

Depression

Moodjuice Self-help Guide



Learn more about depression
and skills to cope with it.

Self Help for Depression

- Do you find that your mood is low for large periods of the day and you generally feel 'down in the dumps'?
- Has your motivation to do things you previously enjoyed decreased?
- Do you often feel weepy or irritable?
- Do you feel that things are getting on top of you?
- Do you find that your confidence is low and you generally have a poor opinion of yourself?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', you may be experiencing symptoms of depression and you may find this workbook helpful.

This workbook aims to help you to:

- Recognise whether you may be experiencing symptoms of depression.
- Understand what depression is, what causes it and what keeps it going.
- Find ways to understand, manage or overcome your depression.

Do I have symptoms of depression?

If you experience symptoms of depression or low moods it is likely that you will recognise many of the feelings, physical symptoms, thoughts and behaviour patterns described below.

Please tick the boxes which regularly apply to you.



Feelings

- Sad / Low / Flat
- Upset
- Miserable
- Tearful
- Irritable/low patience threshold
- Lonely
- Unmotivated



Physical Symptoms

- Poor concentration
- Poor memory Increase or decrease in appetite
- Lethargic/lacking in energy
- Sleeping too much or too little



Thoughts

- No-one likes me
- I'm a waste of space
- I'm no good
- Things will never change
- I'm a failure/I'm going to fail
- I can't be bothered
- It's not worth going on



Behaviour Patterns

- Spending more and more time alone
- Staying in bed longer than usual
- Keeping to yourself
- Stopped doing the things you enjoy

If you have ticked a number of these boxes it is possible that you experience symptoms of low mood or depression. However don't be alarmed, this is a common problem that can be overcome. By following the steps in this workbook, you may be able to learn how to improve your situation.

What is depression?

Everyone feels 'low,' 'down in the dumps,' 'blue,' or like they 'can't be bothered' from time to time. Depression is essentially a more extreme form of this. For example, depression tends to describe when these feelings last for most of the day, over an extended period of time. When depressed, people also find that their motivation is low, their appetite is reduced, their sleeping patterns are disrupted and their concentration and memory are poor. Other typical experiences include feeling irritable, weepy and lonely.

People who are low or depressed normally have a critical way of thinking about:

Themselves:

- I'm boring
- I'm Ugly
- I'm a failure

Others:

- No-one likes me
- Everyone is better than me

The future:

- Things will never get better
- What's the point?



People's behaviour patterns also typically change if they low or depressed. For example, they tend to spend a lot of their time indoors (often in bed) and don't socialise or do as much as they used to.

What causes depression?

Life Events:

We can feel depressed for a variety of reasons. However often depression can follow difficult experiences (such as a bereavement, being bullied or the end of a relationship). It is normal to feel low during such times and often these feelings pass naturally with time, but unfortunately sometimes they stick around for longer and become problematic. On the other hand, sometimes depression can seem like it comes 'out of the blue' for no particular reason at all.

Thinking Styles:

One theory suggests that the way we interpret, or think about things, can lead us to feel depressed. This is because how we think affects our emotions. For example, if you walked past a friend in the town centre and they ignored you, it would be easy to think this was because you've upset them, or that they dislike you. Of course having such thoughts would naturally cause you to feel upset and bring you down. On the other hand, if you instead thought; "perhaps they were daydreaming and didn't notice me," you would likely feel better about yourself. When we are depressed, we commonly think about situations in an overly negative manner (as described above) and this has a negative impact on our mood.

Behavioural Explanations:

Another popular theory is that depression can occur because we stop doing many of the things we used to enjoy (such as socialising with friends and participating in our hobbies). This often means we have little to look forward to which can make our lives seem boring and meaningless. Instead when we are depressed we tend to spend most of our time alone or sitting in front of the TV and this can become very unrewarding and unsatisfying.

Biological Reasons:

It has also been shown that depression can have familial ties. For example, if someone in your immediate family has experienced depression, there is an increased chance that you will develop similar feelings. It is therefore thought that our genetic make up plays a role.

