much harder to fix.

Here's what to do:


- **Talk to someone about the problem.** This is a good first step. If talking to someone you know feels scary there are plenty of places out there where you can chat anonymously eg the **Samaritans** [Samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org) | **116 123** or **CALM** <https://www.thecalmzone.net> | **0800 585858**. Or try **Ben** which offers help and support for those working in the automotive industry <https://ben.org.uk/get-help/#> | **Helpline: 08081 311 333**.


- If you feel the issue is about work or is affecting your work, talk to your academic trainer or assessor.


- **Practise 5 ways to wellbeing.** These are 5 simple steps which, if you manage to do daily, can help enhance your mental wellbeing:

 **Connect:** It's good to stay connected to other people.

 **Keep Active:** Exercise or any kind of activity is good for our physical and mental health.

 **Learn:** This doesn't have to be anything major (although it can be), just learning a simple new skill or fact really helps.

 **Notice:** When we're feeling down or worried, we often get stuck inside our own heads. Taking time to notice what going on around you really helps.

 **Give:** Giving to others is really good for us, as well as the other people. There are lots of ways, big and small, we can give to others. Even little things like giving someone positive feedback or a kind gesture really helps.



- **Practise self-care.** This means valuing yourself enough to look after yourself properly, including eating well and doing the things you enjoy. Sometimes, when we're low in mood or depressed we don't feel we're worth looking after or we can't be bothered. At first, it might feel like you're going through the motions but it will slowly become easier.
- **Spend time in nature.** There is lots of evidence that spending time outside really helps lift your mood. If you have access to a park, countryside or open space, try running, cycling or walking or even just sitting outdoors as much as you can.
- **Practise self-compassion.** Start being kind to yourself instead of beating yourself up when you are feeling bad or think you have messed up in some way. This helps you to calm down and respond to difficult situations and feelings better.
- **Try mindfulness.** Mindfulness is the art of living in the present moment – not worrying about the past or future. It requires practice but can really help with low mood, depression, anxiety and sleep problems. For more information and a guided course, try this link: <https://www.army.mod.uk/people/join-well/managing-stress/mindfulness-course/>
- **Get some professional help.** Talk to a counsellor, your GP or mental health services. <https://hubofhope.co.uk> will help you find the right place near you.

If you are in crisis or feeling suicidal, call 111 or go to A & E.

For more links see our **Wellbeing MOT**.