

Some children have **struggles with their mood**. There are **many potential reasons** for this. The child may have underlying difficulties – they may be struggling with academic pressures at school or may be having difficulties with their siblings, friends and/or social group(s). Some children may have anxious or depressive feelings, which may or may not be related to a Neurodiverse condition. To help boost your child's mood:

- 1) Build a supportive environment where your child feels safe and comfortable telling you about how they feel.
- 2) If your child tells you about how they feel:
  - ❖ Put down your phone/book and/or turn away from the TV/computer, so that your child knows that they have your attention. If it's something that absolutely can't be stopped (e.g. you're at an important step when cooking) explain this, promise to have a chat at the soonest opportunity and keep that promise.
  - ❖ Listen quietly and attentively, using 'good listener' sounds like "Mmm...", "Oh...", "I see..." to let your child know that you're listening without interrupting them.
  - ❖ Recognise that you don't always need to ask questions (or ask them immediately) – sometimes you just need to listen and be present.
  - ❖ Accept and respect how your child says they feel – do not deny, dismiss or try to minimise your child's feelings. Avoid saying things like "I think you're taking this too seriously" or "Well, I don't know why you're so upset about that".
  - ❖ Help them name their feelings if they are struggling to, e.g. "That sounds frustrating".
  - ❖ Show your child that you empathise and that their emotions are normal, e.g. "I would be upset if that happened to me".
- 3) Recognise that sometimes your child may not say that they are feeling bad but that this might show in their actions, e.g. temper tantrums, being snappy and argumentative or spending a lot of time alone.
- 4) Show that all feelings can be accepted, but sometimes actions may need to be changed. E.g. "It's ok to be angry, but it's not ok to kick the door".
- 5) Once your child is a bit calmer, you can try to help problem-solve the situation. E.g. could you or they talk to a teacher about bullying or academic stress?

