

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 things that you would normally do. As a result, you may get critical thoughts about being lazy, or irresponsible which make you feel even worse. In other words, you get caught in a **vicious cycle**.

For example:

Suppose you are walking down the street and you see 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 didn't see you. Normally you would feel better and put what happened out of your mind. But if you're depressed, you probably 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're more likely to make mistakes like this over and over again.

Signs and symptoms of depression

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
- Loss of interest in sex.

Thoughts

- Losing confidence in yourself
- Expecting the worst and having negative thoughts
- Thinking you hate yourself/feeling worthless
- Poor memory or concentration
- Thinking that life is not worth living.

Behaviour

- Having difficulty in making decisions
- Can't be bothered to do everyday tasks
- Putting things off
- Not doing things 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 all the shortcomings that you think you have.

At the bottom of all this you feel **negative about yourself**, about **the world** and **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.

Summary

Research now tells us that negative 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.

These are the thoughts of two people who are depressed:

"I feel so alone, I never see my friends now, I guess they have dropped me. They probably don't like me – who would? There is no point in making any effort. It doesn't pay off... I just hate myself"

"I feel like crying all the time, I am so tired and can't get interested in anything. In fact 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..."

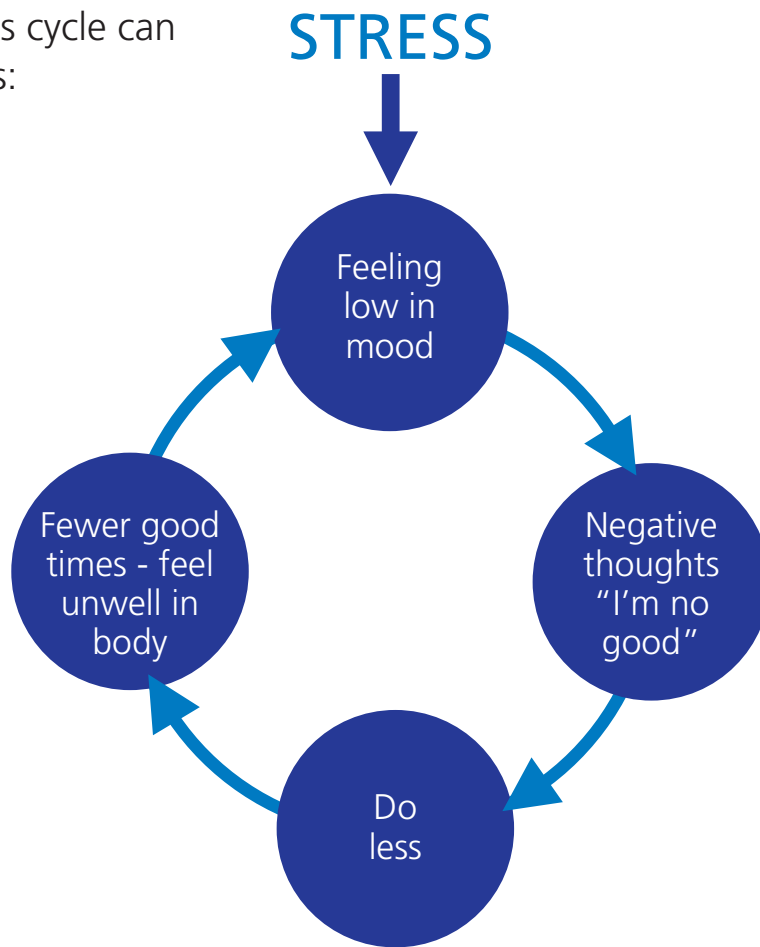
You may have had similar thoughts yourself. Depression is a very common problem and many people feel low or down in the dumps at times. This is often due to stresses such as bereavement, getting older, physical health problems, money or housing issues, or difficulties in relationships. For some people the problem becomes much worse and gets 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. But 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. We have included pen and paper exercises in the booklet to help you begin to understand and begin to deal with depression practically. You should find it helpful to complete these exercises.

This vicious cycle can be like this:



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

How can I help myself?

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

Positive Steps

- Take exercise
- List things to do
- Join in activities
- Mix with people
- Do things you enjoy

Positive Steps: Getting active

Becoming 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, find it hard to decide what to do each day and can end up not doing very much. This means that you may be doing very little that gives you a sense of enjoyment, or very little that gives you a sense of achievement or purpose.

Doing less can mean that you have more time on your hands to fill and you can start to think more about all the things that are upsetting you. We all need to do things that give us a sense of pleasure and you can become more depressed and down if you do not build this into your life too.

Learning how to become more active can enable you to set a daily routine, which includes increasing enjoyable and necessary activities and also finding activities that give you a sense of achievement. 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 physically unwell, have more negative thoughts, which can lead you to change the way you behave as a result. For example, when you feel depressed you might stop seeing your friends or family, stop exercising, and stop doing things you used to enjoy or 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. This sense of relief can lead you to withdraw even more.

In the **longer-term**, if you continue to avoid 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 every-day activities, which are important life routines. These include:

1. Cleaning and tidying the house
2. Getting up too late, going to bed late
3. Avoiding meals or eating less healthily
4. Doing the ironing or washing up.

Pleasurable activities

You may also avoid or stop doing activities that you used to find enjoyable, such as:

1. Seeing friends
2. Exercise such as swimming or jogging
3. Having lunch with work colleagues
4. Reading
5. Playing with your children.

Necessary activities

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

1. Paying the bills
2. Opening post
3. Dealing with difficult situations at work.

These are as important as pleasurable activities, because if you avoid them, this can lead to further problems and an increase in stress.

