

# Low Mood and Depression

A self help guide for older people

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## These are the thoughts of people with depression

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*I feel so alone and isolated, I never see my friends or family, they have all died or moved away, or have their own lives to get on with. Those who are left probably find me annoying as I just can't seem to find anything positive to say. There is no point in making any effort. It doesn't pay off ... I just hate myself.*

*I am so tired and can't get interested in anything and I feel like crying all the time. I don't even get started with jobs I should be doing, I can't even do basic things that seem so easy to other people and when I was younger and healthier these things would have been no problem...*

## You may have had similar thoughts yourself.

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**Depression is a very common problem and many people feel low or down in the dumps at times. This is often due to life stresses such as bereavement, retirement, money or housing problems, or difficulties in relationships. For some people, as they get older, the problem becomes much worse and can get in the way of normal life.**

## How can this booklet help me?

It may seem that nothing can be done to help you feel better and that feeling this way is an inevitable part of getting older. However, there are things that you can do to make a difference. There is also further help you can get if the depression does not seem to be getting any better.

This booklet aims to help you cope with depression and begin to get better. The approach is called Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT uses methods that have been tried and tested and found to be effective. It involves looking at the way you think about things and the things that you do everyday. We have included pen and paper exercises in the booklet to help you begin to understand and begin to deal with depression practically. You may find it helpful to complete these exercises.

## What does research tell us about depression?

Life is sometimes difficult and we know that factors such as poor health, bereavement, relationship problems and retirement can make people more likely to become depressed. New research has helped us to understand depression more clearly. We now realise that thoughts can also play an important role in depression. Changes in feelings may occur gradually, but the way a person thinks about themselves when they are depressed may be very different from how they thought before. Perhaps you can notice some examples of depressed thinking in yourself or in someone you know who has depression.

### Here are a few of our examples:

- ➔ The grandmother whose family moves away and thinks she is now worthless as she can not help out with the childcare.
- ➔ The older woman who thinks she is useless as she wants to be able to continue working but no one will take on someone of her age.
- ➔ The intellectual older man who thinks he can no longer concentrate following retiring from his work.

- ➔ The wife who feels guilty that she gets irritated with her husband who has been diagnosed with Dementia.
- ➔ The man who thinks that he is useless because he has lost his job.

People who are depressed typically have these thoughts and at the time they believe them to be true. When someone's thoughts change like this, they also begin to experience other changes.

## These are some of the signs or symptoms that you may experience if you are depressed:

### Emotions or feelings - (tick if you feel like this)

- Feeling sad, guilty, upset, numb or despairing
- Losing interest or enjoyment in things
- Crying a lot or unable to cry when a truly sad event occurs
- Feeling alone even if you are in company
- Feeling angry and irritable about the slightest things



### Physical or Bodily Signs

- Tiredness
- Restlessness
- Sleep problems
- Feeling worse at a particular time of day - usually mornings
- Changes in weight, appetite and eating
- Noticing physical changes such as increased pain or upset stomach



### Thoughts

- Losing confidence in yourself
- Expecting the worst and having negative or gloomy thoughts
- Thinking that everything seems hopeless
- Thinking you hate yourself
- Poor memory or concentration
- Worrying about what will happen in the future



**Behaviour**

- Having difficulty in making decisions
- Feeling less motivated to do everyday tasks or that you 'can't be bothered'
- Putting things off
- Doing fewer things that you used to enjoy



If you have ticked many of these boxes then you may be experiencing low mood or depression. When you're depressed you may believe that you're helpless and alone in the world; you often blame yourself for the problems that you are experiencing. At the bottom of all this you may feel negative about yourself, about the world and about the future. So you tend to lose interest in what's going on around you and you don't get any satisfaction out of the things you used to enjoy. It can become hard to make decisions or to carry out little tasks that you once did with no problem at all.

**In Summary**

Research now tells us that gloomy thoughts play an important role in depression. When someone is depressed there are usually changes in the way they feel - their emotions, how their body reacts, what they think and how they behave.

