



Blues Busters

Building Resilience to Stress, Depression, and Anxiety

By Ruth Brown, PhD

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Introduction



Stress happens! Whether big or small, stress can give us the Blues. Learn how to become a Blues Buster and fight back the Blues! This workbook will answer some basic questions about stress and symptoms of depression and anxiety.



You'll learn to identify the Warning Signs of the Blues: Blue Body, Blue Beliefs, and Blue Behaviors.



You'll look for clues in the way your body feels, your beliefs, and your behaviors.



You'll learn to Take Action to bust those negative Blue Thoughts that bring you down and how to build healthy habits to help you thrive in times of stress.

To get the most out of the workbook, you'll need to practice! This workbook includes some blank worksheets that you may photocopy to fill in. You can also use blank notebook paper to record your responses. It helps to practice by writing your thoughts and answers down or talking about your answers with a trusted friend or family member.

If you feel like this workbook isn't enough to help you feel better, talk to your doctor. It may help to talk to a mental health counselor or therapist.



What are The Blues?

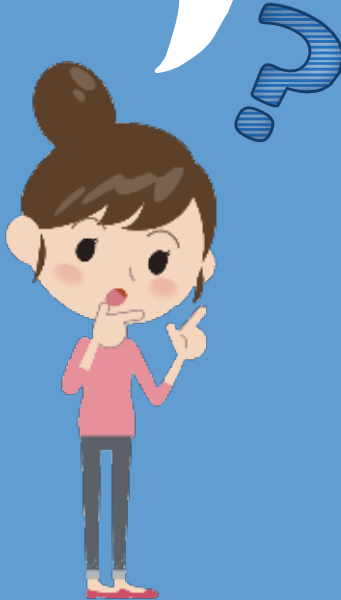
The Blues mean different things to different people. In this workbook, when we say “The Blues,” we mean feelings of **Stress, Anxiety,** and **Depression.** These are feelings that may stop you from doing the things you love to do or being your best self.

Some people get The Blues when some change happens in their life. Sometimes we don’t know why people get The Blues. It just seems to come out of the blue!

Whether you get The Blues because something has happened in your life, or it seems to just happen, learning some tools can help.

Let’s start by learning some emotion words that we’ll be using in this workbook.

What are some other emotion words you use? Fill in the blanks with other words you use to describe happy, sad, scared, or mad.



EMOTIONS

Happy

- Excited
- Cheerful
- Hopeful
- Content
- Loving
-
-

Sad

- Down
- Tearful
- Ashamed
- Lonely
- Depressed
-
-

Scared

- Worried
- Anxious
- On Edge
- Tense
- Panicky
-
-

Mad

- Angry
- Irritable
- Hateful
- Frustrated
- Jealous
-
-



How Are You Feeling Now?

Take a look at the Emotions List. What emotions are you feeling right now? Hint, you can have more than one feeling at a time. For example, you can feel excited to meet new people, but also a little worried about what they'll be like.

I'm Feeling:

Mood Rating.

It can be helpful to check in from time to time about how you are feeling overall. We'll be taking Mood Ratings through out this workbook. Let's try it out. Rate your mood right now:





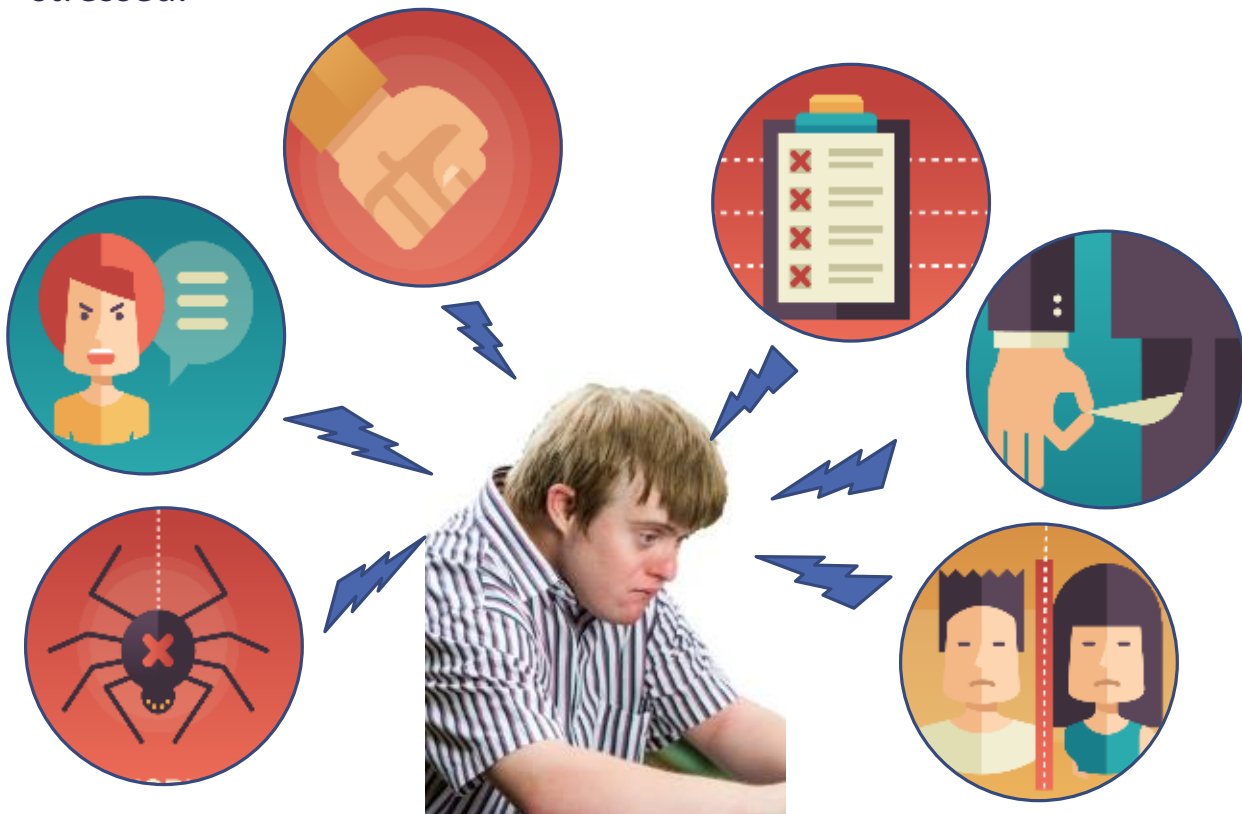
What is Stress?

