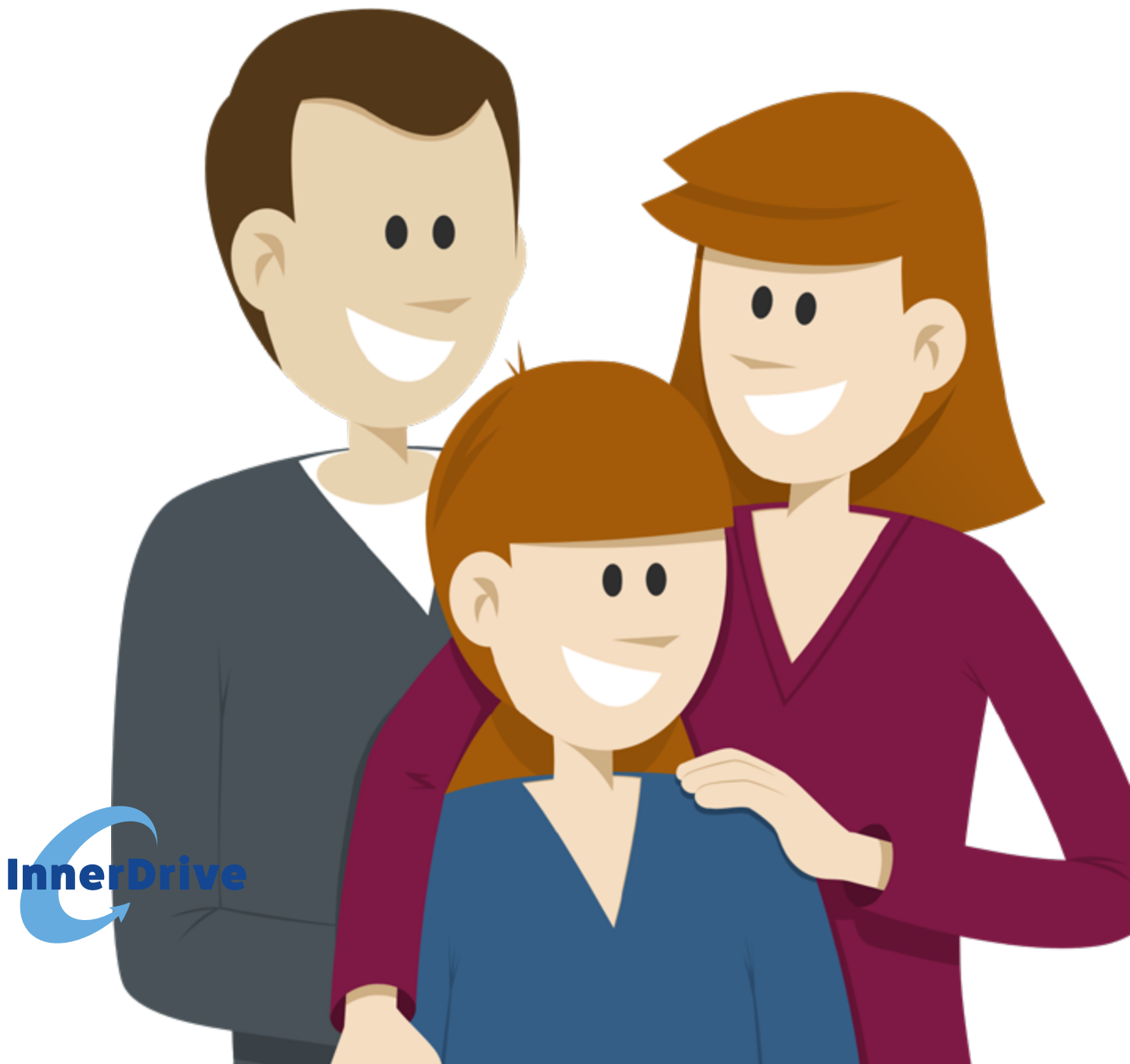


# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FOR PARENTS

InnerDrive resources



# TEENAGERS AND SOCIAL REJECTIONS



## WHY THIS STUDY?

James Bond actor Daniel Craig once noted that as an actor, *"you get used to the rejection and you don't take it personally"*. However, for many, social rejection hurts a lot. The question is, does it hurt some more than others?

Having to navigate the teenage years whilst learning and performing in school can be a real challenge for our students. Keen to test if they are less immune to social rejection than adults, researchers from University College London and Purdue University ran [a fascinating study in 2012](#). Their results, published in the journal of Brain and Cognition, provide an interesting window into the world of teenagers.