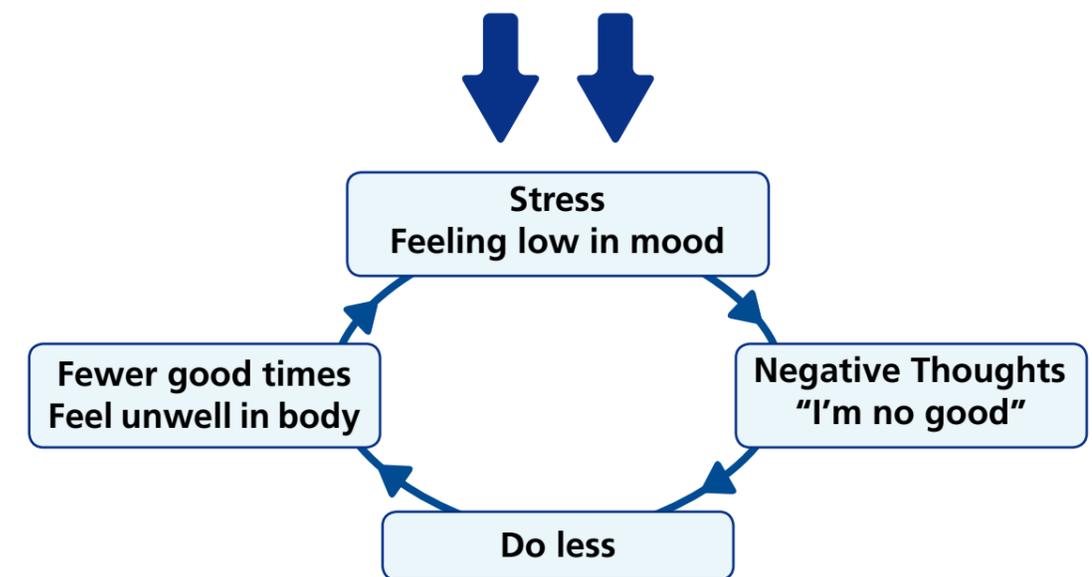
**Understanding these feelings**

The way you think about things affects the way you feel, which affects the way you behave. It is difficult to change the way you feel, but you can change the way you think. When you are feeling depressed you might have negative thoughts a lot of the time. With each negative thought the feelings of depression are likely to increase. Sometimes negative thoughts can stop you from doing the things that you would normally do. As a result, you may get critical thoughts about being lazy, or not good enough which make you feel even worse. In other words, you get caught up in a vicious cycle.

**For example**

Suppose you are looking out of your window and wave at a friend who appears to ignore you completely. You might wonder why your friend has turned against you and you feel a little sad. Later on, you mention the incident to your friend, who tells you that he was preoccupied at the time and he didn't even see you. Normally you would feel better and put what happened out of your mind. But if you're depressed, you may believe your friend has rejected you. You may not even ask him about the incident, and then the mistake goes uncorrected. If you're feeling depressed you are more likely to make mistakes like this over and over again.

**The vicious cycle can look like this:**



**Has a similar cycle happened to you? Try and draw it out.**



## Recognising negative thoughts

When you are feeling low the gloomy thoughts may be so familiar and happen so often that you just accept them as facts.

**Negative thoughts are often about yourself. For example:**

*"I'm no good", "I'm useless", "People don't like me",  
"I'm unsociable", "I look ugly".*

**Do you have any gloomy thoughts about yourself?**

**Jot them down:**

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These thoughts are sometimes about other things such as the world around you or the future. For example:

*"People are unkind", "There is nothing to look forward to" "The world is a horrible place", "Nothing will work out well".*

**Do you have any gloomy thoughts about other things?**

**Jot them down.**

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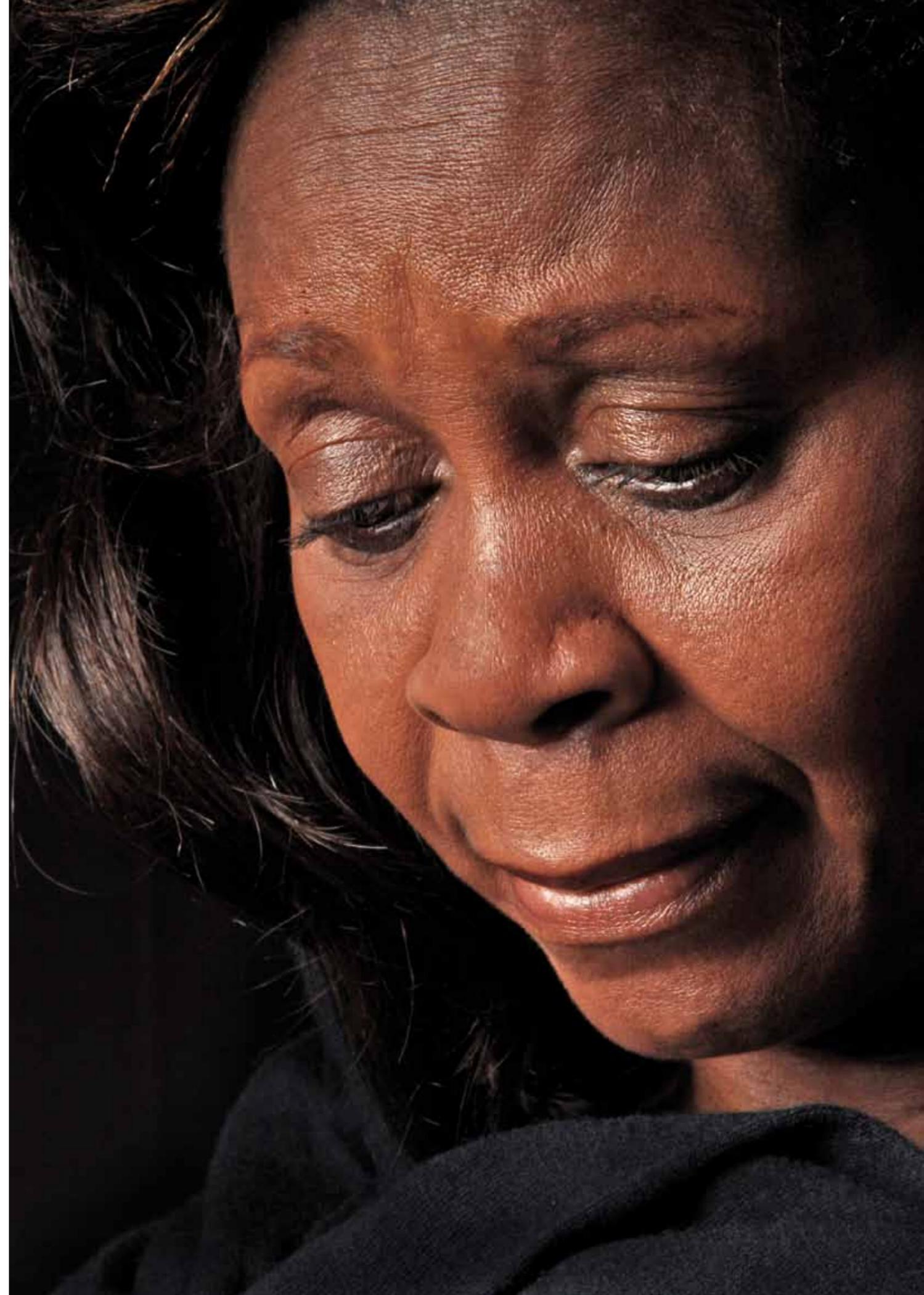
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## What more should I know about these gloomy negative thoughts?