Stress can be any thing that changed your normal routine. We tend to think of stress as bad things that happen, but even good things can be stressful.

Stress can make us wonder what is going to happen in the future. We may feel worried, scared, or anxious.

Stress can also make us feel feel sad, lonely, or depressed.

Let's start by talking about the kinds of situations that make people stressed.



Warning Signs: What Gets Me Down



Here are some examples of life events that can cause stress.

Have you experienced any of these?

Health problems

Injuries

Money problems

Loosing job

Changing job/position

Problems with co-workers

Starting or stopping school

Problems with school performance

Housing problems

Moving

New room-mate

Legal troubles

New romantic relationship

Break-up with romantic partner

Problems with romantic relationship

Family changes (birth, moving away, marriage, separation)

Death of a parent, partner, friend

New friendship

Break-up of friendship

New or lost pet

Victim of crime *

Victim of violence *

Involved in accident

Can you think of others? _____

What is Anxiety

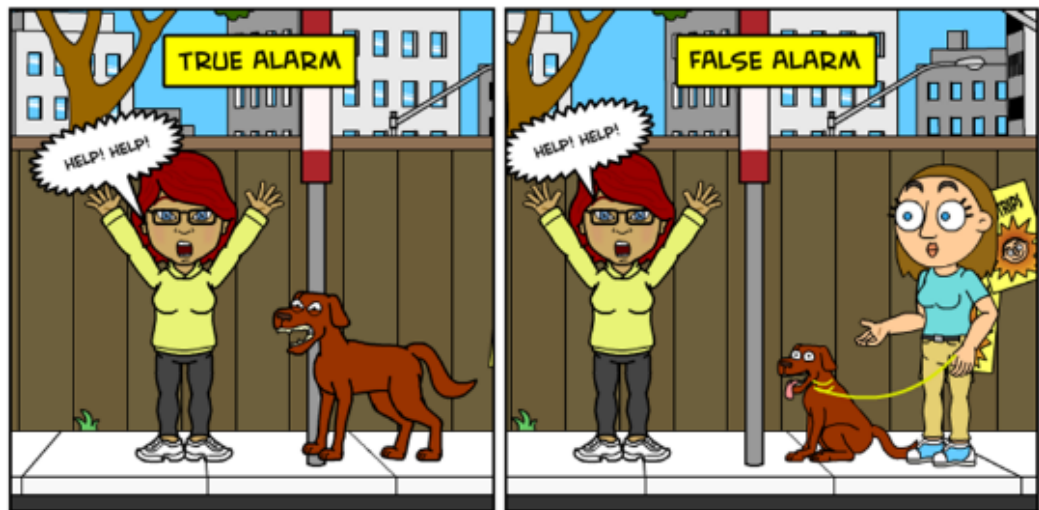
Anxiety is our alarm system. It prepares us to take action when there is danger, like running away from a wild animal or burning house. This kind of anxiety is good. If we never felt anxiety, we'd be in big trouble.



What are some other examples of dangerous situations in which you need anxiety to protect you?

True Alarms and False Alarms

Sometimes, we have false alarms and feel anxiety when there is no real danger.



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This kind of anxiety can make us feel bad and keep us from doing things we need or want to do.

True or False?

Below are some situations that someone might feel anxious or scared in. Are these True Alarms or False Alarms?

Write T for True Alarm or F for False Alarm.

___ 1) Raising hand in class

___ 2) Walking alone in a dark alley at night

___ 3) Meeting someone new

___ 4) Making a minor mistake at work

___ 5) Someone yelling or threatening to hurt you

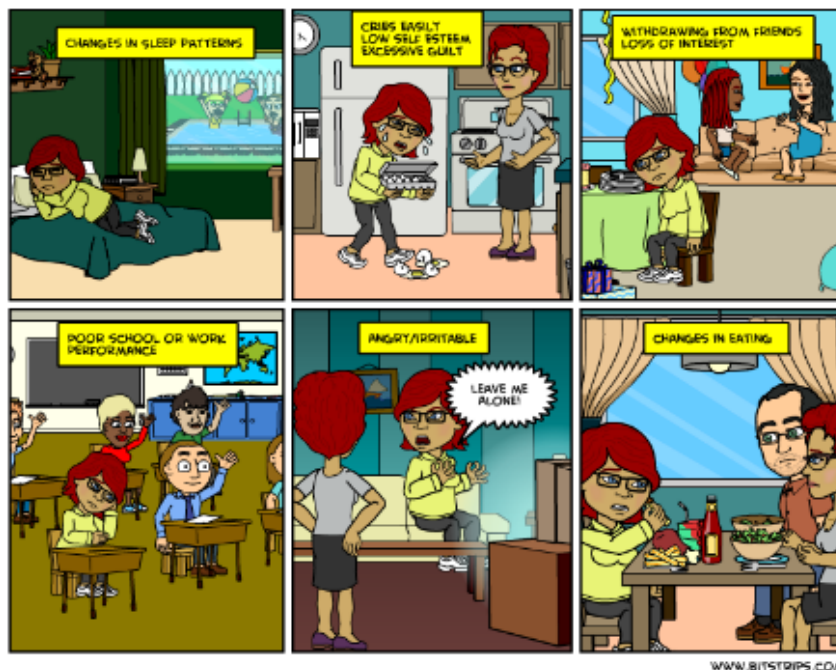
___ 6) Not doing routine in the exact same way every day

Answer Key
1: F
2: T
3: F
4: F
5: T
6: F



What is Depression?