Getting active step by step:

Step 1: Understanding your cycle

Sometimes people can find it hard to know what types of activities they might be avoiding as a result of feeling low, or what they are managing to still do that makes them feel better. The first step can be to start with doing a diary (see page 42 of this booklet) to see what you are doing day to day and what you are finding hard. This can then be used as a starting point for planning in more activities.

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

The next step is to identify 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: Draw your vicious circle [Homework]

Using a recent example, please draw out your vicious circle. You are required to write down

- 1) Date you started working on this cycle
- 2) Stressful life event that happened or that is happening to you
- 3) Your negative thoughts
- 4) Change in your behaviours

Date you started working on your vicious circle

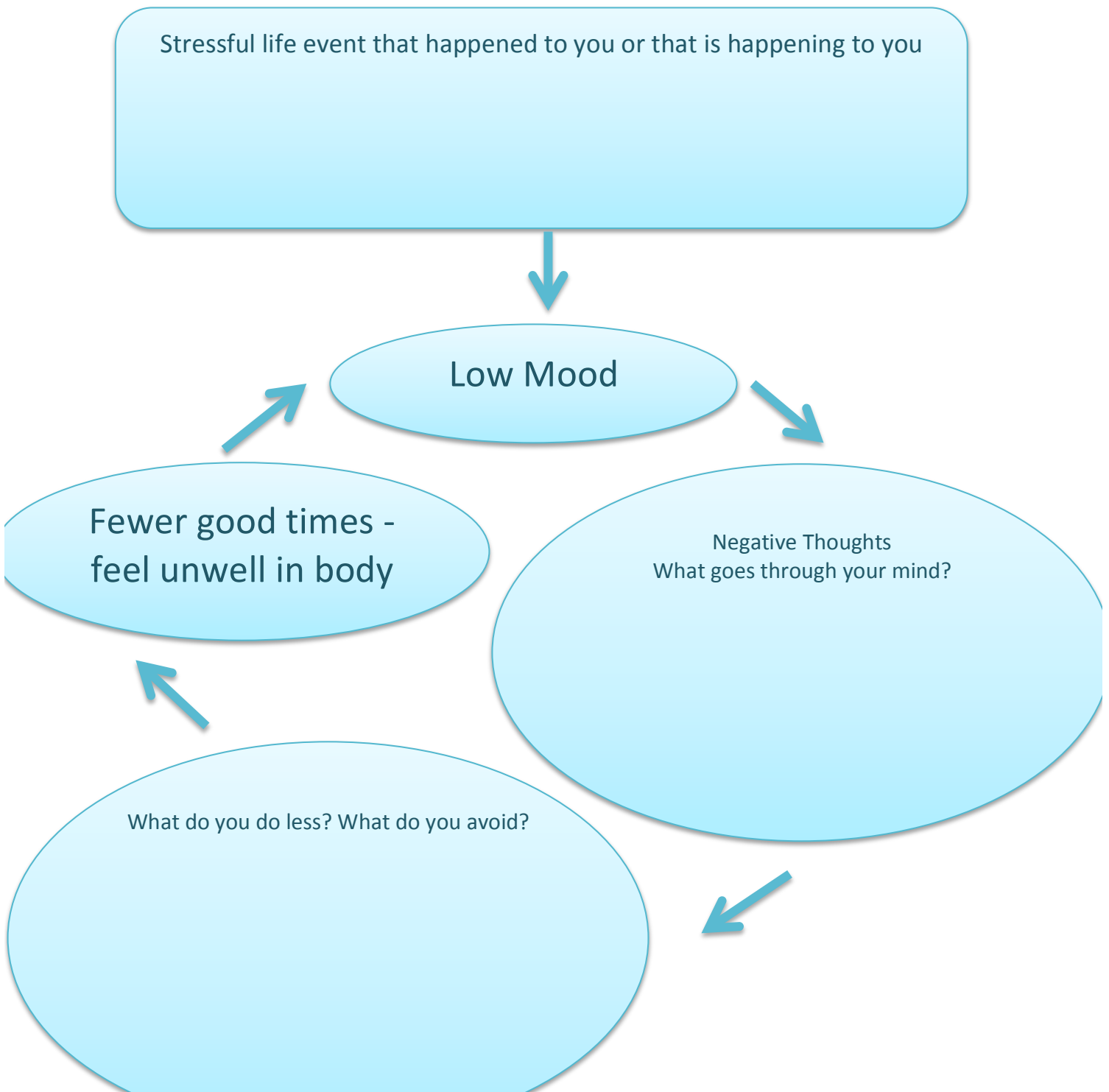
Stressful life event that happened to you or that is happening to you

Low Mood

Fewer good times -
feel unwell in body

Negative Thoughts
What goes through your mind?

What do you do less? What do you avoid?



Exercise 2: Goal setting to increase activity

With the help of the experimenter, set some goals for increasing your routine, pleasurable and necessary activities. Put at least one activity a day onto the activity diary sheet so that you know when you will do. You can add more activities after today's session

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Today			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

Exercise 3: Putting it into practice to get active [Homework]

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. When you achieved what you planned to do, strikethrough the item (e.g. ~~go jogging~~). Leave the items as they are if you did not do.

Exercise 4: Insight it into your homework [Homework]

As you work on your homework, please write down your comments and insight into this homework. How helpful is this homework? What are difficult things to do? How can we improve this homework?

Date you started working on this section

Your comments and Insights

Next appointment is on _____ at _____ am/pm at _____