It may be that as you get older you face challenges such as changes in your health, loss of loved ones and retirement that are difficult to manage and it is unsurprising that these events may result in you feeling low or having negative thoughts about yourself, your situation or about the future. We have given examples of the negative thoughts people have when they are depressed. It is important to remember that you might still occasionally have some of these sorts of thoughts when you are not depressed. The difference is that you would generally dismiss them from your mind. When you are depressed, however, these thoughts are around all the time.

### Let's look at these negative thoughts in more detail:

1. Negative thoughts tend to be automatic. They are not actually arrived at on the basis of reason and logic, they just seem to happen.
2. Often the thoughts are unreasonable, and unrealistic. They serve no purpose. All they do is make you feel bad and they get in the way of what you really want out of life. If you think about them carefully, you will probably find that you have jumped to a conclusion which is not necessarily correct. For example, thinking someone doesn't like you because they haven't phoned recently.
3. Even though these thoughts are unreasonable they probably seem reasonable and correct to you because of your low mood.
4. The more you believe and accept negative thoughts, the worse you are likely to feel. If you allow yourself to get into the grip of these thoughts, you may find you are viewing everything in a negative way. When people become depressed their thinking often changes. They may make some of the following errors when they are thinking negatively:

## 1. Exaggerating the negative

This means you think things are much worse than they really are. For example you make a mistake while cooking and fear the whole meal is ruined. In other words you jump to a negative conclusion and believe that it is likely to happen. You may spend a long time worrying that you have upset a relative only to find later she didn't even remember the comment.

### Do you ever exaggerate the negative?

Think back over the last 2 weeks and list examples:



## 2. Overgeneralising

For example, if one person doesn't get on with you, you may think "no one likes me". If one of your daily tasks hasn't been finished you think for example, "I've achieved nothing - nothing has been done". In other words from one thing that has happened to you, you draw a negative conclusion which is much bigger and covers all sorts of things.

### Do you ever overgeneralise?

Think back over the last 2 weeks and list examples:



### 3. Ignoring the positive

People who are depressed tend to focus their thinking on negative or bad events and ignore positive or good events. You might have had a game of cards and lost one hand but played well in general. After the game you just think about that one hand where you did not win and not the rest of the game played well. You may have many good friends who you have known for years but you concentrate and worry about one that has fallen out with you rather than remembering all the other good friendships.

**Do you sometimes ignore the positive?  
Jot down examples from the last 2 weeks:**



### 4. Taking things personally

Often if our mood is low we blame ourselves for anything which goes wrong, even if things have nothing to do with us in reality. For example, you go into a local shop and the assistant who knows you is 'off-hand', your automatic thought is "she doesn't like me ... have I done something wrong?", but the most likely reason is that she's tired or upset or has had a 'bad day'. In this example you have taken the blame personally.

**Do you sometimes take things personally when they probably have little to do with you? Give some examples from the last 2 weeks:**



### In Summary

When people are depressed, although this may have been triggered by challenging or negative events, they also often have gloomy or unhelpful thoughts about themselves, the world and the future. They can also make errors in the way they think. They exaggerate the negative, overgeneralise bad events, ignore positives in their lives and can take things personally. It is important to notice unhelpful thoughts and errors in thinking.

### How can I help myself?

So far we have talked about how what we think affects the way we feel. We have looked at particular ways of thinking which can lead to us getting depressed. In this section we will look at practical steps to help to overcome depressive feelings and thoughts.

