

HOW TO SNAP A PAL OUT OF A BAD MOOD

When a friend gets in a foul mood, you can help him bounce back by following a few simple tips, a psychiatrist says.

"If you see someone in a bad

mood and you want to help him snap out of it, try playing psychiatrist," said Dr. Jack Chermus.

The New York expert offered the following helpful suggestions for bringing someone you

care about out of the doldrums:

● **Find out what caused the bad mood.** Ask your friend what happened to put him in such a state.

If he says, "Oh, it was nothing" or "Don't bother me," be

patient. Sooner or later he'll talk about the problem.

● **Be sympathetic.** If your friend says he's had a disagreement with his wife or boss, say something like, "That could happen to anyone — don't let

an argument get you down."

● **Encourage your friend to talk.** Ask questions that will help him "get it all out."

● **Make straightforward suggestions.** If you really think it'll help, suggest that your friend try to talk it out with his boss or wife. But make your suggestions specific.

● **Be understanding.** Even if your friend gets angry while he's telling you about his bad mood, be sympathetic, understanding and consoling. Being harsh and making accusations won't help.

● **Change the scene.** If your friend doesn't seem to want to talk where he is, suggest a change of scenery.

Ask him to take a walk with you or suggest going for lunch or a drink together.

● **Assure your friend that there is a solution to his problem.** If the two of you can't arrive at a solution, suggest talking to a third party — perhaps another friend, a co-worker or a helpful relative.

● **Distract your friend.** One way is to suggest that he do something physical — some kind of exercise. This will help your friend get his mind off his problem.

MOOD BOOSTERS

Depressed? Stressed out? Thinking about going the Prozac route? Want a natural alternative?

Here are some methods being used to treat depression without prescription drugs.

Acupuncture--Strategically placed needles help regulate the flow of energy throughout the body improving the functions of all systems. Some studies show that acupuncture helps relieve depression. The American Academy of Medical Acupuncture (800-521-2262) can send you a list of physicians who use acupuncture for such problems.

Hypericum/St. John's Wort--Little research has been done in the United States about St. John's Wort, but German studies have touted the herb's powers in fighting depression. It is currently the most popular herb used to treat moderate depression, and is considered to be as effective as synthetic drugs. St. John's Wort users also report fewer side effects than those experienced with synthetic antidepressants.

Exercise--Therapists generally agree that regular exercise helps relieve depression. Studies have shown that even moderate exercise has benefits. People who are depressed rarely want to work out, so joining an exercise program where you can get guidance and encouragement is advised.

Nutrition--Sugar, alcohol and caffeine cause mood swings, so eliminating them can help to stabilize moods. Depression is often caused or exacerbated by haywire blood sugar levels caused by poor eating habits, so getting sound nutritional advice can help chase away the blues. ♦