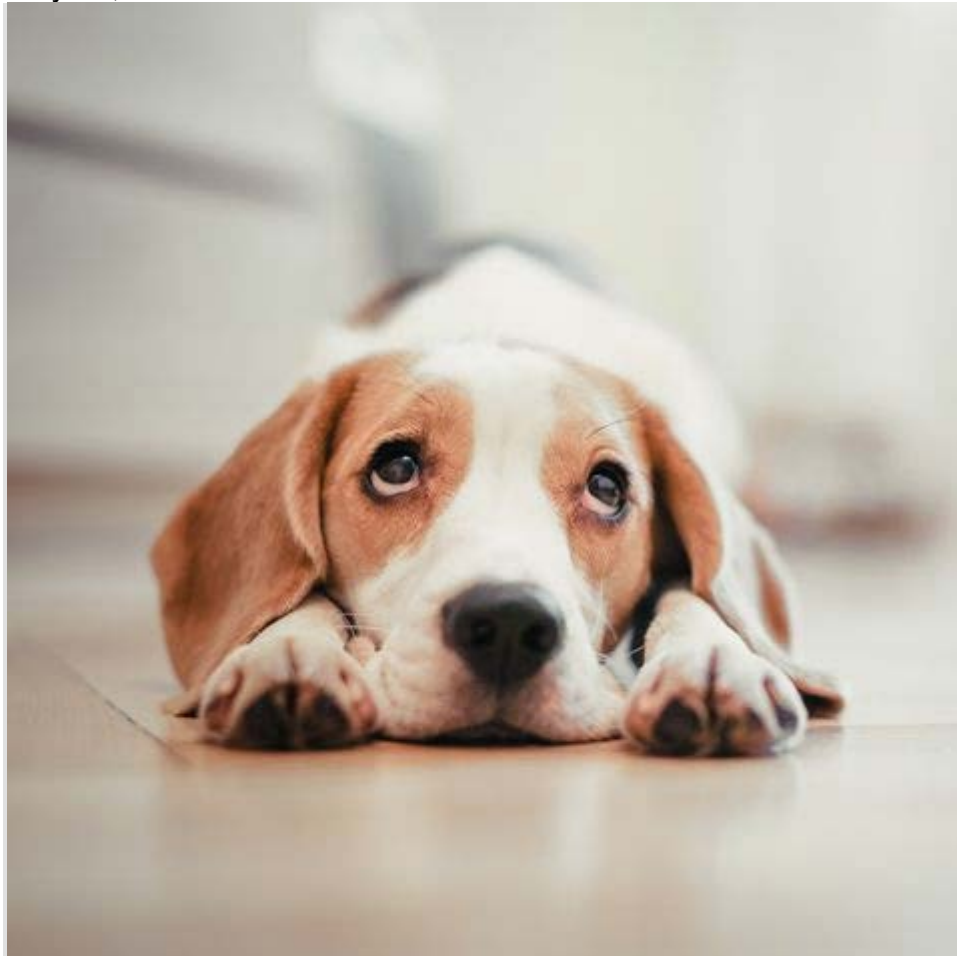

How to Stop Being Sad

Here's how to get through your short-term melancholy.

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Is that ice cream in your hair? That carton of Chunky Monkey was soothing while it lasted, but how's it working for you now? What? You feel sticky and [bloated](#)? And still pretty sad? Wait! Don't cry! (Or actually, do ...we'll explain why later.) Yes, feeling sad stinks. But it's time to drop the spoon, and let us lead you out of the darkness—because we asked the pros how to beat the blues. See, you're (almost) [smiling already](#).

Don't feel bad about feeling sad.

When something negative happens in your life—a breakup, a death, the loss of a job, for example—it can seem like your world is ending, so it's natural to feel awful. “All emotions are important to experience and have valuable information for us about our lives,” says Dr. Lori Rockmore, Psy.D. Consider this an opportunity to learn, grow and find true healing, says Briana Borten, CEO of the wellness organization [Dragontree](#).

First figure out why you're sad.

Sometimes it's easy to pinpoint the reason you feel upset—like if you just [can't get over your ex](#). Other times you may be sad for no discernible reason. When this is the case, try getting out a pen and paper and “write without stopping for five minutes,” suggests life coach, radio host and author [Sunny Joy McMillan](#). She calls this brain dumping. You can also try journaling, [meditating](#), yoga or any other practice that will help you focus on your inner self.