Everyone has days when they feel sad or grumpy. Depression is when these feelings won't go away for weeks, months, or years. When people are depressed they may have problems with sleep, feel tired or restless all the time. They may cry a lot or be angry and irritable. They may have trouble paying attention or concentrating on their work. They may lose their appetite or want to eat all the time. They may stop doing the things that they used to have fun doing. Depression can really get in the way of life.

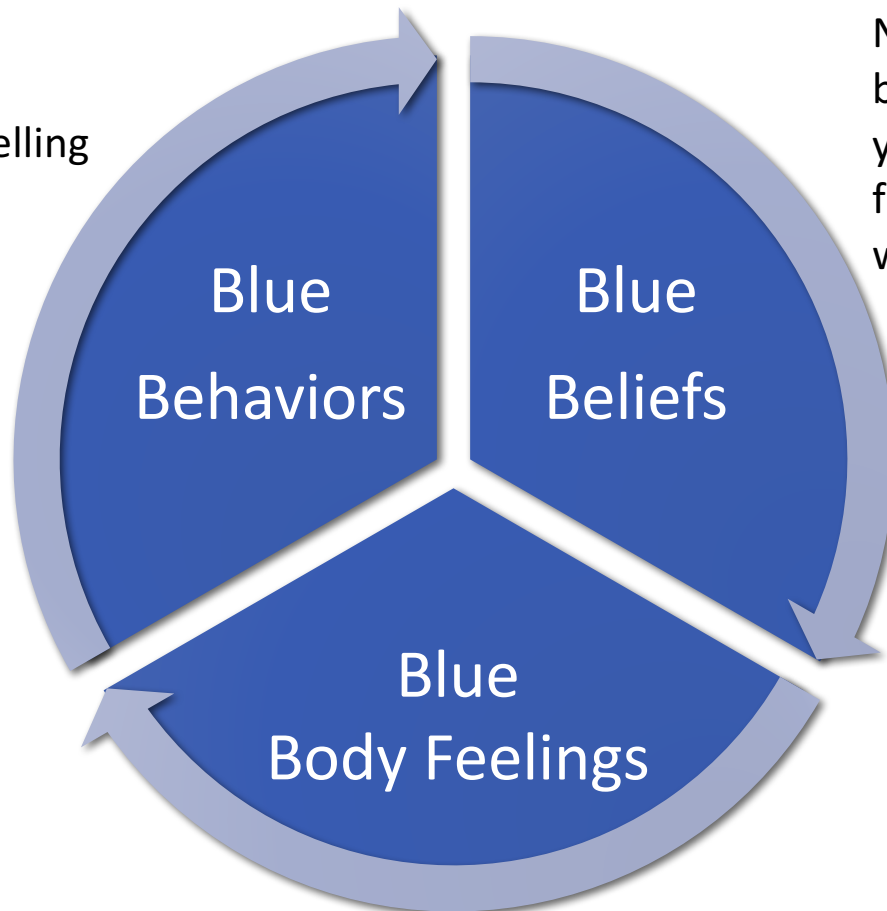




The Blues

There are 3 parts to stress and The Blues. Knowing these parts are the key to feeling better. This workbook will help you identify Blue Beliefs, Blue Body Feelings, and Blue Behaviors and learn how to bust them!

Avoiding important situations, yelling at others, isolating self



Negative beliefs about yourself, your future, or the world.

Feeling tense, tired, in pain, nervous

Warning Signs: Blue Body



Our body gets us ready to act when it thinks there is something dangerous. We call this Flight, Fight, or Freeze. Here are some examples of the kinds of feelings you might have in your body when you are stressed.

Brain: You might have headaches or feel like your mind is racing with thoughts.



Brain



Heart

HEART: Your heart might beat very fast or feel like it is pounding hard.

Stomach: You might feel sick or feel like you have “butterflies in your stomach.”



Stomach



Lungs

Lungs: You might breathe very fast or feel like you can't catch your breathe.

Bladder: You might feel like you have to go to the bathroom a lot.

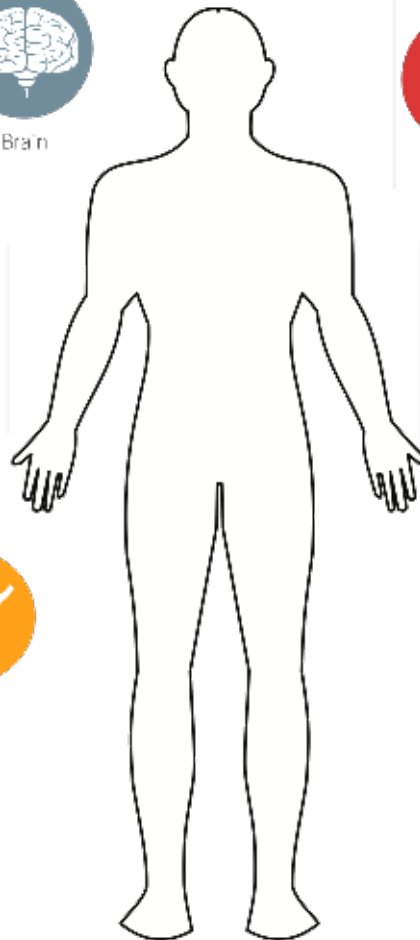


Bladder

Muscle Aches: You might feel aches in your muscles, like your shoulders, arms, or legs.