They had young teenagers, old teenagers and adults play an electronic game of catch. In a virtual online room, they were one of three players. Unbeknownst to them, the other two players were automatic bots playing to a set programme.

To start with, the other two bots would include the participants by throwing the ball to them. Other times, they would exclude them, by only playing with each other. The researchers then compared how the participants thought and felt afterwards as a result.

## THE MAIN FINDINGS

The researchers found that being socially rejected made all three groups feel worse. However, they also found that being excluded from their peer group had the following impact:

#1 Both younger and older teenagers felt much worse than adults did.

#2 Younger teenagers had the biggest drop in mood.

#3 Younger teenagers had the biggest increase in anxiety.

#4 Older teenagers had lower self-esteem than adults.

STUDIES THAT EVERY TEACHER NEEDS TO KNOW

#8

THE ONE ABOUT TEENAGERS AND SOCIAL REJECTION

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**THE STUDY**

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The researchers found that being socially rejected made all three groups feel worse. However, they also found that being excluded from their peer group had the following impact:

- Both the younger and older teenagers felt **much worse** than the adults did.
- Both younger and older teenagers had a **bigger drop in mood** than adults.
- Younger teenagers had the **biggest increase in anxiety**.
- Older teenagers had generally **lower self-esteem** than adults.

Ref: Sebastian et al. 2010. *Brain and Cognition*  
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## RELATED RESEARCH

Research into the fear of failure has found that the strongest emotion people experience after failure is one of shame and embarrassment. This chimes with the university's research, as it emphasises how important group status is to us and shows how anxieties about being ostracised are a key component behind social situations and interactions.

The authors of this study noted that their findings "*suggest that teenagers are hypersensitive to rejection*" and that this was "*in line with previous work showing that social anxiety is at its peak at age 15*".

We now know more about the teenage brain than we ever did before. It is structured and functions differently to the adult mind. Other research has demonstrated how teenagers

are [more likely to take risks](#), need more sleep, struggle to read emotions and have less self-control than adults. Furthermore, they are more likely to be influenced by the group and feel the effects of peer-pressure, with teenagers being more likely to make bad decisions when in the company of their friends than compared to adults.

This effect may be particularly pronounced in teenage girls, with one study finding that they suffer a significant decrease in self-esteem during their teenage years. This impact probably has a large environmental factor to it, with the messages young women get from the media and online differing to those that young men get.

Another study found that this may be linked to the hormone cortisol, which is often referred to as the '[stress hormone](#)'. Following a social rejection, only female participants were found to have an increase in cortisol.

## CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

A person will never be surrounded by so many people their own age than when they are in education. If teenagers are more sensitive to social rejection than adults, then navigating their teenage years at school presents a tricky tightrope for them to cross. Excessive levels of stress can hinder learning, concentration and memory, meaning that what happens out on the playground (and also online on social media after school) can impact what happens in the classroom. Therefore it is important that we explicitly teach students strategies that help them manage their anxieties and frustrations. This includes [techniques such as](#) self-talk, deep breathing, refocusing and reframing.

**Make sure your child has a great, supportive group of people around them.**

It is also interesting to note the different reactions that teenagers and adults had in this study. This shows how two people can experience the same event and have very different reactions. This does not mean that teenagers are

over-reacting when they experience social rejection. To them, at this stage of their life, social standing is an important currency. Finding a balance between empathising with them whilst also putting the latest slight into perspective is crucial.

## **READ MORE**

For more tips, advice and strategies about the unique challenges of the teenage brain, read these blogs:

- [Understanding the teenage brain](#)
- [How the world views teenagers](#)
- [What we know about teenagers and screen time](#)
- [Why do teenagers get wet in the rain?](#)

# THE MOST POWERFUL SENTENCE A PARENT CAN SAY



The sentences parents deliver to their children often have more of an impact than they realise. But choosing a good sentence to say is tricky as parents want to make sure they are saying the 'right thing'. So, what is the most powerful sentence parents can say?

We think the answer is simply: "I'm proud of you". So, what makes it such a positive phrase?

## REDUCES FEAR OF FAILURE

Children [often fear failure](#) and worry about letting their parents down. Therefore, parents should try and utilise the phrase "I'm proud of you", as it lets the child know that they will always have their parents' support and will give them the confidence to experiment with new strategies.

## INCREASES SELF-ESTEEM

[Research has shown](#) that the use of sentences such as "I'm proud of you", which are considered displays of parental warmth, can increase a child's self-esteem. Having a high level of self-esteem is beneficial as it makes the child feel as though



they are valued as an individual and that others accept them for who they are.