**Positive steps – some of the suggestions below may be possible steps you can take**

- ➔ List things to do
- ➔ Mix with people
- ➔ Join in activities
- ➔ Take appropriate exercise (Discuss this with your doctor or nurse if you are worried about how much exercise you can do)
- ➔ Do things you enjoy



### Positive Steps: Getting Active

Getting more active in a meaningful and step-by-step way can help improve your mood and wellbeing. When you experience symptoms of depression, you can find that you don't feel like doing anything, or that it's hard to decide what to do each day. As you get older, it may be that you have developed physical health problems which can affect your mobility or cause you pain, resulting in you feeling less able to stay active or finding it harder to do the activities you previously enjoyed or found easy. It may also be that having recently retired you have more time on your hands and are looking for new interests or activities, which can sometimes feel daunting.

This may mean you end up doing very little, and you miss out on activities which would bring you enjoyment and a sense of achievement or purpose. Doing less can also mean that you have more time to think about all the things that are upsetting you, which may make you feel worse. We all need to do things that give us a sense of pleasure. You can become more depressed and down if you do not have any pleasurable activities in your life.

Learning how to become more active can help you plan a daily routine, reintroduce things you enjoy or need to do, and help give you a sense of achievement in your life. There is lots of research to show that carefully planned activity can be a very effective treatment for depression.



## Why is getting active important?

When you feel depressed, you can feel tired and physically unwell, and you may have more negative thoughts. These can all lead you to change the way you behave. For example, when you feel depressed you might stop seeing your friends or family, stop exercising or going out, and stop doing things you used to enjoy or that were important to you. In the short-term, you might feel a sense of relief that you don't have to do activities that feel hard because you are depressed. This sense of relief can lead you to withdraw even more.

In the longer-term, if you keep avoiding things, you miss out on the sense of pleasure or achievement you might get from these activities. This can make symptoms of depression worse, and lead you to feel lower in confidence.

## What types of activities do people avoid when they are depressed?

### Routine activities

You might find that you avoid everyday activities, which are important in giving your life a routine that makes you feel comfortable day-to-day.

#### These might include:

1. Cleaning and tidying the house
2. Doing the ironing or washing up
3. Cooking meals and food shopping

### Enjoyable activities

**You may also avoid or not do activities that you used to find enjoyable, such as:**

1. Seeing friends and family
2. Exercise such as swimming or going for a walk
3. Having lunch with friends
4. Reading
5. Playing with your grandchildren

### Necessary activities

**A third area where people avoid activities is in important and necessary things such as:**

1. Paying the bills
2. Opening post
3. Dealing with difficult situations with family or friends

These are as important as pleasurable activities, because if you avoid them, they can lead to further problems and more stress.

### Getting active step-by-step:

#### Step 1: Understanding your cycle

Sometimes people can find it hard to know what types of activities they stop doing or avoid when feeling depressed. It can also be hard to recognise what you are still managing to do that makes you feel better. A first step can be to keep a diary of what you are doing at the moment, which things you are finding hard and which things gives you some pleasure (See page 22 of this booklet). This can then be used as a starting point for planning more activities.

#### Step 2: What are your routine, pleasurable and necessary activities?

The next step is to list routine, pleasurable and necessary activities that you used to do, and would like to be doing, but have stopped doing since you felt low.

**Exercise 1: What activities have you stopped doing or do less of since feeling depressed that you would like to be able to do?**



**Routine activities**


**Pleasurable activities**


**Necessary activities**


**Step 3: Making a list of routine, pleasurable and necessary activities in order of difficulty. Now group the activities you listed in exercise 1 in this order:**

- 1.** Easiest
- 2.** Not so difficult / quite difficult
- 3.** Difficult

In each of these three groups you should include some routine, pleasurable and necessary activities to work towards.

**Exercise 2: Place your lists in order of difficulty in the following groups, mixing up routine, pleasurable and necessary activities**



**Easiest (least effort):**


**Medium difficulty**


**Most difficult (most effort)**




**Step 4: Setting goals to do some routine, pleasurable and necessary activities**

Now you know what activities you have been doing less of and would like to start doing again, and which ones are easier and harder to do, it is time to set some goals to increase your activities. It might be a good idea to start with the easiest activities on your list and to include pleasurable, routine and necessary ones. You can use the activities from exercise 2 to help you set your goals.

You can use a blank activity diary to plan in your activities for the week. The more specific you are about your goals (where, when, with whom and which activity) you can be, the more likely you will be to succeed. It is tempting to set big goals but research shows that setting small and regular activity goals is most effective in the early stages. You also need to build up to doing more so you don't set yourself too many goals at once.

**Exercise 3: Goal setting to increase activity**

Set some goals for increasing routine, pleasurable and necessary activities, starting with the easiest ones first and put them onto a blank activity diary sheet (Page 22) so that you know when you will do them. Try and put in at least a couple of activities for each day, and for the time of day that you feel better to give yourself the best chance of completing this.

**Step 5: Putting it into practice and getting active**

Now that you have made a plan of what activities and goals you would like to work on, it is time to try and follow this plan and achieve the activity goals that you have set yourself. Remember that a balance of routine, pleasurable and necessary activities will be most helpful to your recovery so try to do some of each.

**Exercise 4:**

Try to do the activity tasks you have planned on your activity diary. Make a note on the activity diary as to whether you managed to achieve the goal, and any problems or successes you had.

