

HOW TO MASTER YOUR MOODS



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BITESIZE

Manage your moods proactively to stay calm, comfortable and energised.

YOUR EMOTIONAL MIND

We don't always like to think of ourselves as emotional people, yet emotions are a central part of how our minds work. We experience emotional reactions all the time and they change how we think and behave. Our moods affect our concentration levels, creativity and productivity, and influence our judgement. They can blind us to possibilities and change how we react to risks and rewards. Whether we like it or not, we need to **talk about our feelings**.

Emotions are short-lived reactions that show us how we feel about events and experiences

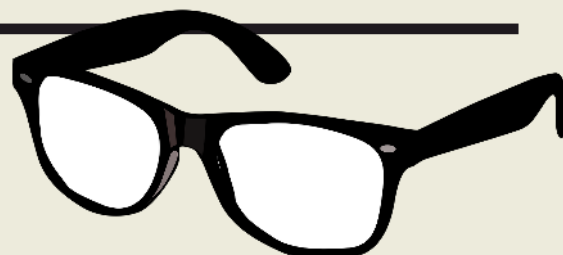
Moods are background feelings that give us information about our internal state of affairs

Positive and negative moods are both useful:

- Negative moods focus us on threats and problems, things to protect or change.
- Positive moods focus us on opportunities, things to explore, learn or enjoy.

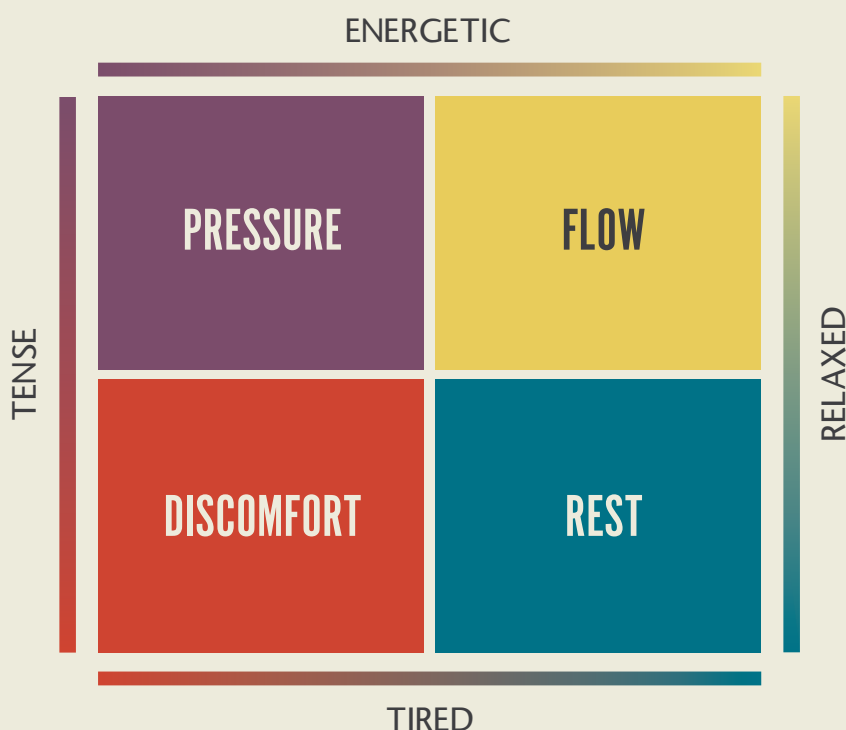
Each of these modes is useful in its own way, a bit like owning two pairs of glasses.

MOOD MANAGEMENT



Although we often talk about being in a 'good' mood or a 'bad' mood, psychologists generally measure mood in two dimensions: positive or negative feelings, and high and low energy.

A simpler approach, proposed by the psychologist Robert Thayer, describes mood as a product of energy and tension. We can be tired and tense, or energised and also relaxed. Put these two factors together, and we can map most of our common day-to-day mood states.



When we feel energised, we can relax and enjoy ourselves, throwing ourselves into hobbies or socialising, or we can feel tense and pressured, hypervigilant and focussed on tasks and deadlines.

When we feel tired, we can feel calm and enjoy a bit of downtime like reading or watching TV, or we can feel tense and restless, too tired to do anything useful but also too nervous to unwind.

Notice how your mood changes through the day. Are all these mood states familiar to you, or are some more familiar than others?

Many things can move you around this grid. Your personality and biochemistry will influence how you feel, making some of us more sensitive or changeable. Diet, exercise, hydration and other basic factors influence our moods too, particularly strong substances like coffee or alcohol. Events and experiences will have an impact, particularly long-term stresses or habits.

Thayer and others argue that we actually manage our moods proactively, taking simple steps each day to feel more comfortable and avoid unpleasant feelings. Every day, consciously or unconsciously, we all take actions to raise our energy, and reduce our tension.

Mood management begins with noticing the simple things you do every day to manage your moods. Think about what you do to **raise your energy** and **reduce your tension**. Which activities work best, and how can you build more of them into your day?

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Mood regulation is part of a wider area of psychology called 'emotional intelligence'.

Emotional intelligence is our capacity to recognise and manage emotions in ourselves and others. It is important in self-regulation, wellbeing and managing relationships, and a key predictor of personal and professional success.

'Intelligence' may not be the best word for it though: '**emotional literacy**' might be more accurate. We learn to read our emotions through experience, and in so doing gain a better understanding of ourselves and others.

Emotional intelligence is not about being cheerful all the time. It is about processing positive and negative emotions and handling difficult situations.

Self-regulation is the ability to hang up the phone after getting the message



We are all different in how we self-regulate, and in how successful we are - but the more tools and experience we have, the better we can get at managing our moods.

Moods are important signals though, and not something to be suppressed or 'fixed'. They show us how we feel about the world, and they have a natural rhythm. Listen to your mind and notice how you are feeling. Don't worry about trying to stay in one particular mood all the time. The key is to keep moving through moods, and not to get stuck in uncomfortable or unhelpful feelings.

This free tip sheet was created by Mindapples to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic. To find out more about our apps, e-learning, webinars, face-to-face training and charitable work, visit www.mindapples.org.