Using phrases such as “I’m proud of you” also stops parents from overvaluing the talents of their child, and comparing them to others. If parents consistently praise their child by saying “You were so much better than X”, this can lead to negative outcomes for the child, for example increased levels of narcissism.

## **DISCOURAGES A FIXED MINDSET**

In [one particular study](#), researchers looked to investigate whether the [type of praise](#) a child is given has an impact on their [mindset and reaction to failure](#). Children were either given ‘process’ or ‘person’ praise. Process praise focuses on the strategy the child is using and the effort they put in, for example “I’m proud of how hard you tried”, whereas person praise concentrates on natural ability (which children have little control over e.g. “you’re so talented”).

Giving process praise using phrases such as “I’m so proud of you” is something parents should be aiming for, as this promotes [a growth mindset](#), which not only leads to improved academic attainment in the classroom, but also a higher level of [performance in sport](#) and more [pro-social behaviours](#) outside the classroom.



**THE MOST POWERFUL WORDS A PARENT CAN SAY**  
by @inner\_drive | www.innerdrive.co.uk

**"I'M SO PROUD OF YOU"**

**Because it...**

- 1 Reduces fear of failure**  
Often a child's greatest fear is letting you down. Using this sentence demonstrates your support and gives your child the confidence to experiment with new strategies.
- 2 Increases self-esteem**  
Showing warmth and affection can increase your child's self-esteem, as it helps them feel as though you accept them for who they are.
- 3 Stops development of a fixed mindset**  
Praising your child for the effort they put in, rather than their natural ability, can improve their reaction to failure and promotes a growth mindset.
- 4 It's what a child wants to hear**  
Your child is not looking for technical or tactical guidance but instead wants you to offer encouragement and common sense advice on effort, attitude and practical aspects.

**Parental praise is very important to a child - as long as it used correctly.**

## **IT'S WHAT YOUR CHILD WANTS TO HEAR**

Research has shown that [when children play sport](#), they are not looking for their parents to give them technical or tactical advice but instead want them to offer encouragement using phrases such as "I'm so proud of you".

Parents need to remember that they are not their child's coach. Their role is to support their child and the strategies employed by the coach. Children want their parents to offer them common sense advice, for example on effort, attitude and practical aspects such as remembering the correct kit, rather than performance related advice.

## **FINAL THOUGHT**

Saying "I'm proud of you" is so simple, yet research has proved this type of sentence to have very powerful effects. When children hear this phrase from their parents they are less likely to fear failure and instead feel encouraged to learn and try new techniques. They also experience an increased sense of self-worth, which leads to improvements in well-being and social relationships. With such outcomes being realised, we hope that this single sentence will allow children to feel liberated to play and enjoy sport in the ways in which they are meant to.



## BLOG 3

# HOW TO WORK FROM HOME EFFECTIVELY



We are in the middle of testing times. Handling the current situation has required a shift in the daily routines and working lives of many. Although this may be a significant and worrying change for some, it is important to keep a level head as we all push forward and [cope with these changes](#).

Working from home can prove especially difficult for teachers having to teach remotely, and parents having to balance looking after their child whilst also working. This may feel overwhelming, but there are some simple changes you can implement to make this work for you.

## WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

An online community-based outsourcing company called Airtasker carried out [a study](#) in 2019 to assess the effects of working from home. They found that employees benefitted as they didn't have to commute to work. It also increased productivity and led to employees following healthier lifestyles. The same researchers also found that office workers are unproductive for an average of 37 minutes a day, whereas those who worked from home were only unproductive for 27 minutes a day. These results show that working from home can have positive effects, even if it is unsettling at first.

## WORKING FROM HOME FOR TEACHERS

This is a new and difficult experience for many, especially for teachers. The very nature of this job requires you to be interactive and engaging - maintaining this through social distancing may be confusing. This unprecedented challenge comes with a lot of pressure. Everyone is worrying how this situation will impact students, but teachers are experiencing this for the first time too.

