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5 Things to Do When You're Feeling Down

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Sadness, feeling flat, or even feeling really down will happen to most of us at some stage in our lives ... it's part of being human. These feelings could be triggered by a loss or multiple losses over the years (i.e., relationship breakups, work stress or loss of a job, death of a loved one), or these feelings could seem to come from nowhere. And while it's common that we all feel sadness, it's common too that these feelings will pass – either when our circumstances change or over the course of time.

However, if you feel like you're stuck and you don't seem to be moving towards your usual happy self, then maybe the following 5 suggestions will help.

1. **Get moving, eat well and get good sleep**

These may sound like simple things to do; however when we're down they are the things that we tend to neglect first. Research demonstrates that **exercising regularly** is beneficial for our mental health – it releases our 'feel good' hormones, it can be a great stress reliever, and it can help us distract away from our painful emotions. Like exercise, **feeding our body** with the 'good' stuff helps us to think better, feel better and cope better. So rather than reaching for comfort food, try reaching for wholefoods – with the occasionally yummy treat, of course. And getting the best **sleep** we can helps regulate our emotions, it helps us to cope better, and it's actually great for our body too.

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2. Talk it out

Being able to share how we're feeling is really important. Often when we get to talk about our problems with someone we trust we feel **understood** and **validated**. This in turn can help us with gaining perspective regarding our problems, and problem solving. So, reach out to someone.

3. Write it all down

When our thoughts and feelings busily rush around in our head and bodies, often we can get 'caught up' in these thoughts and feelings. And sometimes we tend to believe all these thoughts and feelings are true ("I'll never get over this" "I'll never feel happy again" "No-one feels like this" "No-one will ever love me"). By writing down everything that's been troubling you (regardless of how big or small you think these things are), you can then get your mind to **take a step back** from them, which in turn, will help you with the next two steps.

4. Make an action plan

Look at everything you have written down (all the things that have been troubling you). Now go through this list one-by-one, and decide whether you can do anything about them. If you can – **put it on a separate page** titled 'Action Plan'. If you can't – see if you can either let that thought or feeling go (you could try watching the thought or feeling and being uninterested with it, you could try manipulating that thought by seeing it backwards or twisting it in your mind, you could try breathing in to the sensations in your body and gently accepting those sensations rather than fighting them).

5. Take action

With everything that you put on your 'Action Plan' page, write down 1, 2 or 3 things that you can do to **take action**. And make sure these are **specific actions** that you can **achieve**. If you just write down 'Stop feeling lonely' I can guarantee that won't work. If you feel lonely then maybe your action plan could include 'Catch up with Susie and Mike for dinner this week', 'Go to an exercise class 3 times a week', 'Go to the movies with Harry this week, and plan a catch up with Harry every other week'. And you guessed it; the final part of this step is **taking the action!**

If you are feeling down and flat, see if you can engage in one of these steps above. It is definitely hard ... but you'll notice the benefits soon.

However, if you're finding that your sadness is making it difficult to perform everyday activities, concentrate at work, isolates you socially, you find you're lethargic, and you've lost pleasure in activities you used to find pleasurable, then seeking professional assistance might be for you.

If you would like help in managing your thoughts, feelings or behaviours, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195, amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)