In reality it is likely that a combination of all these factors play a role in people becoming depressed or low. However, in some ways it is less important to know what causes depression and more important to know what stops us moving past it.

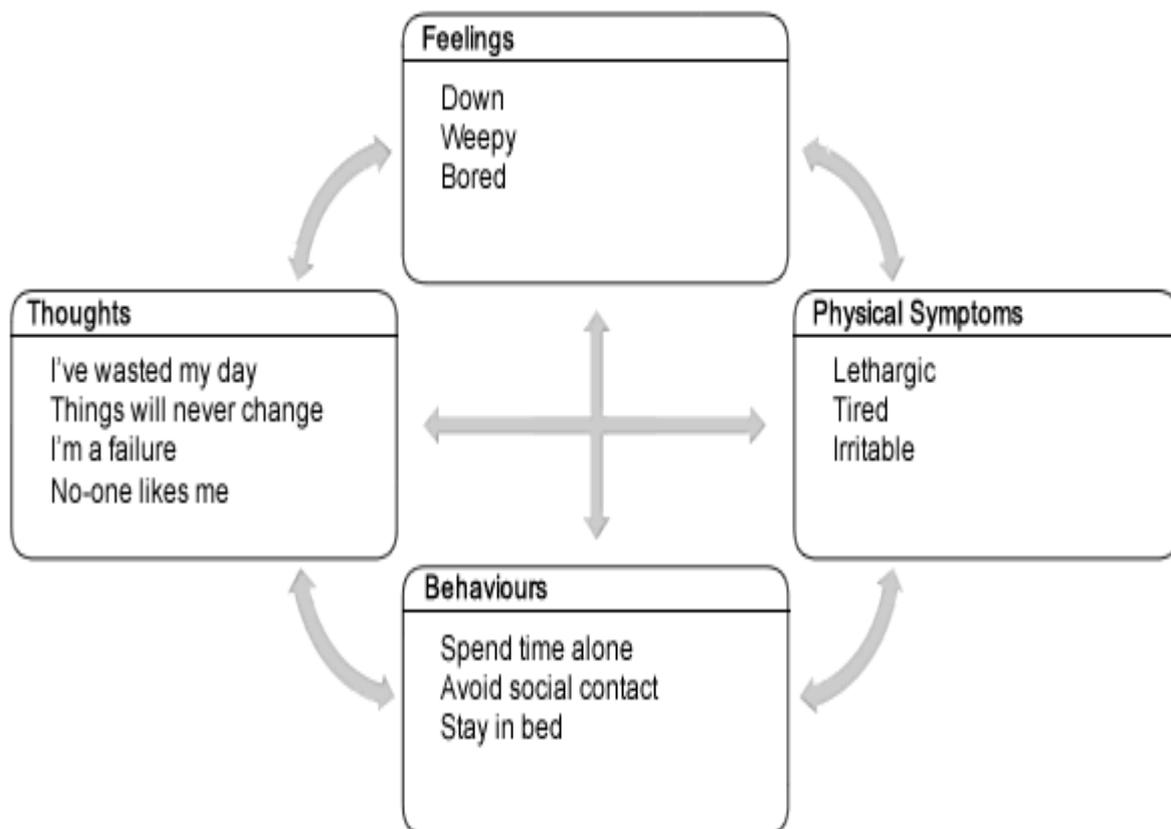
What keeps our depression going?

When people are depressed, they often have a negative way of looking at themselves, the world and their futures. Some believe that people's tendency to think in this negative fashion is one of the important factors in ensuring their depression continues. It clouds the way they interpret situations and helps ensure they continue to have a negative outlook on life.

Furthermore when people feel depressed or low, they often stop being as active as normal, and spend less time socialising or engaging in their hobbies. This means that they have less pleasure in their lives and little to look forward to on a day to day basis, which too can keep them feeling low. Furthermore, when they are inactive, it normally leads to them feeling even more lethargic, which makes it even more difficult to escape this trap and a vicious cycle occurs.