Then, let it hurt.

When you avoid sadness altogether, you're actually doing more harm than good. “You can't heal what you don't feel,” says life coach and author [Nancy Levin](#). In other words, stop binge-shopping, stop your back-to-back-to-back-to-back spin classes, stop the [tequila shots](#) (or anything else that numbs). As uncomfortable as it may be, embracing your sadness is actually the first step to feeling better.

Attempt crying it out.

Levin says when she is sad, she likes to do something she calls “crashing.” “I put on music or movies or shows that I know will help me cry and have a release,” she says. While this may seem counter-intuitive, she's actually on to something. “Only humans exhibit emotional crying,” says Dr. Matt Bellace, PhD, psychologist, and [author](#). And not to get too science-y but Bellace says a biochemical analysis of tears found an endorphin named leucine-enkephalin that is known to reduce pain and improve mood. So, let those tears flow!

Now, try moving on.

Once you've ugly cried until your eyes burn, it's time to get a grip on things. It could take a few days, a few weeks, or even a few months. "Grief doesn't live on a timeline," says Levin. But you can't stay in a dark hole forever. Here's how to crawl out:

Set the bar ridiculously low.

"Lay the groundwork for success by initiating action in the smallest possible increments," suggests McMillan. For example, you brushed your teeth...hoorah! You made some coffee...you go! "Once you get moving you may be surprised that you feel inspired to do more," she says.

Find what *does* make you happy. (And laugh).

This is the opposite of crashing. Instead, pick a few authors, musicians and/or movies that really [make you feel good](#), suggests McMillan. Whether you gravitate towards something that gives you a broader perspective on life or just a [simple, silly comedy](#), choose work that lifts your spirits. Even a cat video on YouTube can be helpful!

"Laughing in response to pain and sadness can be a terrific coping mechanism," says Bellace, adding, "Laughter releases endorphins similar to exercise, reduces the stress hormone cortisol, and increases dopamine (aka 'the feel-good-hormone')." Of course, the grieving process takes time, "so there is no shame in not wanting to laugh for a while," assures Bellace.

And find your people.

Having a support network is important, especially if you're going through a difficult time. If you don't know where to begin, "start doing things outside the home that include other people," says Borten. For example, pick something that generally interests you, like a running club or a photography class. "You'll be surprised how quickly a community forms." And while it's great to have friends IRL, even an online community can offer kindness and and accountability.

Try searching Facebook for groups that may be able to offer support—for example, a bereavement/grieving support group. Or, search groups by interests (travel? cooking? even crochet!) to find like-minded people who can lift your spirits with a common passion. Just "make sure the online group is a loving place, involving people with a common goal," says Borten.

Reframe your thoughts.

Let's say that after a break up, you keep telling yourself you'll never find love again. After all, you feel like your heart has been torn out with a butter knife and even watching the *Wedding Singer* again and again hasn't helped. It's time to [change your negative narrative](#) (therapists call this technique cognitive restructuring). For example, says

McMillan, instead of telling yourself, “I’ll be alone forever,” try saying “I will find love again.” (Or if that’s a stretch even saying “I *may* find love again,” is better!) You’ll feel more peace and less sadness, and eventually you will even believe it.

Spend time in nature.

Rockmore recommends experiencing the outdoors with your five senses. She calls this “behavioral activation.” Paying attention to what you see, feel, hear, smell and possibly taste in nature may help you out of your slump. “Getting out of hibernation and being active stimulates the nervous system and gives people the opportunity to see beauty in the world,” says Rockland.

Seek help.

If your sadness goes beyond the blues—your sleeping patterns and eating habits change, you’re not interested in activities you used to enjoy—you owe it to yourself to feel better. Self-help books are a good tool: Rockmore recommends [*The Happiness Trap*](#) and [*Beat the Blues Before They Beat You*](#). But, if it’s too overwhelming to tackle alone, talking to a therapist may be extremely helpful. Most importantly, if you are considering self harm, call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 1-800-273-8255 or text HOME to 741-741, the [Crisis Text Line](#).
