

Depression-

Information and a self-help guide

Depression

Depression is a very common problem which can affect us in many ways. We can become very low and tearful, have difficulties with our sleep, become very tired and find it very difficult to do things we would normally do very easily.

What happens if someone is experiencing depression?

Common ways we think

- Focus on the worst thing that is going to happen, and dwell on it
- Think that we are no good at something
- Think that we are a failure
- Think about the past and how we wish things were different
- Lose confidence and self-esteem
- Blame ourselves.

Common ways we feel

- Down and sad
- Guilty
- Hopeless
- Anxious
- Out of control
- Irritable.

Common ways it affects our body

- Poor sleep-difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, waking up too early
- Sleeping too much
- Feeling tired
- Poor motivation
- Not wanting to eat anything or eating too much
- Feeling fidgety

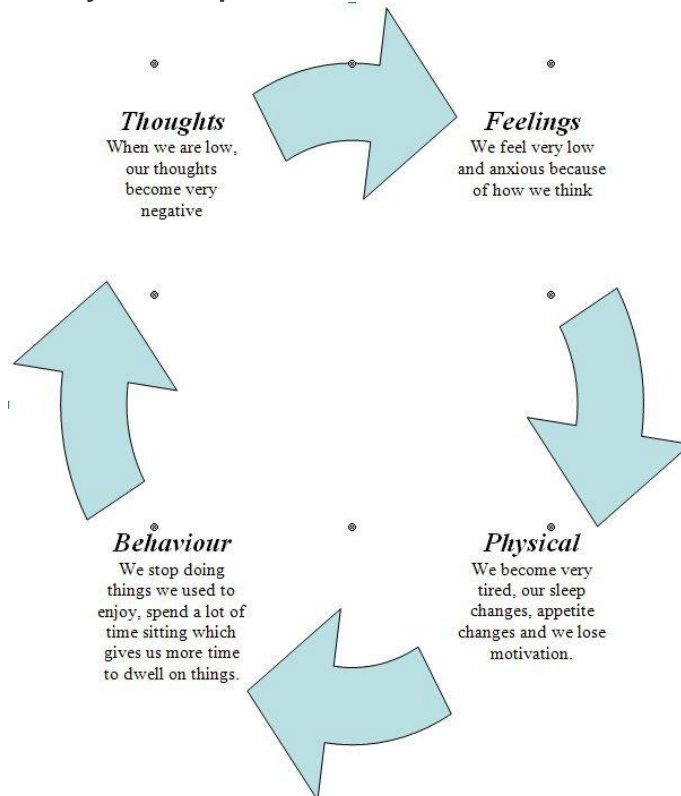
Common things we do

- Avoid social situations
- Stop doing things we used to enjoy
- Spend more time sitting
- Stop answering the phone
- Only do things when we have to
- Become short tempered with people.

Who Can Depression Affect?

- In short, **everyone**. Often people are experiencing a large amount of stress when they start experiencing symptoms of depression. However, some people can't identify anything which may have caused their symptoms to start.

The Cycle of Depression



How Do I Overcome Depression?

The aim here is to become our own therapist. That way whenever we experience problems with low mood, now or in the future, we have a toolbox of techniques to help us manage our situation. Now we're going to breakdown how to tackle this in small, manageable steps.

Step 1 – learn about low mood and depression

- In order to try and change something we need to understand what is happening and how it affects us personally. It might be useful to draw your own Vicious Cycle of low mood to really get to know what you're dealing with
- Try speaking to friends and family to see if they can give us another point of view; sometimes we don't always see how we have changed or what might be effecting us.