Tired: You might feel tired all the time for no reason.

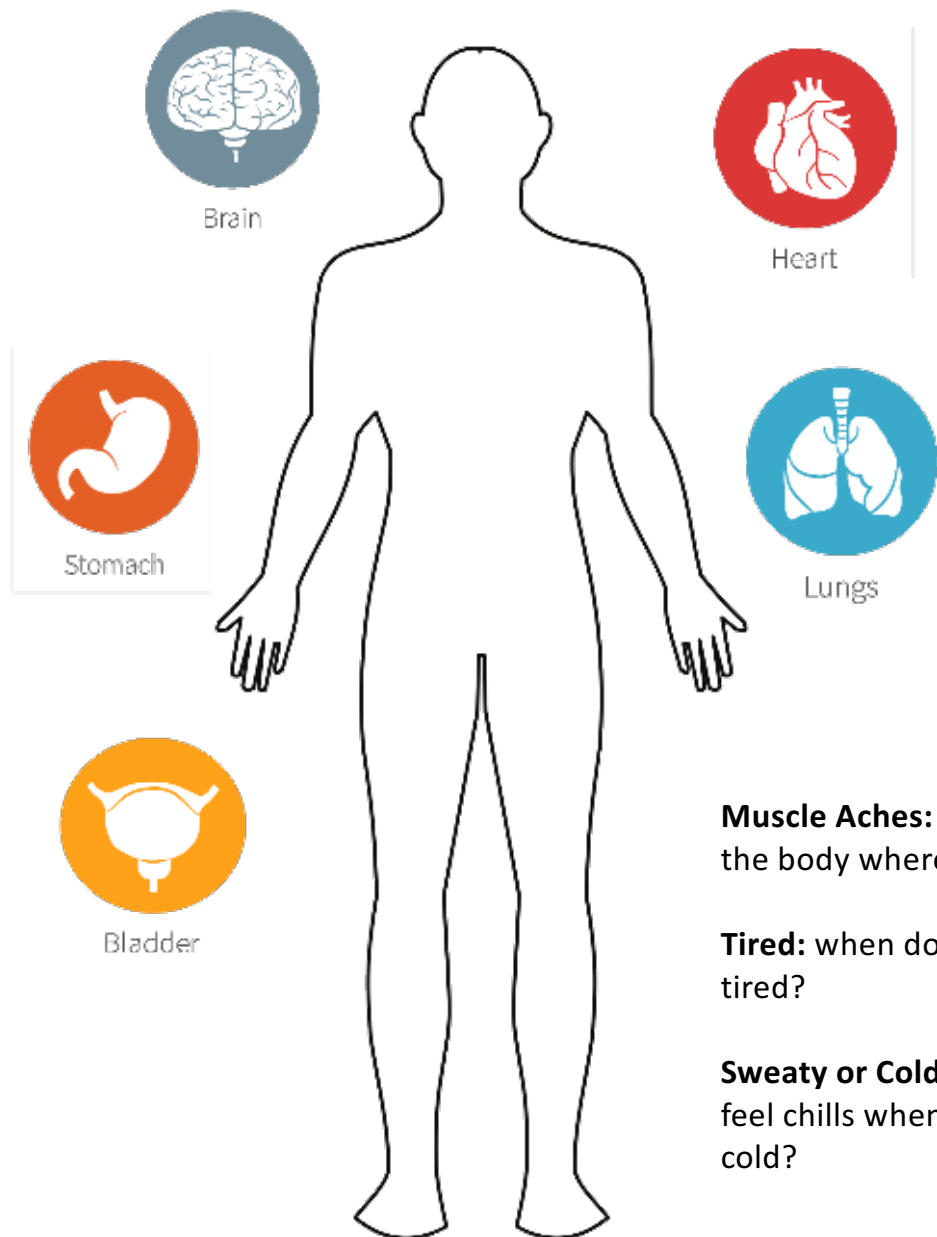
Sweaty or Cold: You might sweat a lot or feel warm when it isn't hot. Or, you might feel cold and have chills when it isn't cold.





Where Do You Feel Stress?

Circle where you feel stress in your body.



Muscle Aches: Circle the places on the body where you feel aches.

Tired: when do you feel the most tired?

Sweaty or Cold: Do you sweat or feel chills when it isn't hot or cold?

Our body can be a warning sign that we are stressed and that we need to take action to change the situation or take care of ourselves.¹⁵

Take Action: Body Calming



Body Calming in 3 easy steps!

When you feel upset it can be hard to think about what to do or say. You may have those Blue Body feelings we talked about. You may feel like not saying anything. You may feel like running away. This is a good time for **Body Calming**. You can do Body Calming any time and any where. It has 3 simple steps. The more you practice these steps, the easier it gets to be calm when you need it most.

Step 1 **Breathe:** Breathe in and out slowly



Step 2 **Relax:** Make your muscles tight and then let go to relax them.



Step 3 **Imagine:** Think about a time when you felt happy and relaxed.



Let's learn a little more about each one...



Step 1: Breathe

Breathe: Take deep slow breaths. Instead of trying to fill up your chest, think about breathing deep into your belly.

Breathe in: Put your hands on your stomach and as you breath in, feel your belly push out. As you breathe in count 1... 2... 3... Try to take all three counts to fill up your lungs.

Breathe out: As you breathe out, imagine your breath is the wind, blowing your stress away.

