

Mood Disorders - Agree Disagree

KS 3

30 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) two short accounts of how young people describe their experience. One of the accounts was 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

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

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

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.

Depression

Ben is 13. He has been feeling sort of empty and hopeless for a long time. He manages to get by at school and tries to cover up how he's feeling, but he's not joining in with things the way he normally does and his friends are getting fed up with him and starting to leave him out of things. At home he spends more and more time in his room, playing on his Xbox or sleeping. Night time is the worst. He often wakes up and then he can't get back to sleep. The hours drag and then it's time to get up and go back to school when all he really wants to do is stay in his room. His parents/carers have been trying to get him doing things with them but he doesn't have the energy and he doesn't see the point anyway. They just don't get it. He can't see how things will ever change. He feels isolated: Everyone else is getting on with their lives but he's stuck. He doesn't want to feel like this anymore.

**(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)

