



Tips to help improve and support mood

The impact of the pandemic on mental wellbeing has been significant for many people across the globe. Recent literature, research and an ISIC sponsored consumer survey of 5,170 people¹, have highlighted the negative impacts on mood brought on by lockdowns and associated restrictions, including an increase in overall prevalence of depression² and anxiety³.

Giuseppe Grosso, Assistant Professor, Department of Biomedical and Biotechnological Sciences School of Medicine, University of Catania, shares his top tips on small ways that people can help support their mental wellbeing, which are provided below.

- 1. Maintaining routine** — this is particularly important when working or studying from home. Keeping to regular waking and sleep times, taking regular breaks and filling your day with activities and rituals that are important to you such as walking, cycling, reading, enjoying a coffee break, or setting time aside to cook a healthy meal can help.
- 2. Eating and drinking healthily** — survey findings reveal that nearly a third of people (30%) have found that eating and drinking more healthily in lockdown and associated restrictions has helped improve their mood¹. This can be as simple as incorporating more fruit and vegetables into your diet, eating at regular meal times and ensuring that you stay hydrated.
- 3. Keeping in touch with friends and loved ones** — this can be done via a simple text message, scheduling regular calls, or making plans to meet up for a walk (where permitted). Keeping in touch with loved ones can be helpful in lifting moods and distracting yourself from negative thought patterns.
- 4. Keeping active** — consumer survey findings show that over a quarter found taking some form of regular exercise helpful in lifting their mood¹. If you're unable to access gym classes, an alternative approach could be as simple as going for a walk or run, or even following a virtual workout video.
- 5. Spending time in nature** — research has found that people who spend at least 120 minutes in nature per week are more likely to report good health and wellbeing, than those with no contact⁴. Combining the outdoors with your daily exercise is an easy way of maximising nature's calming effects.
- 6. Taking things slow and being mindful** — remembering to take a break can be particularly helpful during busy days to help avoid feeling overwhelmed or stressed. Taking a coffee break, for instance, and focussing on the aroma and taste when drinking can be a great way to practice mindfulness and being present.
- 7. Recognising what can and cannot be controlled** — this is particularly important with regards to changes to your environment and negative news items. Assess what aspects of your environment are in your control and know that you can positively benefit your wellbeing by focusing on these.
- 8. Maintaining a healthy relationship with social media** — although a highly useful way to stay connected with friends and the world around us, social media can also expose users to a lot of negativity, particularly when it comes to daily news. Restricting time spent on social media and limiting notifications, can help to reduce potential exposure to less positive content.

References

- ¹ Censuswide Pan European adults survey (March, 2021)
- ² Bueno-Notivol, J. et al. (2021), Prevalence of depression during the COVID-19 outbreak: A meta-analysis of community-based studies. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*, 21(1).
- ³ Santabárbara, J. et al. (2021), Prevalence of anxiety in the COVID-19 pandemic: An updated meta-analysis of community-based studies. *Progress in Neuro-Psychopharmacology and Biological Psychiatry*, 109.
- ⁴ White, M.P., Alcock, I., Grellier, J. et al. (2019), Spending at least 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with good health and wellbeing. *Sci Rep*, 9, 7730. [Published online.](#)