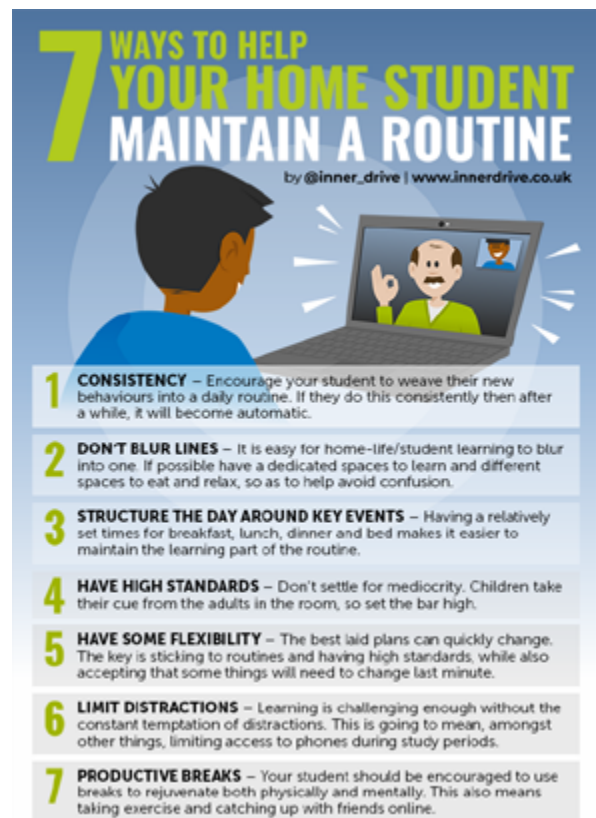
It is important to take the time you need to get to grips with working from home and online teaching. If you're struggling, don't be afraid to [ask for help](#). Your colleagues are in the same boat and ready to discuss the best ways to create effective teaching for all students. Try to avoid implementing new techniques, and instead bring it back to the basics. Focus on solidifying student knowledge and providing simple tasks when introducing new topics.

### ***Take Care of Yourself***

In times of uncertainty, stress happens very easily. This can negatively impact the way we work and our productivity levels. [Looking after your mental health](#) and maintaining your physical health is especially important to keep yourself calm. Remind yourself that staying home is the best way you can contribute to controlling this situation. Take breaks when you feel you need them and try and spend some time away from your screen. [Set daily goals](#) that are achievable, and maintain a routine that keeps you active, productive, and relaxed.

### ***Interact with Your Students***

Clear, concise communication is the key to effective teaching. Whether you are video calling students or sending



them work at the start of each school day, the lines of communication need to be open and easy to access. Give students your email address or create a

Slack for your classroom. This will allow students to ask you questions whilst helping you to keep track of their progress. Most importantly, make sure you [give them excellent feedback](#) - this is the best way to help them learn independently more easily.

**This situation takes some adjusting to - don't be too hard on yourself.**

## **HOW TO HELP STUDENTS**

School plays a very important social role in the lives of students. Many will miss break times with their friends, collaborating on work and taking part in afterschool activities.

To help them get through this isolation, boredom and sometimes frustration, encourage them to continue enjoying their learning - just in different ways. Here are a few ways you can make the transition easier:

- Engage with them via video lessons and discussions.
- Give them your email so they can ask you questions as they would in the classroom.
- Introduce them to interactive learning platforms.
- Use this as an opportunity to open their minds up to different types of learning.

## **ADVICE FOR PARENTS**

These are challenging times for parents too - many have had to adapt to working from home, all the while keeping their children entertained, motivated and healthy. As well as [these 11 things parents can do help their child thrive at school](#) in normal times, here's some more helpful advice.

### ***Create a Schedule***

During this time, schools may provide a timetable for

students to follow. Have a look at this and make some changes to adapt it to your child. Help them maintain a regular routine by waking up early, having breakfast, getting dressed, and then sitting down to get started with their school work. Teachers will have provided them with enough work to keep their brains stimulated but it is up to you to keep them focused. Create a schedule that leaves space for a family lunch, play, and enough time to get your child's school work finished. A physical timetable will help to keep them on track and make the transition to remote learning a little easier.

### ***Their Brain Needs a Break (and so does yours)***

Breaks are crucial if you want to [stay motivated and focused](#). Asking children to sit at a desk for 5+ hours might work for a day or two, but they will eventually be itching to get up and run around. Give them well-timed breaks, and make sure you take some for yourself. Working from home is still working.

Also, don't stay cooped up inside all day long. Get some fresh air in your garden if you have one, or take your children for a walk, whilst maintaining distance from others. Where this isn't possible, crack open a window and take a few minutes to clear your mind before you get back to work.

## **FINAL THOUGHTS**

These are difficult times for everybody. We are all struggling to adapt to the situations we are presented with and are experiencing some trial and error as we go. It is important to stay level-headed and calm for yourself and your students or child. Creating a schedule and keeping communication lines open will help this process go a little more smoothly. Ultimately, don't place too harsh of an expectation on how your teaching or parenting needs to be.

