

## ***Instant mood lifts for blue days***

### **1 Get out some photos**

People suffering from depression seem to agree with research from the Open University (UK) that suggests looking at old holiday photos or pictures of family and friends can significantly boost mood. In the research study, music and chocolate failed to raise mood, and alcohol and TV gave only a tiny lift (1%) – but photos made people feel 11% better.

### **2 Search out some sunlight**

If possible, sit, walk or run in some sunlight. In one study of 450 women, those who got the most sunlight (especially in the morning) reported an uplift in mood. Part of the benefits people experience in mood while running is attributable to sunlight (though the endorphins produced during exercise are the biggest bonus). If you don't have time to exercise outside in the morning, go outside for 10 minutes or so at lunchtime to soak up the sunlight.

### **3 Speed up your thoughts**

Studies at Princeton University (USA) showed that by thinking faster, people experienced an uplift in mood. Even when these thoughts were negative! During depression, everything slows down, in mind and body, and by speeding up the actions of either the body OR the mind, it seems that emotions receive an uplift.

### **4 Buy some good experiences**

Buying stuff (that we probably don't need) gives us a momentary lift, but this can often settle down into guilt or discontent. On the other hand, buying experiences (such as gig tickets) has been shown to lift people's moods. It seems that part of this is due to the fun of doing things we love, and part is down to the added lift of doing things in the company of others.

### **5 Talk to the locals**

When we're depressed we tend to isolate ourselves, and feel that we can't face talking to people. But research has shown that even very short interactions with other people can help lift our mood. If you don't have friends or family nearby, try talking to a friendly neighbour or shopkeeper, even briefly, and notice how you feel afterwards.

### **6 Find your personal triggers**

Although depression is characterized by a relentless low feeling, you may notice that sometimes you feel better or worse than others. By beginning to notice these times, it may become possible to notice what happened just before your mood shift up or down. Did you have a particular thought or see a particular image (in your mind or the external world) that led to a stream of consciousness pulling you in one mood direction? If you sometimes worry about a relationship, for instance, pictures of happy couples on TV or in a magazine may trigger your concerns and set off a stream self-critical of thoughts down a well-worn neural pathway. By recognizing triggers we can help to lessen their impact, and head off a stream of downward thought pattern before it takes root.