As you breathe out count 1... 2... 3... Try to take all three counts to blow the air out.

Repeat deep breaths until you feel better.



Step 2: Relax



Tense and Relax your Muscles:

Close your eyes and think about your body from head to toe.

- Are there places your body feels tense?
- Do your muscles hurt or feel tired somewhere?



Let's relax them. But, first we have to make them even tighter. This helps the muscles let go.

Tense: Squeeze those muscles as tight as you can and count to 3. You can practice your breathing while you do it. Breathe in while you squeeze your muscles.

Relax: Then, let go and let them go loose and floppy. Breathing out at the same time can help. Repeat a few times with each muscle.



Step 2: Imagine

Imagine Your Happy Place:

Close your eyes and think about a time when you felt relaxed and happy.

- What did that place look like?
- What are the sounds and smells?
- How did your body feel?
- What kinds of thoughts did you have?

Imagine feeling that way again. Try to think about as much detail as you can.





Body Calming Practice

1) Let's practice **Body Calming** together. Choose at least one day to write about your experience.

Describe the situation when you felt stressed:

Rate how you feel before by circling the picture that describes you.



Body Calming Practice



2) Now, use **Body Calming**. Here are the steps as a reminder:

Step 1 **Breathe:** Breathe in and out slowly



Step 2 **Relax:** Make your muscles tight and then let go to relax them.



Step 3 **Imagine:** Think about a time when you felt happy and relaxed.



Repeat 1-3 until you feel calmer

Describe how it went:

Rate how you felt after:



Remember, the more you practice, the easier it gets!

Warning Signs: Blue Beliefs



Our thoughts and beliefs affect the way we feel and behave. When people are stressed, anxious, or depressed they tend to think a lot of negative beliefs. For example:

Negative beliefs about themselves:

- “I mess up everything.”
- “Something must be wrong with me.”

Negative beliefs about the world:

- “No one likes me.”
- “There is danger outside.”

Negative beliefs about the future:

- “I’ll never be happy.”
- “I’ll never be good at anything.”

Usually, these thoughts are not true, but they can keep coming back into our head and make us feel bad. The good news is that with practice, you can learn to have true thoughts that will help you feel better and more confident.

Next time you are feeling stressed, depressed, or anxious ask yourself, “Do I have Blue Beliefs right now?”

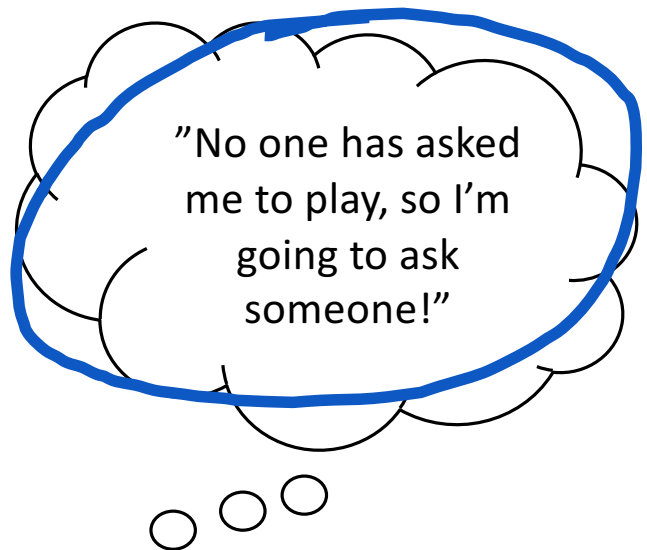
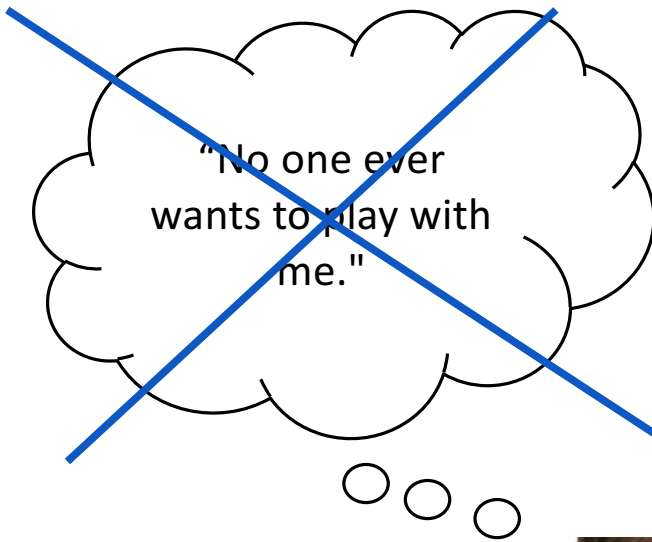


True or Blue?

Let's learn how to Bust these untrue Blue Beliefs and replace them with true beliefs!

Let's go through some examples of beliefs people have. Bust the Blue Beliefs by marking an X through it. Then, circle the True Thought.

Here's an example:





True or Blue?

"I always mess everything up. I'm not good at anything."

"Sometime I make mistakes, but everyone does. And, there's lots of things I'm good at."



"I have been feeling tired a lot, maybe I should get my thyroid checked."

"I'm so tired all the time. I'm such a slob."





How Do I Bust Blue Beliefs?

Blue Beliefs usually involve focusing on the bad, expecting the worst, labeling, and blaming.

Focusing on the Bad: Paying attention only to what is bad about a situation and ignoring the good. Remembering only failures or past hurts and ignoring the times when things went well.

Expecting the Worst: This usually involves believing that the worst thing is certain to happen even when it probably won't. Believing that if the worst thing happens it will be bad forever.

Labeling: Name-calling yourself or other people which makes us think things will never change. For example, "I'm stupid," "Other people are mean," or "Dogs are dangerous."