Step 2 – challenge your thoughts

Thoughts play a big part in depression. Sometimes our thoughts are not based on facts but are affected by how we are feeling. See the example below to see how different thoughts can make us feel better or worse:

Jane is...	The situation	Thoughts	Then...
<i>Low in mood; she has been feeling very tired and hasn't been sleeping so didn't meet with her friends this weekend as they planned. She felt guilty and worries that she'll lose them if she doesn't start making an effort soon!</i>	<i>Jane was walking down the street and passed a friend from work. Jane wasn't sure if they had seen her so waited for them to say hello. They walked past without looking at her.</i>	<i>"Oh no they've ignored me! I bet that's because I cancelled on them this weekend. They probably think I'm useless and probably don't want me to come out next week – I should just cancel now!"</i>	<i>Jane feels worse about herself, thinking she's a failure and now no-one likes her. She doesn't go to the night out they'd planned with work and so is sat at home thinking about things she'd done wrong and worrying about cancelling on her friends again.</i>
<i>Happy: didn't go out as usual this weekend because she was feeling tired. Instead she stayed in and relaxed and now is feeling much better and looking forward to a work night out next week.</i>		<i>"That's funny, I guess they didn't see me. They did seem distracted and were playing on their phone. I'll ask them when I see them on the night out next week!"</i>	<i>Jane goes to the social event the following week and sees the person who ignored her. She mentions it to them and they apologise saying they feel terrible for ignoring her! Jane has a brilliant time with her friends and goes to bed feeling happy and relaxed.</i>

Unhelpful thinking styles

Based on Beck's 'thinking errors'.

- Is it based on fact? – Drawing conclusions that are not based on evidence
- Negative filter? – Ignoring some aspects of a situation, usually only focussing on the negative
- Generalising – making a generalising statement (i.e. which covers all or many different situations) based on a single event
- Minimising or magnifying – e.g. minimising positive events or evidence which doesn't agree with your thought and magnifying negative events
- Personalising – taking responsibility for things or relating them to yourself when there is no reason to
- Black and white thinking – thinking in all or nothing terms e.g. 'if I can't get 100% in this test I'm a complete failure'.

Thought balancing techniques

This is a way of 'balancing out' unhelpful thoughts by seeing how true they really are. Often when we are feeling low in mood our thoughts tend to be more negative, they are not always based on real life.

Jane's example shows some personalisation: believing she was the reason the person from work had ignored her, when in fact they were just busy on their phone.

Mind reading; believing the other person thought she was 'useless' when there was no evidence for this, and generalising; thinking she is a 'failure' and that 'no-one likes her', when in fact only one person ignored her and on only one occasion. See below for an example, it might be useful to try and do your own example.

What is the thought?

'I'm a failure and no-one likes me.'

How do I feel about this?

'Down, depressed, lonely.'

What is the evidence for this thought?

'I walked straight past that person from work and they didn't even look at me!'

What is the evidence against this?

'If they never looked at me its possible they just didn't see me, they usually talk to me at work. They were also playing with their phone, I know I'm often distracted if I receive a text message. In addition, I was invited to that night out next week, they didn't have to invite me, so some of them must like me even if that person did ignore me on purpose!'

What would be a more realistic thought?

'Its possible that person ignored me but they were probably just not paying attention. Besides, even if they did ignore me its only one person, it doesn't mean no-one likes me.'

How do I feel now?

'Much better. Thinking about it I am really looking forward to the work night out. I don't want to miss out on that because of this one incident and I bet they don't even realise what they did! I don't feel as nervous about seeing them again now.'

Step 3 - change our behaviour

When we feel low in mood we can often change our normal routine. This may be because we are not sleeping, or just tired, and no longer have the energy or motivation to go to the gym/see friends/go shopping.

Sometimes we just feel too overwhelmed to face a crowd of people in the town centre, or friends at a party. It may be that we start behaving in a different way, such as drinking more coffee to stay awake, or more alcohol to give us a more confidence.

It sometimes helps to find out what has changed and start doing things that will help us feel better. This could be facing our fears, cutting down on avoidance, or eating/drinking in a healthier way.

- Using an 'Activity Diary' can help us to see patterns, such as feeling better on the days we've spoken to friends or family, and feeling worse on days after we've had a drink of alcohol or not eaten properly
- The 'Managing Behaviour' worksheet can help us to see what behaviour has changed, and to gradually start increasing healthier activities while getting rid of those that are not helping.