# THE BEST TWO GIFTS YOU CAN GIVE YOUR CHILD



What can parents do to best help their children thrive? The two best gifts parents can give their children are simple, easy and guaranteed to boost performance. This is great news for parents, as these changes are easy to implement, and the positive impacts they have on children are clear to see.

What are these two best gifts? A structured bedtime routine each night and eating breakfast every day.

## A BEDTIME ROUTINE

Did you know that [45% of teenagers fail to get](#) the recommended 8-10 hours? A lack of sleep may be caused by children staying up too late on a school night and thinking that they can catch up with sleep at the weekend.

However, this is not the case; [research shows](#) that one night of long sleep does not restore performance, and the positive effects may only last 6 hours.

### ***What Are the Benefits of a Bedtime Routine?***

Having a bedtime routine will help children get enough sleep. This will help [improve their memory](#) as the brain [forms new connections](#) and [prioritises the most important](#)



information during sleep. Sleep deprivation can also have a negative effect on a child's mood, as children who experience lower levels of sleep remember [less positive information](#). This may explain why children are often more stressed or frustrated when they are tired - the negative experiences from the day are at the forefront of their mind.

### ***What Does a Good Bedtime Routine Involve?***

A good bedtime routine should start hours before a child actually goes to bed. [Exercise will help tire them out](#). Likewise, parents should ask their children to [turn off their phone](#), or at the very least turn down the brightness. This is because phones emit a bright light which tricks the body into thinking it's daytime, causing lower levels of the sleep hormone melatonin to be produced. As a consequence, sleep quality and duration [are reduced](#).

As a final little extra help, parents should encourage their children to [drink cherry juice](#), as cherries release melatonin (the sleep hormone) which helps prompt a sleepy state. Likewise, it is best to avoid caffeinated drinks such as tea and coffee, as these increase alertness.

**Good routines around sleep and breakfast will benefit your child for a lifetime.**

For more tips and resources for better sleep, go to [our guide page](#).

## **BREAKFAST**

Everyone knows the saying "breakfast is the most important meal of the day" - but over [60% of teenage boys and 70% of teenage girls](#) regularly skip breakfast. This is a problem because breakfast can provide 20-25% of our daily nutritional requirements and reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers. Not eating breakfast can also [lower a child's concentration levels](#), with [recent research](#) showing that the odds of an 11 year old student achieving an above average score in a test are twice as high if they eat breakfast, compared to those who do not.



### ***What are the Benefits of Breakfast?***

Research has shown that eating breakfast can improve attention and memory. In [one particular study](#), it was found that students who skipped breakfast or only had an energy drink performed worse in attention and memory tasks compared to those who had eaten breakfast.

It can also lead to improvements in mental and physical health. [Research has shown](#) that people who have a breakfast of cereal each day display lower levels of stress and depressive symptoms in comparison to those who do not have breakfast.

### ***What Should Children Eat for Breakfast?***

[Research suggests](#) that the ideal breakfast should include foods high in fibre such as wholegrain breads or cereals. It should also be used as an opportunity to encourage children to eat one of their five portions of fruit or vegetables. A glass of milk would be a good accompaniment, as milk is high in calcium, which is essential for strengthening children's bones.

## **FINAL THOUGHT**

The research speaks for itself in terms of the importance of a bedtime routine and eating breakfast. If parents can encourage their children to turn off their phone and exercise in the lead up to bedtime, and to start their day with a meal high in fibre then they will be happier, healthier, and better equipped to reach their full potential.

# RESEARCH SAYS THIS IS THE KEY TO HAPPINESS



Success, wealth and intelligence are all attributes that many desire, but for the majority, the one that tops all of these is happiness. However, whilst in the pursuit of happiness or increased life satisfaction, it appears that many don't know how to go about achieving this. They don't know which strategies are considered to be the most effective, and sometimes don't even know such strategies exist...

## WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY IS THE KEY TO HAPPINESS?

In [one particular study](#), over 1000 participants described the type of strategies they were going to use over the coming months to boost their happiness. These were divided into two categories: ones that were 'socially engaged' (i.e. spending more time with friends and family, joining a non-profit organisation...) and ones that weren't (i.e. stay healthy, find a better job...).

One year later, the researchers interviewed all the participants. They found that those who described socially engaged strategies were [significantly happier](#) than those who didn't. These enhanced happiness levels were partially attributed to these people [spending more time socialising](#)

with friends and family.

