



10 ways to help teenagers shift their moods

by Michael Grose



Ever had a teenager in a grumpy mood and she just doesn't know how to make herself feel better? Alternatively, you may have experienced a teenager who comes home from school so angry that there's steam coming from his ears.

Feeling emotional extremes is part of life, but that doesn't mean we need to stay in those states. Teenagers aren't necessarily hostages to their moods – with a little knowledge and effort they can shift their mood to a more pleasant and productive place.

Here are ten ways teens can shift their moods:

1. "Take a breathe....take a few actually"

Perhaps the simplest way for a teenager to feel better, whether it's to settle some nerves before a talk or reduce anxiousness before meeting new friends, is to take three or four deep breaths. Deepbreathing releases dopamine into their system, moving kids toward the yellow or green zones on the Mood Meter.

2. "Picture yourself..."

Encourage your kids to carry a picture of a favourite thing – person, pet or holiday – to help them move them to a happier place when needed. Pictures and photos can impact at a deep emotional level. Anyone who carries a picture of a loved one with them will know how powerful a visual reminder can be.

3. "Let me entertain you...."

Watching a movie, reading a book and playing a favourite game are great ways to move moods to more desirable places. These distractions are great for teenagers' mental health and super mood shifters as well.

4. "DO something...."

Boys are action-oriented and tend to act out their feelings more than girls. When they are happy they dance and gig around and when they are mad many become aggressive or just more active. Boys also can use action to dissipate emotion or shift their mood to a better place. If they are angry then insist they play an active game or sport to get the energy out. Lethargy, boredom and other passive emotional states too can be shifted through physical activity.

5. "Listen to the music..."

Ever watched a happy scene in a movie and your whole body tenses up when the background music suddenly becomes suspenseful? Music will shift an emotional state quicker than anything else.

6. "They get by with a little help from their friends...."

Encourage help-seeking behaviours as a way of shifting moods and emotions. It's natural for teenagers to seek solitude when they feel down or have experienced less than pleasant events. They need time to process events internally. Boys will often visit their caves (aka bedrooms) to process their emotions while girls are more likely to use a keyboard (formerly it was a diary) to help them work through difficult feelings and events. At some stage they need to emerge and seek the company of others whether for distraction or to share the worries. Seeking the support of family and friends is a fabulous long-term mood changer.

7. "Think yourself to a different mood..."

I remember my mother saying, "For goodness sake stop moping about and stop that ridiculous brooding!" While her take-no-prisoners approach may not be everyone's cup of tea her message has resonance for every parent. If I could think myself into a negative mood then I could also think my way to a better mood was her notion. She was right. Kids can think happy thoughts by thinking about happier times, happier places and happier events. Their thoughts do impact on their feelings so they may as well use them to their advantage.

8. 'Talk to yourself...'

Sustained positive self-talk is one of the best ways to move from a place of anxiety to a place of optimism and hope. The trick is for teenagers to catch their negative self-talk and replace it with a mantra such as "I can do this. I've done it before and I'll do it again." Change your self-talk; change your moods! The hard part is remembering to do it.

9. "Mind the meditation...."

It's fabulous to see many schools are now adding mindfulness and meditation to their well-being programs. Both are terrific strategies to help teenagers relax and ease the tensions and stresses of life. Both involve controlling the mental clutter that can overwhelm them which in turns impacts on how they feel.

10. "Get a good night's sleep..."

Parents of past generations seemed to be adept at reminding children and young people, "Get a good night's sleep and things will be right in the morning." There's a great deal of scientific evidence to support the fact that your teenager's emotional health is linked with the amount of sleep he or she gets. With the high number of teenagers currently experiencing anxiety and depression one great place to start is a good night's sleep.

If your teenager uses ineffective strategies such as rumination and worry, acting out or self-blame then help them choose more effective strategies from the list above to regulate their emotions. Decide on two or three ideas that seem like a good fit for your teenager and use them to build their repertoire of emotional intelligence strategies.



Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's the author of 10 books for parents including Thriving! and the best-selling Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It, and his latest release Spoonfed Generation: How to raise independent children.