**Step 6: Reviewing your progress and setting new activity goals**

During your follow-up sessions with your worker it is helpful to talk through how you are getting on with the activity goals, including what is going well and any difficulties you have had. If there are specific barriers to increasing your activity connected to physical health or mobility problems there is plenty of specialist advice and support available which your GP or your 'worker' can help you to access. You can problem-solve any difficulties with your worker, and adapt your goals in terms of:

1. Difficulty
2. Frequency
3. Balance of routine, pleasurable and necessary activities
4. How much is going on in your life

## Daily Plan/Diary - Date:



This can be photocopied and used as needed. Your Mental Health Worker may also have larger copies of worksheets that you can use to help with the different exercises.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

### Exercise 5: How am I getting on?

At each session and in your own time it is helpful to consider how you are getting on with setting and achieving your goals. If you are finding some goals easy to achieve and they are helping with your mood, it is useful to carry on with those goals, or take the next step to a more difficult goal.

If you are having any difficulties in achieving a goal, it can be helpful to ask yourself:

- 1. Is the goal important to me?** If not, you may want to set a different goal
- 2. Is the goal too difficult or complicated for me at this time?** If this is the case, how can you break down the goal into smaller more manageable steps?
- 3. Am I trying to do the task at the right time?** There may be an easier time of day or week to try and achieve this goal. What would that be for you?
- 4. Would it be easier to do this task if I had some help or support from someone?** If so, who could help you e.g. a partner, friend or relative?

Over time, getting more active should help you to feel more positive and less depressed. In addition, you will have learned skills that you can use in the future if you should ever start to feel low again.

### Suggested daily action plan format

There is a chart at the centre of this book to use as part of your daily action plan. This can be photocopied and used as needed.

## The ABC of changing feelings

As we get older there are changes that we experience that can make life more challenging. As we have discussed above, our feelings are affected by what we think about and how we make sense of what has happened to us.

Try to think about a recent event which had upset and depressed you. You should be able to sort out three parts of it:

- A.** The event.
- B.** Your thoughts about it.
- C.** Your feelings about it.

Most people are normally only aware of A and C. Let's look at an example.

**Suppose someone you know asks you to join them on a day trip and you decide not to and they criticise your decision.**

**A. The event - criticism.** You may feel hurt and embarrassed.

**B. Your thoughts -** "He thinks I'm being difficult and unsociable, he's probably right. I'm hopeless at friendships, they shouldn't even bother with me.

**C. Your feelings -** hurt, embarrassed.

You may need to play back the event in your head to pay attention to the thoughts you were having.

How depressing! No wonder you feel bad! The important point about trying to become aware of these three stages A, B and C is that we can change what we think about an event and therefore change how we feel about it.

### Thought balancing

A useful technique to try is called balancing. When you have a negative, critical thought, balance it out by making a more positive statement to yourself. For example:

The thought: "I'm no good at cooking", could be balanced with: "my family depend on me and my daughter said how much she appreciates me yesterday". The thought "I've got nothing to offer anyone since being made redundant" could be balanced with "I have more time to catch up with friends and have started to think about the changes that I would like to make to my home".

### The double column technique

Another thing you could do is write down your negative automatic thoughts in one column - and, opposite each one, write down a more balanced positive thought. Like this:

Negative automatic thought	Balancing thoughts
John hasn't come to see me I'm not important to him anymore.	Maybe he is very busy and thinks I am doing better than I was last week, so he doesn't need to worry about me.

### Try and remember details

Research tells us that the person who is depressed doesn't remember detail of events but tends to think in general statements, such as "I've never been any good at anything". Try and train yourself to remember details so that good times and experiences are easy to recall. Think of particular times. A daily diary can help you to do this. Make lists of actual achievements and good aspects of yourself such as "I'm always on time", "I helped my friend on Tuesday", "My friend complimented me on how well I keep my flat."

Try to keep a diary of events, feelings and thoughts. It may look a bit like the following table. Use the approaches described to gain more balanced thoughts. Look out for errors in thinking.

Event	Feeling or emotion	Negative automatic thought	Other more balanced thoughts
A neighbour ignored me	Low and depressed	She doesn't like me, no one does	She's probably got something on her mind – I am jumping to a conclusion that she doesn't like me.
<b>Your example</b>			



### In Summary

**Using a daily plan, noticing pleasurable events and those which give you a sense of achievement and keeping a diary of automatic thoughts and more balanced thoughts can help you to fight depression and the gloomy thoughts that go with it.**

## Solving difficult problems

Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the very complicated and difficult things we have to do. Problem solving is a systematic way to help you manage your problems. It can help you feel more in control and think of realistic solutions.

