

# Feeling Low, Sad or Depressed

The Child Brain Injury Trust is a national charity supporting anyone affected by childhood acquired brain injury. The following information has been developed to help the reader understand more about brain injury and some of the associated issues. Every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. If you require more immediate support or assistance please contact our **Helpline 0303 3032248** or email [helpline@cbituk.org](mailto:helpline@cbituk.org) where we will be able to respond to your specific enquiry and offer support.

## Feeling Low, Sad or Depressed

We mentioned in the section about “Looking after yourself” that it is important for you, your child and indeed all the family to care for yourself. This section looks briefly at depression and feeling low or sad, whether this is a normal feeling or whether it would be useful to get some help.

### Is it normal to feel this way?

At some point in all our lives everyone will feel a bit low, down in the dumps or sad about something. In fact, it would be strange and perhaps worrying if we did not, as things never go as smoothly or as we wish all the time and if we did not react when things were difficult, and then we might feel nothing at all, not even happiness or joy when things were going well.



### What makes me feel like this?

Many things can make us feel depressed. Some people get generally more depressed than others and this may always been so for you, even before the events which caused your child’s ABI. It is important for you to remember that you will have gone through a very difficult time when your child was ill/had their accident which could well have shocked you, given rise to fear that he/she would not survive and caused a great deal of worry and stress. At the time you may have felt you were coping fine, almost on automatic pilot, but once the crisis is over then the emotions can kick back in with vengeance. You may feel a great loss over the fact that your child has changed and is not as s/he was before, or loss at the future hope you had for her/him.

There may also be continuing, and what may seem like endless worry ahead about what is going to happen and how you and the family will cope. All this can take a toll on both physical and mental health. Depression can also occur in conjunction with anxiety – please see our fact sheet on **Anxiety**. If you cannot sleep because you are going over and over what has happened, or have flashbacks about the accident or events around the incident when your child acquired their brain injury, please look at our fact sheet on **Post-Traumatic Stress**.

### How might I know if I need help?

Obviously, if you are crying a lot and feeling very sad or feel you cannot go on these are signs that it is important to do something about this. But sometimes, things are not as clear as this. You may not be crying or feeling sad, but rather just feeling empty or numb, so that nothing seems to touch you emotionally, and you may feel you cannot laugh, smile or feel anything at all. Other signs are that you may lose your appetite or just want to eat all the time, find it difficult to sleep, or perhaps just want to sleep or sit about all day. Loss of interest in everything and everyone about you and loss of interest and enjoyment of sex can also be possible signs. It can be difficult to plan or do anything, and everything

may seem just too much to cope with, so that you find yourself doing things mechanically in a sort of daze. Sometimes it can feel as if no one else can really understand. You may not feel all of these things; people are different and react differently.

### **When will I know I need some help?**

Usually the above feelings last for a short time, but sometimes they persist for week or months, and nothing seems to shift them, even when everything else appears to have got back to normal. It is then you may need some help.

### **What can I do?**

Talking to someone you trust at first to let them know how you feel maybe helpful, but a visit to your GP is a good idea, trying to plan it so that you have the last session of the clinic so you have time to talk to them properly. This may lead to a referral to a psychiatrist or clinical psychologist, as there are effective talking therapies. Sometimes medication is prescribed for a short time. In addition, there are a number of confidential helplines and websites which may be useful, and some are listed at the bottom of this page. There are also helpful self-help books and self-help groups but these may be best used in conjunction with talking to a therapist.

Our Child and Family Support Coordinators fully understand the emotions you are going through, so please do chat to them about your feelings as well and they may be able to help signpost you to other professionals.

Useful helplines and websites:

The Samaritans: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

This is a 24 hour confidential telephone service and local numbers can be found on their website or in the local telephone directory. This is not just a service for people who are suicidal.

Mind: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

They have useful information and advice on line

NHS Website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

They have useful information and advice on line

### **Further Reading**

#### **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach**

Wilson & Branch, (2006) *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Dummies: Common sense techniques for improving your mind and mood*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd

Padesky & Greenberger (1995). *Mind over Mood: Change how you feel by changing the way you think*. The Guildford Press.

There are also free online CBT courses, e.g.

#### **Living Life to the Full**

<http://littfi.com/Home/tabid/36/Default.aspx>



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The website requires registration, but it is a free resource and includes worksheets, videos, exercises etc. using the cognitive behavioural frame.

### **Mindfulness approach**

The author *John Kabat-Zinn* writes very accessible and readable books on the technique of mindfulness to manage overwhelming emotions:

Kabat-Zinn (2004). *Wherever you go, there you are: mindfulness meditation for Everyday life*. Paitkus Books Ltd.

Thich Nhat Hahn (2010). *Peace is Every Step: the path of mindfulness in everyday life*. Bantam Books.

Orsillo & Roemer (2011) *The Mindful Way through Anxiety: Break Free from Chronic Worry and Reclaim Your Life*. The Guildford Press.

Teasdale, Segal & Kabat-Zin (2007) *The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness*. The Guildford Press. (Includes Guided Meditation Practices CD).

Crimmins (2000.) *Where is the mango princess: A journey back from brain injury*. Vintage Books, New York.

Cathy Crimmins has written an account of the effects of brain injury on her husband and on her family.

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