These types of strategies are more within one's control, compared to achieving a promotion or staying healthy. Even if people did achieve the goal of getting a better job, this still came with some adverse side effects, such as having less time to spend with family and friends. Similarly, individualistic achievements may be less rewarding than those which [occur in a team](#), as there is no one to share the success with.

## DOES MONEY BUY HAPPINESS?

We all know the phrase 'money doesn't buy happiness' – and, as it turns out, this is actually true. Further research has demonstrated the value of social relationships over more materialistic items. In one particular study, researchers sought to compare the happiness of lottery winners with those who hadn't won the lottery but lived in the vicinity.

**Now is a great time  
to focus on spending  
quality time with  
your family.**

The researchers looked to measure participants' general happiness by asking them to rate how happy they are now, how happy they were before winning and how happy they expected to be in the next couple of years. They also took a measure of everyday pleasure, where participants were asked to rate how pleasant they found seven activities or events, for example buying new clothes, watching television etc.

The researchers found that having a large sum of money at their disposal did not make the lottery winners any happier than before, and that having access to better products meant that everyday activities were seen as significantly less pleasurable than before. This was attributed to the idea that everyone has a baseline level of happiness – and whilst initially having more money makes people happier, the impact this has on their mood soon wears off.

Novel pleasures afforded by new wealth become 'normal' and are no longer exciting, such that the individual's baseline

level of happiness changes to allow for their increased wealth.

## **FINAL THOUGHT**

Research has shown that the best way to improve happiness is not to concentrate on materialistic attributes such as earning more money, but to instead focus on creating strong social relationships with those around you, be it friends or family. The social aspect of human DNA should not be underestimated, as it appears that isolation breeds stress and loneliness that not even wealth can insulate against.

# 7 WAYS TO GET OUT OF A BAD MOOD



Bobby McFerrin famously sang “*Don’t worry, be happy*”.

But that’s easier said than done, right? Sometimes we find ourselves stuck in a huff and we don’t know why, or maybe we do know why, but we still struggle to break out of it.

Being in a bad mood has a powerful effect; it leads to [social rejection](#), [worse problem-solving skills](#), and an [inability to stop unwanted thoughts](#). So what does psychological research tell us about how to get out of a bad mood? Here are 7 tips:

## ***Go For a Run***

Exercise is a great way to lift your spirits; just a 10-minute run [is shown](#) to increase positive feelings and mood. Exercise releases dopamine in your brain acting much in the same way anti-depressants do!

## ***Be Optimistic***

Just thinking that positive things will happen to you in the future improves mood. Optimistic people live a higher quality of life than pessimists. In fact, [optimism leads](#) to better emotional flexibility, problem solving, and rationalising despite negative situations.

## Positive Imagery

Much like being optimistic, imagining yourself succeeding or being the best you can be helps bring about a good mood.

If you're feeling down, [actively taking time](#) to think or write about your best possible self brings about a positive change in mood. To read more about this, check out our blog about visualization in either [education \(before an exam\)](#) or in [sport \(before a match\)](#).

## Take a Deep Breath

Slow deliberate breathing and movement has a [whole host of positive effects](#). This [has been shown](#) to reduce negative feelings such as depression, anger, fatigue, and anxiety.

## Take a Nap

Extended periods of being awake or feelings of fatigue and exhaustion will increase negative emotions. To offset that, a single hour-long nap leads to increased feelings of joy and happiness. By both countering situations that lead to negative effects and bringing on positive effects, napping is a powerful tool to snap out of a bad mood. For more tips on how to sleep your way to success, check out our [9 Common Sleep Mistakes](#) and [How to Fall Asleep Quicker](#) blogs

## Treat Yourself

Everyone loves treating themselves to a little bit of "retail therapy", but you can now [justify it with science](#)! The consumption of these self-indulgent treats has a lasting positive effect on mood, beyond their immediate enjoyment. Furthermore, even unplanned "impulse buys" (in moderation) done with the purpose of improving



**Being in a bad mood only  
ever gets in your way.**



mood do not lead to feelings of guilt or regret later on.

### ***Listen to Music***

Music is a powerful tool when it comes to emotions. Happy music is an effective distraction from bad feelings. [In research](#), people who listened to upbeat, positive music when they were in a poor mood did a better job of repairing their mood and had a more optimistic (remember from earlier?) view of their ability to fix their mood.

For even more tips on using mindset to improve your mood, check out our blog on [7 Ways to be More Optimistic](#).