### The 7 steps to problem-solving:

- 1. Identify and clearly define the problem.** If you are experiencing more than one difficulty choose the most urgent, or maybe the easiest or the one you may have most control over to deal with first.
- 2. 'Brainstorm'** to list all the possible solutions to your chosen problem. Even silly ideas or ones that are not likely to work are useful to write down - the more ideas you come up with the more likely you are to find a solution.
- 3. Evaluate how effective each solution will be.** Go through each solution and list the pros and cons of each one – this will help you decide which solution is most suitable.
- 4. Choose the most realistic and practical solution.** The one you choose should be both helpful and achievable.
- 5. Plan the steps for carrying out your solution.** Breaking down your solution into simple steps will help you to see how it can be achieved and any aspects that may be more difficult. Try thinking about what will be done; how it will be done; when you will do it; who will be involved; and where it will happen.
- 6. Carry out your plan.**
- 7. Review the outcome.** If your solution works - GREAT! Congratulate yourself and remember this success for the future. If the problem is not solved, try to understand what may have got in the way – maybe you were feeling particularly unwell, tired or tried to do too much. Whatever the reason, you did not fail. Learn from the experience. You could try again or go back to your list of solutions as often as you need to. The more ideas you produce the more options you have to choose from.

### Example

#### Problem:

I can't pay my bills or rent this month

#### Possible solutions:

- ➔ Ignore the problem
- ➔ Rob a bank
- ➔ Arrange an overdraft from the bank and use this to pay off the bill
- ➔ Pay a small amount of the bill
- ➔ Speak to an expert about the debt. e.g. Citizens Advice Bureau or Age Concern
- ➔ Ask a friend or relative if they can help you sort this out

#### Chosen solution:

'Arrange an overdraft from the bank'

**Pros:** Bills would be paid on time and I would avoid getting the 'red letters'.

**Cons:** They may say no and how would I pay them back.

**Plan:** 'I could find the number of the bank from a letter and phone them up. I'll do this tomorrow morning. I will plan what I want to ask in advance so I don't get my words muddled up. I'll ask for an appointment and get a friend to join me. I can discuss the fact that I am having problems paying my bills and rent and I'll ask if I can arrange a meeting for the morning (as I tend to feel tired and low in the afternoon). I'll make sure I take all the information I have about my bills and bank account to the meeting. If they say no to my request I will ask them what other advice they have for me and I will try not to be disheartened and look at other options'.

**Try this way of problem solving yourself.**

**What is the problem? (write it down)**

Light blue horizontal writing lines for describing the problem.



**List all the solutions (brainstorming):**

Remember how you may have solved similar problems in the past. What would you advise others to do? Or what might those you trust advise you to do?

Light blue horizontal writing lines for brainstorming solutions.



**List the pros and cons (advantages and disadvantages) of each possible solution:**

Light blue horizontal writing lines for listing pros and cons of solutions.



**Choose the best solution (write it down)**

Light blue horizontal writing lines for choosing the best solution.



**Steps to tackle it:**

(include the what, how, when, who and where aspects)

**Step 1**

**Step 2**

**Step 3**

**Step 4**

**Step 5**

Light blue horizontal writing lines for detailing the steps to tackle the problem.



**Long term beliefs**

Sometimes people have long-held views about themselves that are very self critical - for example, "I'm not a very clever person" or "I'm not a very lovable person". These beliefs are often a product of our past experience and may hold no truth in present reality. Try to challenge this self criticism, stop knocking yourself down and look for evidence that disproves the beliefs or ideas. What would you say to a good friend if they held that belief about themselves? What might other people who see you in a more positive light say about these beliefs or ideas?

Light blue horizontal writing lines for reflecting on long-term beliefs.





## Sleep management

Changes in sleep patterns are common as you get older, especially when you are feeling low.

You may have difficulty getting to sleep, or you may be waking during the night or very early in the morning. Often as people's mood improves their sleep improves too.

### Basic rules for sleeping

**There are some basic rules for better sleeping:**

- ➔ Get used to going to bed and getting up at a regular time
- ➔ Have a bedtime routine and try to wind down before bedtime
- ➔ Avoid drinking tea, coffee, caffeine drinks (including coca cola etc) and alcohol in the evenings
- ➔ Be aware that napping during the day can affect your body clock and stop you sleeping well at night
- ➔ Don't eat a large meal before bedtime. If you're hungry before bedtime have a light snack
- ➔ Try to keep as active as is possible for you, during the day, but try and relax as you get closer to bedtime
- ➔ Try to only sleep in your bed rather than napping on the settee or anywhere else, unless you have a medical reason not to
- ➔ Don't watch TV, eat or write in bed unless you are certain from past experience that these activities will help you get to sleep
- ➔ Don't go to bed until you feel sleepy
- ➔ If you have not gone to sleep within half an hour, get up and do something distracting and relaxing (away from the bedroom if possible). Go back to bed only when you feel sleepy. It may also be helpful to monitor your sleep to see when you are and when you are not sleeping, and record any activities that helped you return to sleep.

## Looking after yourself

When you are feeling low it is particularly important that you take care of yourself. It can be easy to forget to eat regular meals or keep active or take medication that you have been prescribed.

Your diet should be a source of health and pleasure. Eating regularly can help to maintain a daily routine, and keep your energy levels up. Try to avoid cycles of under and over-eating, and limit, rather than ban, unhealthy foods.