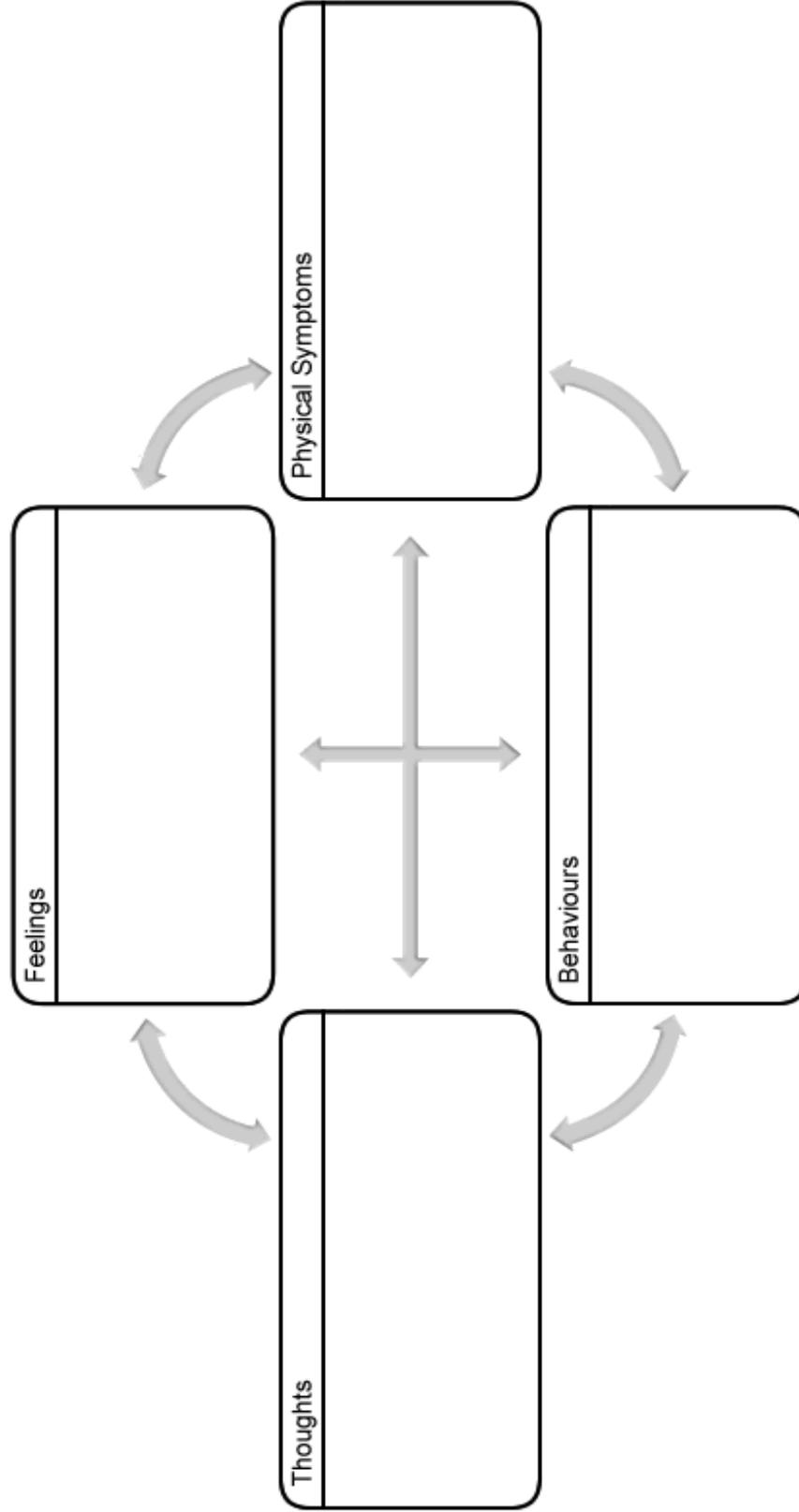
Similarly, people who are depressed or low, often spend a lot of time lying in bed or sitting around watching TV. Often this leads to people feeling as though they have wasted their day and have achieved very little which makes them feel even worse. It also leaves them with plenty of time to beat themselves up or worry about their problems, which of course also makes them feel worse.