Blaming: Believing that if something went wrong it was your fault.

Blue Beliefs can seem true even when they aren't. To tell if the belief is true ask yourself some of these questions:

- ***What is the proof that this belief is 100% true?***
- ***Are there some times when things turned out well?***
- ***What is the worst that could happen? How would I handle it?***
- ***What would I tell a friend who had this belief?***

Take Action: Bust your Blue Beliefs



Now let's try to identify some Blue Beliefs you've had and come up with True Beliefs!

Blue Belief: _____

How do you feel when you have this belief:



Now, turn the page to turn that Blue Belief into a True Belief and Bust those Blues!

Take Action: Bust your Blue Beliefs



Blue Busting Questions:

Ask yourself some questions to help you come up with True Beliefs.

- What is the proof that this belief is 100% true?
- Are there some times when things turned out well?
- What is the worst that could happen? How would I handle it?
- What would I tell a friend who had this belief?

True Belief: _____

How I feel when I have this True Belief:



Remember: Most people have the same few Blue Beliefs over and over. It takes time and lots of practice reminding yourself of your True Beliefs. It will get easier the more you practice!

Warning Sign: Blue Behaviors



The third part of The Blues are Behaviors. These are the things we do when we feel stressed, depressed, or anxious. Here are some common Blue Behaviors:

Avoiding: People who are worried that something bad might happen may avoid situations where they may have to face the thing they are scared of. They might avoid going to school or work, going outside the house, social situations, or others.

Withdrawing: People who are depressed may lose interest in their favorite hobbies and stop doing them. They may stop spending time with friends or family and become isolated.

Giving up or not trying: People who feel hopeless or bad about their abilities, or who are afraid of failing, may give up too early on tasks or not even try at all.

Arguing or being aggressive: People who are stressed, depressed, or anxious may be irritable and may show that by getting into arguments with other people, yelling, throwing things, or trying to hurt themselves or others.

Unfortunately, Blue Behaviors usually make the problem worse.



My Blue Behaviors

What do you do when you are feeling The Blues? What are some ways someone else might know you are feeling stressed, depressed, or anxious? Check the boxes of the things you might do when you have The Blues.

Don't talk as much

Don't take care of looks

Stay to myself

Get behind in tasks

Don't look people in the eye

Can't sit still

Cry a lot

Try to avoid things

Yell at people

Can't sleep

Throw or break things

Want to sleep all the time

Say bad things about myself

Eat a lot or eat junk food

Talk or move more slowly

Don't eat or don't feel hungry

Not cleaning up room/house

Are there other ways you behave when you have The Blues? _____

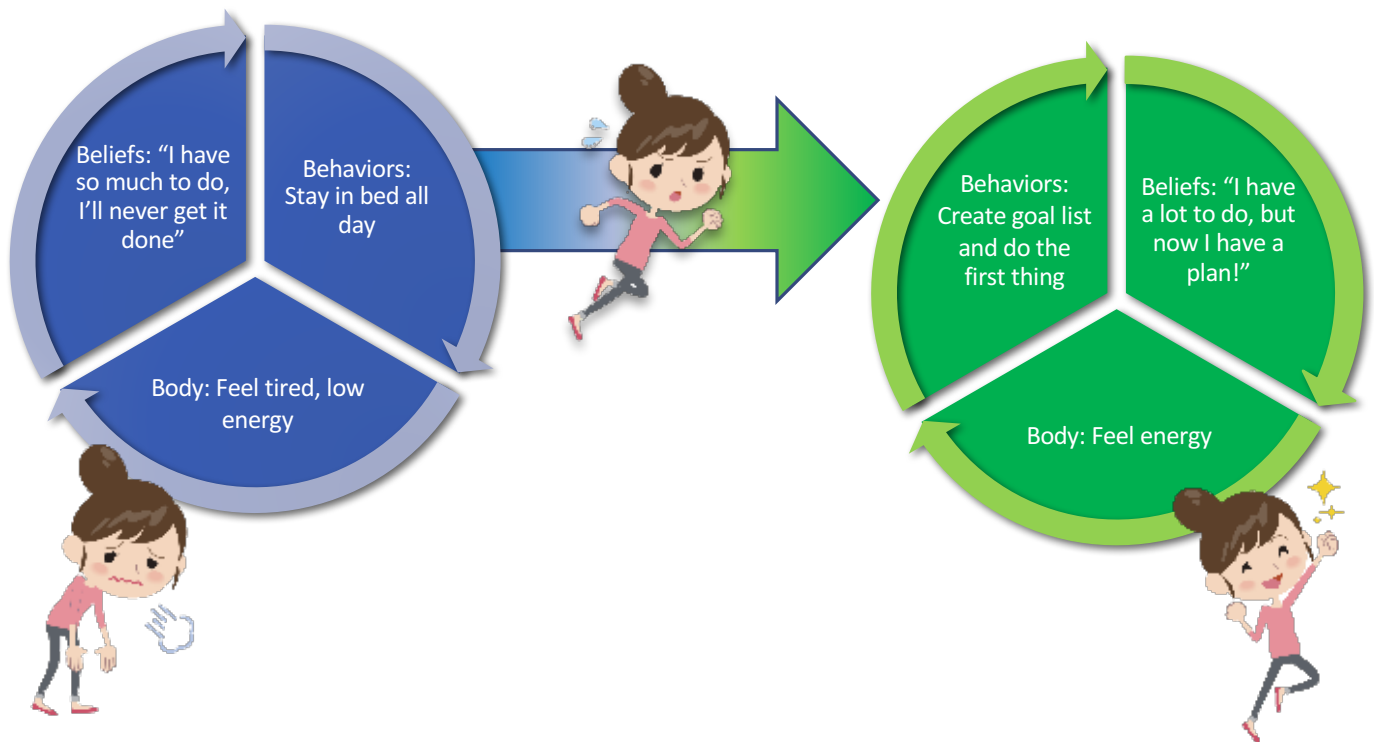
Take Action: Change Your Behavior, Change your Mood



One of the most effective ways of dealing with Blue Behaviors is to get busy! Getting started is usually the hardest part. But most people find that once they get started, the rest is pretty easy. There are 2 strategies that will help.