Remain as active as possible (and do physical exercise if you can) as this helps to keep you healthy and can actually make you feel invigorated rather than exhausted. It is also recommended as a treatment for mild to moderate depression. There are lots of ways of increasing your activity levels, whether through housework, daily walks or attending a local gym, or your local community centre, many of which have groups geared towards older people. **If you have any concerns about doing physical exercise because of your physical health consult your GP for advice.**

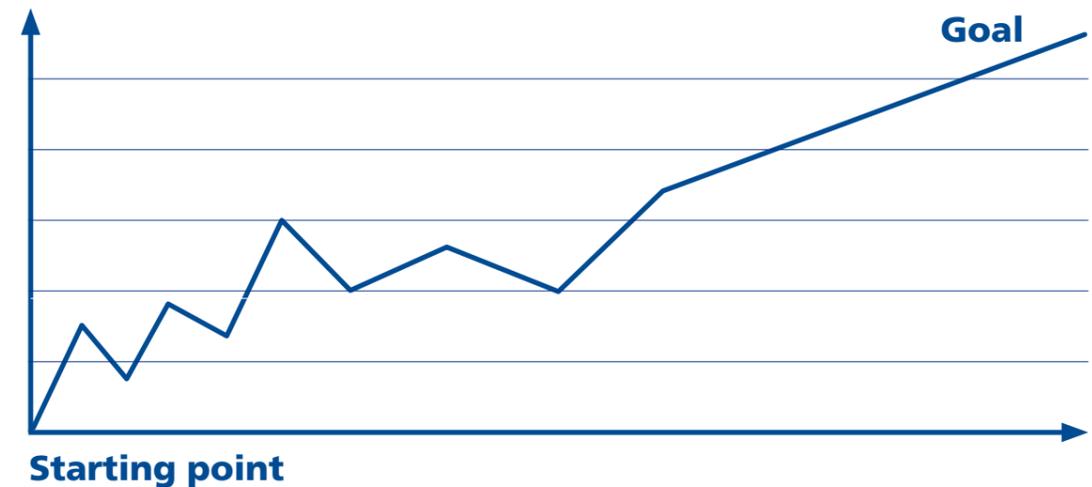
Take time to relax. Everybody deserves a break once in a while.

### Particularly stressful times

Many people experience difficult times in their lives because of events that they cannot change. For example, a bereavement, separating from a partner, retirement, longstanding illness, financial problems or loneliness and isolation. Sometimes several of these events happen together and depression can result. In time, most people bounce back, however this can be difficult without support.

## Coping with setbacks

Most of us get through our problems in a series of ups and downs. Your progress is likely to follow a similar path to the diagram below.



Starting point

*“Just when I started to make progress and things were going well I had a setback and I was back to square one. I needed help from my husband to start again but I soon made up the ground I had lost and I’m still going forward. I still have one or two setbacks but I keep working at it.”*

This is a very important point. If you expect to get better without any setbacks you may be very upset, or believe you have done something wrong, when a setback occurs.

Setbacks are normal. The way to cope with a setback is to remember that they are to be expected. Look at how you made progress so far. Do the same again.

Most of us have ups and downs as we get over our problems.

## Staying well plan

In order to feel better and to stay well, it is important to continue to look after your mental health just as you would your physical health. It can be helpful to see yourself as being on a journey towards wellbeing. As part of this journey, it is important to continue using what you have learned during your sessions in the future to help you stay well, and to improve your wellbeing further. This section will help you to review what your difficulties were, what you did that helped to improve things, and what you can do to stay well and improve how you feel in the future.

### 1. What difficulties did I ask for help with?

- ➔ What were my goals?
- ➔ What things did I want to work on?



### 2. What was keeping my problem(s) going?

- ➔ Behaviour e.g. avoiding situations or people
- ➔ Thinking e.g. always imagining the worst
- ➔ Difficult situations or life events e.g. relationships, physical health problems



### 3. What progress have I made in achieving my goals? How did I do this?



### 4. What ideas and tools have I learned that have helped me?



### 5. What obstacles might lead to a setback or make it harder to stay well? e.g.

- ➔ Stressful life events/ situations
- ➔ Not feeling motivated or thinking negatively



### 6. What would I notice first if I started to have difficulties again?

- ➔ Changes in the way I think e.g. always imagining that things will go wrong
- ➔ Changes in my behaviour e.g. avoiding things, drinking
- ➔ Changes in how I am physically e.g. more feeling tired or run down
- ➔ Changes in how I feel e.g. tearful or irritable



### 7. What can I do to start to use the strategies I have learned to help me feel better again?

- ➔ Who can I talk to? e.g. friends or family
- ➔ Can I keep active? e.g. make time to go out and / or exercise regularly



### 8. How can I build on what I have achieved?

- ➔ What further goals could I set to help me stay well?
- ➔ What could I do in the short-term?
- ➔ What could I do in the long term?



Many people find the structure and routine of talking to someone for regular counselling sessions helpful. Now that your sessions with your counsellor are coming to an end, you might find it useful to continue to have this time to check how you are doing by setting a regular review day with yourself.

### When would be a good regular time for me to check how I am doing?

- ➔ What day/ time of day?
- ➔ How often?
- ➔ Do I want anyone else to help me do this? e.g. a friend or partner



### Further help

We hope you will use the exercises suggested in this booklet. They should help you to begin to overcome your depression and get back control over your thoughts and your life.