When looking more closely at what stops us overcoming our depression, it becomes clear that our behaviour, thoughts, feelings and physical sensations all interact and combine to keep our depression going. See the diagram below:



Understanding Your Problem

Try to fill in something of your own experience. You may begin to understand your difficulties a little better. Particularly what patterns may exist and how things interact.



How can I overcome my depression?

Fortunately, there are a number of strategies that we can use to overcome depression and low moods. These include:

1. Learning how to challenge your unhelpful thoughts and see things in a more realistic light.
2. Learning strategies that can help you become more active and make good use of your time.
3. Improving your problem solving skills.
4. Learning ways to help you notice your qualities and achievements.

When going through this booklet it can sometimes be more helpful to try out the ideas above one at a time, rather than trying to learn them all at once. However simply take things at your own pace.



Challenging unhelpful thoughts

The way that we think about things has an impact on our mood. Many of these thoughts occur outside of our control, and can be negative or unhelpful. It is therefore important to remember that they are just thoughts, without any real basis, and are not necessarily facts. Even though we may believe a lot of our unhelpful thoughts when we are depressed, it is good to remember that they should be questioned as they are often based on wrong assumptions.

The following section will help you begin to recognise if you are thinking about things in an unhelpful or unrealistic way, and discuss how you can start to make changes to this. By doing so, you can learn to see things in a more realistic light which can help to improve your mood. You might have unhelpful thoughts about all kinds of things.

Here are some examples:

Yourself:

- I'm boring
- I'm ugly
- I'm a failure

Others:

- No-one likes me
- People are out to get me
- Everyone is better than me

The world:

- Life is unfair
- The world is a horrible place

The future:

- Things will never get better
- What's the point of continuing
- I'm destined to fail



It is clear to see how this kind of thinking might bring your mood and confidence levels down. Do you ever think in any of the ways outlined above? Fill in your examples below:

You might find it difficult to identify an unhelpful thought. Try thinking about a time when your mood changed. Consider what was running through your mind at that time.

Patterns of unhelpful thinking

First you need to be able to recognise an unhelpful thought. Then you can challenge it. Being aware of the common patterns that unhelpful thoughts follow can help you to recognise when you have them. Here are some of the common patterns that our unhelpful thoughts follow:

Predicting the Future:

When we are depressed, it is common for us to spend a lot of time thinking about the future and predicting what could go wrong, rather than just letting things be. In the end most of our predictions don't happen and we have wasted time and energy being worried and upset about them. For example:

You have an exam and spend the week before predicting you will fail, despite all your hard work studying and your previous good grades.

Mind Reading:

This means that you make assumptions about others' beliefs without having any real evidence to support them.

For example:

- My boss thinks I'm stupid.
- People think I'm weird.

Such ways of thinking can soon lower our mood and self-esteem.

Catastrophising:

People commonly 'catastrophise' when they are feeling low, which basically means that they often blow things out of proportion.

For example:

- They assume that something that has happened is far worse than it really is (e.g. that their friend is going to dislike them because they cancelled a night out).
- They may think that something terrible is going to happen in the future, when, in reality, there is very little evidence to support it (e.g. I'm going to get into serious trouble for calling in sick).

Taking Things Personally:

When people are feeling low, they often take things to heart.

For example:

- Because one of your workmates seem quiet, you assume that it is down to something you said. Instead in all likelihood, they are probably just having a bad day and will be back to their usual self tomorrow.

Should Statements:

People often imagine how they would like things to be or how they 'should be' rather than accepting how things really are.

For example:

- I should have more friends.
- I should be more confident at parties.

Unfortunately when we do this, we are simply being critical of ourselves which brings us down. Instead it can sometimes help to accept that things can't always be perfect.

Over Generalising:

Based on one isolated incident you assume that all others will follow a similar pattern in the future. Basically, you find it hard to see a negative event as a one off which can leave you feeling hopeless.

