

A Framework for Thinking About Mood

$$\text{Mood} = \frac{[\text{Traumatic Life Experiences} \times \text{Temperament}] \times [\text{Thought Patterns} + \text{Social Context} + \text{Spirituality}]}{(\text{Nutrition} + \text{Exercise} + \text{Stress Management} + \text{Connection with Nature}) - [(\text{Genetic Predisposition}) + (\text{Medical Conditions} + \text{Medications} + \text{Disordered Sleep} + \text{Excessive Screen Time} + \text{Alcohol/Substance Use})]}$$

Mood is a product of many things. This equation depicts both the psychological and biological determinants of mood.

The first part of the equation, traumatic life experiences and temperament (one's innate personality), represents the psychological determinants of mood that are outside of one's control. However, these non-modifiable determinants are influenced by psychological factors that are within one's control including thought patterns, social context and spirituality.

All of the psychological drivers of mood depicted in the top half of the equation are modified by the biological drivers of mood illustrated in the bottom half of the equation. First, there are the biological factors that can improve mood including nutrition, exercise, stress management and a connection with nature. This is followed by biological drivers that worsen mood including both factors that are not modifiable, one's genetic predisposition, as well as factors that may be modifiable including medical conditions, medications, disordered sleep, excessive screen time and alcohol/substance use.

Obviously, mood is extraordinarily complicated...more complicated than any equation can distill. However, this framework is intended to illustrate the many factors that influence mood as a means to provide a frame of reference for those hoping to improve their mood.