If you feel that you are making little progress then other help is available to aid you in overcoming your problem. Your family doctor is the best person to talk to first. He or she may suggest a talking treatment or anti-depressant tablets or both. He may suggest you see a worker specialising in emotional problems who can offer expert help. If you feel so depressed that you have thought about harming yourself or ending your life then see your doctor as soon as possible and tell them how you are feeling.

### Where can I find extra help?

If you think you may be depressed, your GP is the best person to talk to in the first instance. They will have information about local services which may be able to help. Help can also be obtained from your district nurse or your practice nurse who is based at your GP practice.

If you have any queries about medication that you have been prescribed then do go and discuss this with your GP. Alternatively, you could telephone NHS Direct for information on **0845 4647**.

### Further reading

Many of the ideas in this booklet are discussed in more detail in the following books, some of which are available to borrow as part of the Books on Prescription scheme in local libraries (for more information ask your GP or mental health worker):

**Mind over Mood: Changing how you feel by changing the way you think (1995)** Christine A Padesky & Dennis Greenberger. Guilford Publications

**The Feeling Good Handbook (2000 2nd edition)** David Burns, Plume, U.S

**Overcoming Depression (2009)** Paul Gilbert

## Further support

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### Useful organisations

#### **Depression Alliance - 0845 123 2320**

212 Spitfire Studios, 63- 71 Collier Street, London N1 9BE  
www.depressionalliance.org

This is a national charity providing information and support for those affected by depression and their carers.

### Helplines

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#### **Age UK (Formally Age Concern & Help the Aged) - 0800 169 6565**

A general help line for older people (not mental health specific)

#### **Carers Line - 0808 808 7777**

Helpline providing advice and information for carers on any issue.  
(Weds & Thurs 10am-12pm, 2-4pm)

#### **CRUSE Bereavement Line - 0870 167 1677**

Help line for bereaved people and those caring for bereaved people.

#### **Drinkline - 0800 917 8282**

Open 24 hours. Confidential information and advice for anyone concerned about their own or someone else's drinking. Can also provide local referrals.

#### **FRANK - 020 7837 3777**

Drug and alcohol helpline, 24 hour free support.

#### **National Domestic Violence Helpline - 0808 2000 247**

National Helpline for women affected by domestic violence. (24hrs)

#### **Mind InfoLine - 0845 766 0163**

Mon-Fri 9.15am - 5.15pm

#### **National Debt Line - 0645 500 511 (local call rate)**

Help for anyone in debt or concerned they may fall into debt.

#### **Samaritans Linkline - 0345 909 090 (local rate)**

Confidential support for anyone in a crisis.

#### **Saneline - 0845 767 8000**

#### **Shelterline - 0808 800 2222**

For people in urgent need of accommodation. (24 hrs)

#### **NHS Direct - 0845 4647**

Telephone Helpline/Health Information Service. Talk confidentially to a nurse or information officer. Calls charged at local rate.

### Websites

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#### **www.livinglifetothefull.com**

Online life skills resource using a CBT self-help approach.  
Sign up for free.

#### **www.moodgym.anu.edu.au**

Free self-help programme teaching self-help skills to people vulnerable to depression and anxiety.

### Emergencies

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If you are in crisis, especially if you feel at risk of harming yourself or someone else, contact your GP. Alternatively, you could contact:

#### **Harmoni - 020 7388 5800**

Provides urgent medical care for people between 6.30pm-8am, Mondays to Fridays and 24 hours at weekends and Bank Holidays.

#### **Samaritans - 08457 90 90 90 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).**

#### **Islington MIND Crisis Line - 0845 123 23 73**

Out of hours telephone helpline and counselling service open Monday to Saturday 5pm – 10pm.

### **Umbrella Crisis Nightline - 020 7226 9415**

Night-time phone line for anyone with difficulties relating to a mental health problem. Open every night from 12.15am - 6am.

You can also go to your nearest Accident and Emergency department where you will be seen by someone who can discuss your difficulties with you.

## **Acknowledgements**

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Extracts from this booklet have been taken from:

### **Depression and Low Mood: A Self Help Guide (2003)**

Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust

### **Managing Anxiety: A user's manual (2002)** Helen Kennerley,

Distributed by Psychology Department, Warneford Hospital, Oxford  
Cognitive Therapy Centre Educational Self-Help Booklets

### **Dealing with Worry: A Self Help Booklet (2005)** S Black, J Hastings, M Henderson, NHS Borders

### **Managing Anxiety and Depression: A Self Help Guide (1999)**

Nicolas Holdsworth and Roger Paxton, The Mental Health Foundation

### **Manage your Mind (1995)** Gillian Butler and Tony Hope, Oxford University Press

## **This booklet is yours to keep, so make use of it again and again**

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The self referral number for iCOPE; Islington Psychological Therapies and Wellbeing Service is

**030 3123 1000**

**IAPT.referrals@islingtonpct.nhs.uk**

The self referral number for Camden Psychological Therapies Service is

**020 3317 5600**

**cpts@camdenpct.nhs.uk**

