

# Mood Disorders - Agree Disagree

KS 4/5

45 mins

An activity to get people thinking about mood disorders and develop their knowledge and understanding.

## What you need:

- Agree/disagree labels and blutak.
- Space for students to move around the classroom and place themselves along an imaginary line stretching from one end of the class to the other.
- Personal accounts of mood disorders

## Method:

- Place **AGREE** and **DISAGREE** labels on the wall at either end of the classroom.
- Explain that students are going to have a chance to wrangle with some of the issues relating to mood disorders. In some cases there are no clear rights or wrongs. In any case getting it right is not important – the purpose is to explore the complexity of the issues and increase knowledge.
- To start off and to give them a sense of what the disorders are like read out loud (or they can if you prefer) three short accounts of how young people describe their experience. Two of the accounts are created by young people in B&NES who have personal experience of these disorders.
- Next read out each statement in turn (see below) and ask students to place themselves along an imaginary line between Agree and Disagree, showing the degree to which they agree with the statement.
- Ask why people have chosen to stand where they are.
- Use the answers written in this pack (for clarification), after each statement has been discussed.
- If you have more time there are some excellent films that illustrate depression very well

**This film from ‘time to change’ features a young man coming back to school after taking time off with depression. Excellent and suitable for all ages**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SE5lp60\\_HJk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SE5lp60_HJk)

**This animation covers the key points and suggests ways to support a friend with depression. Suitable for KS4/5**

<http://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-is-depression-helen-m-farrell> 4:29mins

**This animation, produced by World Health Organisation gives a good account of how it feels to have depression. Suitable for all ages although the character is a adult male.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiCrniLQGYc> 4:18mins

**This short animation was made by a young person to describe his experience of bipolar disorder with help from fixers.org**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0Fv1PuT7E0> 2:38mins

## Statements:

- **Everyone with depression has lots of difficulties going on in their life.**

**Answer:** Life events can contribute to someone having depression, however someone doesn't have to have things going on.

- **If your friend is struggling with depression, you should give them a break and have less contact with them.**

**Answer:** It's important to ask the individual. They may want space, or they may want your support. Just knowing you are there for them is likely to make them feel better. They may want to talk to you about what's going on for them, or they may want to talk about something completely different.

- **If you have depression, you will have it for life.**

**Answer:** Depression can be treated, and the sooner you get treatment the better the outcome. Research has shown people who have had one depressive episode are likely to have another, however this is not always the case and recovery from depression is possible.

- **Seasonal affective disorder, a form of depression linked to shorter days and a lack of sunlight, is experienced by as many as 1 in 5 of the population.**

**Answer:** Yes and no. A mild form of SAD, sometimes called the 'winter blues' is common but in 'winter blues' although fatigue, sleep and eating problems are common depression and anxiety are absent or mild. **SAD** is a more debilitating condition characterised by depression as well as the symptoms of winter blues.

- **Seasonal affective disorder is only experienced by adults**

**Answer:** False. Children and teenagers can also experience SAD but may not initially recognise the link between their depression and the time of year. But if there is a pattern of experiencing depression during the autumn and winter and feeling better and having more energy in the spring and summer then this would suggest SAD.

- Ask if people know what can help people with SAD or winter blues.

Getting outside in daylight every day helps and as many as 80% of people with the condition find light therapy is helpful – this involves mimicking the effects of sunlight through using a specially designed light box.

- **Bipolar disorder, the illness which used to be referred to as manic depression is just another name for mood swings.**

**Answer:** This is not true. Although we all experience changes in our mood - Feeling very energised and happy one day to feeling low and lacking energy a few days later - this is not the same as bipolar disorder. The mood swings associated with bipolar disorder are very different to those without the condition. Although there are different forms of bipolar disorder the changes in mood interfere significantly with our ability to function day to day including our ability to manage at home, or cope with school

- **When someone is in the manic phase of bipolar, they are often very happy.**

**Answer:** True for some people, but not for others. A person may enter the manic phase happy, but not stay that way. The hallmark of mania is a euphoric or elevated mood, but a significant number of people become edgy and irritable as the mania progresses. Many people are actually frightened when they go into mania, as you lose control of their thoughts and feelings and behave in irrational and sometimes dangerous ways.

- **The average individual with bipolar will be more manic than depressed.**

*Answer:* There are people with bipolar who will shift back and forth more quickly than others, but that is not the typical pattern. Research has shown that people with bipolar disorder are often more depressed than manic.

## Depression

Grace is 17. She has been feeling low for a long time. She still manages to function pretty well and is good at covering up how she's feeling, so everyone thinks she's fine. Grace can hold it together while she's at school around others, but when she gets home and is on her own she falls apart. She feels so alone, that everyone else is getting on with their lives and she is stuck. Others put a lot of pressure on her academically because she has always been a high achiever, and she also puts this pressure on herself. As much as Grace wants to do well in her exams, sometimes she doesn't even know if she will be able to make it through the day. She feels that she has been feeling low for such a long time, she has lost hope that she will ever get better. Grace can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. She's started getting thoughts about not wanting to be alive. Deep down she knows she doesn't want to die, but she feels that she cannot cope feeling the way she is for much longer.

**(Written by a member of the CAMHS Participation team,  
drawing on her personal experience)**

## SAD

"My first episode of SAD was when I was about 13. I'd had 'flu in the winter and was stuck inside a lot. I just felt anxious and miserable and tired. I missed my exams and felt sure everyone at school hated me. I was also having trouble sleeping. The trouble is everyone thinks it's just the usual teenage stuff. By summer I felt like my old self again"

**(Taken from Seasonal Affective Disorder Association website)**

## Bipolar Disorder

Louise is 16 and in her final year at school. Recently, her energy levels have rocketed, she has begun to feel the need to always be on the go - out seeing her friends, taking part in sports activities and exercising at the gym. She's struggling to sleep and is only getting a few hours a night. However she doesn't not feel tired and thinks that perhaps she doesn't need sleep. She feels very optimistic and up-beat about her life at the moment and has big plans for her future - these plans change from day to day.

Most of this may sound positive, but in actual fact, Louise is very unwell at the moment and needs help. Her thoughts are racing, almost too fast for her to keep up with, and her speech has become rapid and jumbled. She is losing weight because she doesn't feel hungry and forgets to eat. Her temper has become very short and she can feel extremely irritable at times, which often leads to arguments at home with her family, and has led to Louise being involved in a few physical fights. She feels invincible though, and believes that nothing can stop her. Louise's is getting distracted very easily and has become impulsive and is having a really hard time concentrating. She is getting behind in her school work, and her teachers are growing concerned. Louise has also begun to take more risks, such as shoplifting, staying out late with people a lot older than her who she doesn't know very well. She's also been abusing drugs and alcohol. In addition to this Louise, who didn't want to lose her virginity until she was married, has had sex with two different boys in the past month.

People who know Louise very well are getting concerned; they have noticed the changes in her recently and are worried. Louise is also starting to feel overwhelmed with everything she has taken on, but still can't seem to rest. She doesn't know why she is feeling this way and doesn't know who to turn to for help.

**(Written by a member of the CAMHS Participation team,  
drawing on her personal experience)**