For example:

- After failing your driving test, you assume that you will fail everything else that you try in the future.

What If Statements:

Have you ever wondered "what if" something bad happens?

For example:

- What if I go to a party and no-one talks to me?
- What if I make no friends when I start my new job?

This type of thought can often make us avoid going places or doing things that we would like and enjoy which too can contribute to us feeling low.

Black and White Thinking:

Often when feeling low, people see things as either black or white, there is no in between.

For example:

- They will only accept an A in maths as good, a B or anything lower is a complete failure.
- This too can make people feel as though things are never good enough which can contribute to low mood.

Ignoring the Positives:

Often people can ignore the positive aspects of life or situations, and instead focus on the negative elements.

For example:

- You focus on the one person who dislikes you and forget that you have many friends.

This style of thinking stops us feeling good about ourselves and lowers our confidence.

Labelling:

People who are low often label themselves in negative ways.

For example:

- I'm no good.
- I'm not worthy.
- I'm a failure.
- I'm boring.

It is easy to see how labelling yourself in such a way would lower your confidence and mood.

Do any of your unhelpful thoughts follow some of these patterns? Jot down any examples you can think of into the box below:

Unhelpful Thought	Category
e.g. "I'm such a loser"	Labelling

We can learn techniques to challenge these unhelpful thoughts. This can help to improve your mood. The next part of this handout will discuss how we can go about challenging our unhelpful thoughts. You may come up with a more balanced thought that is accurate and based on evidence.

How to challenge unhelpful thoughts

Once you have recognised an unhelpful thought the next stage is to challenge it. To do this, you can ask yourself a series of questions. See the example below:

Situation: My partner hasn't called me after saying they would.



How you feel: Sad, empty and tearful.

Unhelpful thought: They're getting fed up with me!



Challenges to an unhelpful thought

Now you can challenge your unhelpful thoughts by asking these questions.

Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?

- *We were recently talking about moving in together one day.*
- *We've been getting on really well lately.*

Can you identify any of the patterns of unhelpful thinking described earlier?

- *I'm catastrophising. Based on their failure to call, I'm jumping to worst possible conclusion.*
- *I'm also mind reading and ignoring the positives.*

What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?

- *I'd say - they're probably just busy, stop stressing; they'll no doubt call soon.*

What are the costs and benefits of thinking in this way?

- *Costs: It's really getting me down and I can't concentrate on anything else. I'm also feeling sick with worry.*
- *Benefits: I can't really think of any.*

Is there a proactive solution to this unhelpful thought?

- *I could give them a quick call to see how they're getting on.*

Is there another way of looking at this situation?

- *They're probably just busy and will call soon*

Once you have asked yourself these questions, you should read through your answers. Try to come up with a more balanced or rational view. For example:

I'm sure there'll be a good explanation as I don't have any evidence that suggests they're fed up with me.

Try to apply these questions to the unhelpful thoughts that you notice. It can help to improve your mood. You can use this technique to test your thoughts are realistic and balanced.

Thought Diary

Try to challenge your unhelpful thoughts using the table below.

Situation	Emotion(s)/ How it makes you feel	Unhelpful thought(s)	Challenges to unhelpful thought(s) Use the questions listed below to help	Balanced thought(s) Can you think of a more balanced thought that would be more accurate
			<p>Is there any evidence that contradicts this thought?</p> <p>Can you identify any of the patterns of unhelpful thoughts described above?</p> <p>What would you say to a friend who had this thought in a similar situation?</p> <p>How will you feel about this in 6 months time?</p> <p>What are the costs and benefits of thinking this way? Benefits: Costs:</p> <p>Is there another way of looking at this situation?</p>	

Making Good Use of Your Time

When we feel depressed, our motivation to do things often decreases. You may find that you give up hobbies or activities that you previously enjoyed. Over time you might end up doing very little. This can lead you to feel even lower and a cycle can begin which is difficult to escape from.

By using a diary to plan your week in advance, you may be able to do more of the things you want to, in addition to the things that you have to do. This can really help to lift your mood. This section aims to give you advice that will help you to plan your weeks well.