Mood Boosters: Doing fun things gives you a mood boost and increases your energy levels. You'll have more energy and a more positive outlook.

Goal Setting: Making progress on tasks that you've been avoiding will help reduce stress and give you a sense of accomplishment.



Take Action: Mood Boosters



Have you been feeling bored, tired, or stressed? Have you lost interest in things you used to enjoy? Taking some time to do healthy mood boosting activities can help, especially when you don't "feel like it."



Exercise



Hang out with
Friends



Go to restaurant
with Friends



Play Game



Play a Sport



Read a Good
Book



Invite Friends over or
go to Friend's House



Call Someone



Practice
Relaxation



Go to the Park
with Friends



Sing or Listen
to Music



Go for Walk

Take Action: Mood Boosters Practice



Pick a time this week to do a Mood Boosting Activity. Rate how you feel before and after the activity.

Date: _____ Time: _____

How I feel BEFORE the activity:



The activity I tried was:

How I feel AFTER the activity:



Remember: Most people have the same few Blue Beliefs over and over. It takes time and lots of practice reminding yourself of your True Beliefs. It will get easier the more you practice!

Take Action: Goal Setting



Have you been avoiding things? Avoiding important tasks like cleaning, paying bills, doing work or school work, going outside? Have you been avoiding social activities or going places because you are scared? Setting goals and breaking them down into smaller pieces can help.

3 Steps to Goal Setting:

1. **Set your Goal.** What do you want to get done?
2. **Identify Small Steps to Reach Your Goal.** Break your goal down into small steps to make it easier.
3. **Reward Yourself Along the Way.** Mood Boosters make great rewards. Give yourself small rewards for small tasks and big rewards for big tasks.

Goal: Clean the house

Small Steps:

1. Pick up laundry from floor
2. Clean off counter tops
3. Clean Bathroom

Rewards:

1. Call friend for 10 minutes
2. Go for walk
3. Meet friend for lunch

Hint: Big tasks may need to be broken down into more steps.
Use an extra page if you need more space.

Take Action: Goal Setting Practice



Pick something you've been avoiding doing and make a plan to do it!

1. **Set your Goal.** What do you want to get done?
2. **Identify Small Steps to Reach Your Goal.** Break your goal down into small steps to make it easier.
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Goal: _____

Small Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Rewards:

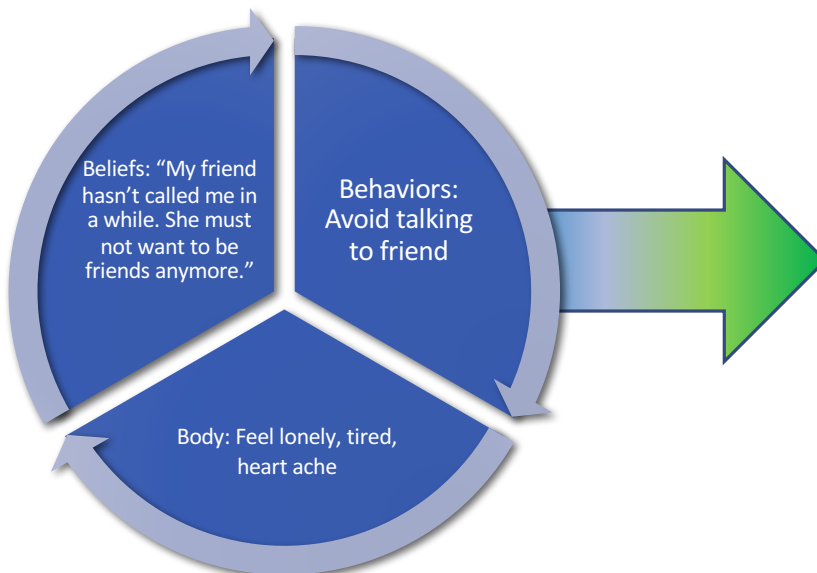
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2. _____
3. _____

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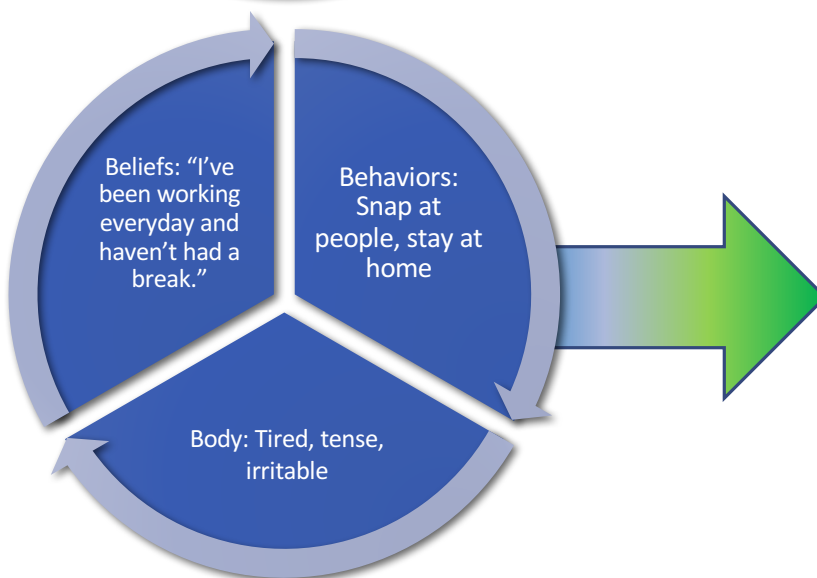
Take Action: Change Your Behavior, Change your Mood



Let's practice coming up with ways to change a behavior to help someone who has The Blues.



