

ACTIVITY: MoodGYM

Referring to an online self-help treatment program

MoodGYM is an interactive web program for preventing depression, designed and delivered by the Australian National University. It consists of five modules, an interactive game, anxiety and depression assessments, downloadable relaxation audio, a workbook and feedback assessment. In this activity, you will be offered a guide on referring a young person to this program.

Guidelines

- This activity can be helpful if you have not used or referred anyone to MoodGYM.
- A referral to MoodGYM would be appropriate for any young people you are working with who wish to address feelings of or a diagnosis of depression, and who have the capacity to use an online program (check access, literacy and willingness).
- This activity could also be of use for practitioners who are not providing Cognitive Behaviour Therapy or interpersonal depression interventions for young people, and can meet a service gap (in role, specialisation, skills or time).
- Set aside half an hour or more to go through the website before accessing it with the young person.

In practice

Getting started

- Suggest how MoodGYM can be used as a way to learn more about coping with feelings of depression, and ask if they are interested in looking at a self-guided program as part of their support options.



Familiarising yourself with MoodGYM

1. Go to moodgym.anu.edu.au and read through the *User Guide* - which provides an overview of the program content.
2. If you are willing to, go through the registration - it provides several options to choose from for the reasons why you are registering, such as "I'm looking to help someone else" or "I'm researching treatment options for depression", so that you can have a better understanding of the content and process.

Unlike some referrals to offline support services, you can access the program without identifying yourself as a professional as well.

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Content, tools and technology for professionals supporting youth mental health and wellbeing.

► au.professionals.reachout.com



- ▶ Open the site on a computer and go through the 'Frequently asked questions' together so that you can go through the broader concepts, and take a look at the layout and its appeal to the young person. It is a great opportunity to help the young person gauge their interest and willingness to engage in the program, and to respond to any questions they may have. Let them go through the timeframes that are suggested for each of the modules, so they have a clear expectation of how much time they will need to complete the program.
- ▶ If they are keen to give it a try (MoodGYM will ask during registration the intention for completion by the registered user) go through the registration together. If they are happy with the terms of the registration, you can also encourage them to complete this section independently. You can also go through the 'User Guide' for additional information.
- ▶ Inform them the first section has many quizzes that measure responses against 'averages' and may give them an indication about the severity of their experiences of symptoms. Encourage them that this is not in an effort to make them feel worse, but to let them know that their experiences are being validated, and will highlight the significant modules for them.
- ▶ Reiterate any safety or crisis plans that you have made together.
- ▶ Research on the effectiveness of MoodGYM is available on the site, and whilst aiming for completion of the program is desirable, many of the benefits can be experienced without full completion. Celebrate achievements in subsequent sessions and if the young person has chosen not to pursue the program, discuss the reasons and assess if they need additional support or if another option is more appropriate to their situation.

Notes

In addition to the activity notes, we recommend you read through the 'Frequently asked questions' on MoodGYM's website:

▶ moodgym.anu.edu.au

MoodGym can be a dense program, and young people may need your support to fully engage and stay motivated. For perspectives on using MoodGym from professionals and young people, view the [ReachOut.com Professionals MoodGym guide](#) in the [Apps and online tools section](#) of the website. Here you will also find a range of other apps and tools that may be engaging and useful for young people you work with.

au.professionals.reachout.com ▶ [Apps and online tools](#)

Follow up

- ▶ Discuss how they can include Moodgym in their existing case plan or goal setting, and when and how they would like you to follow up on their progress. You can suggest that you can both reflect on their progress in subsequent sessions, or if they would like to allow you to view their workbook or any print outs they make. Perhaps the young person would like to allocate times for them to access MoodGYM or scheduled text reminders.
- ▶ Inform them that MoodGYM might recommend that they seek further assistance and that you can support them with further referral if necessary, such as more in depth counselling, therapy or a GP assessment.