What are some behaviors that might help?

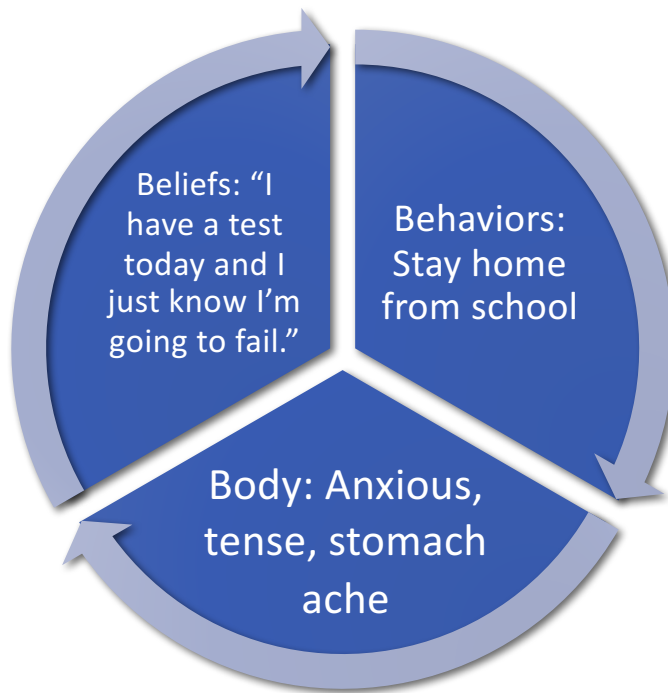


What are some behaviors that might help?

Putting it All Together

Now that you have practiced Busting Blue Body Feelings, Blue Beliefs, and Blue Behaviors, let's put it all together! These coping skills work best when we use them all. Let's practice.

What are some True Beliefs that might help?



What are some Behaviors that might help?

What are some Body Calming tips that might help?

Take Action: My Blues Busting Plan



When you notice yourself feeling Blue, use this worksheet to put your skills into action. Use individual practice sheets if you need help.

Blue Body. How I feel when I'm stressed, depressed, or anxious.

Blue Beliefs. What I think when I'm stressed, depressed, or anxious.

Blue Behaviors. What I do when I'm stressed, depressed, or anxious.

Calm Body. How I feel when practice Body Calming.

True Beliefs. True thoughts I tell myself to feel better.

Helping Behaviors. What I do to feel better or reach my goals.



You are a Blues Buster!

Congratulations! You are on your way to becoming a Blues Buster! Remember that it takes time, patience, and practice to get good at these skills.

If you are experiencing Blues, are stressed, depressed, or anxious, ask yourself these questions to figure out how to cope.

Is this situation temporary?

Some stress, like taking a test or going on a job interview, is ok if it doesn't stop us from doing well. Use Body Calming or Busting Blue Beliefs to help get you through the situation.

Stress that doesn't go away, or comes from bad things happening to you is a problem. Practicing Body Calming, Busting Blue Beliefs, and Busting Blue Behaviors can help if the situation is over and you are having a hard time getting it out of your head.

Can I change the situation?

Some things we can't change, like having a medical procedure done. And somethings happened in the past, like loosing a loved one. In these situations, use Body Calming or Busting Blue Beliefs to help.

Some things we can change, like ending a relationship with someone who isn't nice to us, or getting a new job if the current one is not good. Take steps to change the situation if you can. Ask someone you trust for support.

I'm using these skills but I still have The Blues.

If it doesn't go away, talk to your doctor for help. Ask about therapy or counseling, especially Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. You doctor may also recommend medications that may help.

Extra Practice Sheets

Becoming an expert Blues Buster takes time and lots of practice! You may photocopy these sheets, for your personal use, to keep practicing your Blues Busting skills!

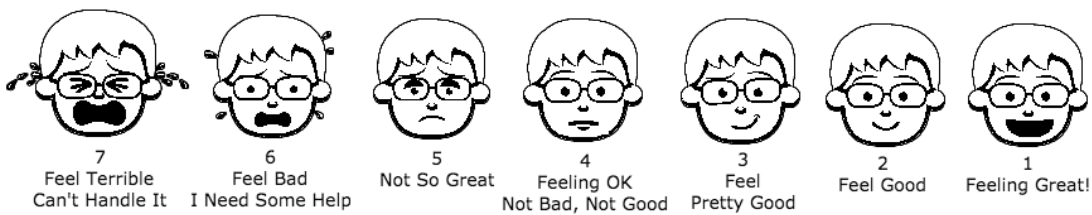


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Repeat 1-3 until you feel calmer

Describe how it went:

Rate how you felt after:



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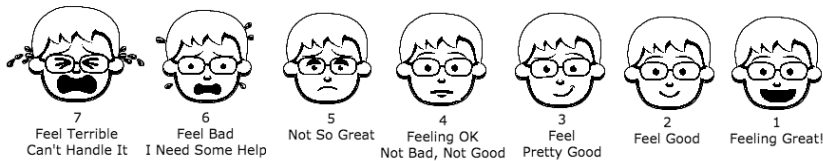
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Goal: _____

Small Steps:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Rewards:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Hint: Big tasks may need to be broken down into more steps.
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