When completing your diary, start by filling in all the activities that you have to do. For example, preparing meals, doing housework, attending appointments, etc. This will show you all the time that you have free. Then you can begin to plan other activities that you would like to do. Remember to pace yourself. Give yourself space to be busy or take time out to relax. You may find it helpful to plan in some time for:

- Socialising - social contact often helps us feel better, even though you may not feel like it at times.
- Hobbies and interests - this might be something you have enjoyed in the past, or a new project.
- Exercise - this can improve your mood and general health. It doesn't need to be anything too energetic. Just going for a walk regularly can be a good option.
- Bedtimes - try to plan regular and consistent bedtimes. Having a regular sleeping pattern can help improve your mood and energy levels.
- Time for yourself - make time to relax and give yourself space between activities.

Some ideas have been provided in the box below that may help you get started. We all have different interests, so try to do things that you know will work for you. Fill in your ideas in the space provided:

Suggestions	Your Ideas
Visit a friend Go to the cinema Do something active (take the dog for a walk; housework) Take part in a hobby or sport Treat yourself (e.g. buy something nice) Do something creative (e.g. draw; paint etc) Watch a movie Read a book Visit a relative	

Now try to complete a plan for a week. You don't have to fill in every space - this can be quite difficult. You could start by just adding in one or two new activities for each day.

Once you have filled in your diary, all you have to do is try to follow your plan each day. Don't worry if unexpected things come up and you cannot stick to it exactly. In fact, it is very unlikely that things will go exactly as you planned. It is also fine to be flexible and replace some activities with new ones. Leave out some tasks altogether if you don't have time for them. Try to be relaxed if this happens.

Activity Diary

Try to plan activities to fill your week. This can help you to make good use of your time.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast							
Morning							
Morning							
Lunch							
Afternoon							
Afternoon							
Dinner							
Evening							
Bedtime							

Problem Solving

You might find it more difficult to cope if you have lots of problems that you can't seem to get on top of. This can have a clear impact on our mood. Struggling with unresolved problems can often make us feel worse. We can end up worrying or ruminating over our problems without finding a way to resolve them. This can make us feel even more upset, and can end up interfering with our sleep.

It can help to develop a structured way of working through a problem. Beginning to overcome some of your problems might help you to feel better. You can improve your problem solving skills by learning to apply the steps outlined here.



Identify your problem

The first thing to ask yourself is “what is the problem”? Try to be as specific as possible.

For example:

- "I owe £400 to my friend."
- "I am going to miss this deadline."



Come up with possible solutions

Try to list every way that you can think to overcome your problem. Don't worry about how unrealistic an idea seems. Write down anything and everything. The best solutions are likely to be the ones you think of yourself. This is because nobody really knows your situation as well as you do.

It may help to consider:

- How you might have solved similar problems in the past.
- What your friends or family would advise.
- How you would like to see yourself tackling the problem.



Choose a solution

Next you need to select the best solution from your list. Think carefully about each option. It is useful to go through all the reasons 'for' and 'against' each idea. This will help you to make a good decision and select the best solution.

After this you may find that you are still unsure. Perhaps a couple of approaches seem equally good. Try to pick one to begin with. If it doesn't work then you can always go back and try out a different one later.



Break down your solution

To help you carry out your chosen solution, it can be useful to break it down into smaller steps. This can make it easier and more manageable to follow through. The number of steps required will vary depending on the solution and how complex it is.

For example:

Someone with debt may have decided to try and resolve their problem by getting a part time job. This would require several steps.

1. Buying a newspaper with job adverts.
2. Choosing which jobs to apply for.
3. Creating a CV.
4. Sending out their CV.
5. Buying interview clothes.
6. Preparing answers to potential interview questions.



Try out your solution and review the outcome

Follow the steps required to carry out your solution. Simply take them one at a time. Go at your own pace and don't allow yourself to feel too rushed.

Once you have completed all the steps, you should then review the outcome. If you have successfully resolved your problem then great. If the problem still exists then don't give up.

- Is there another solution on your list that you could try?
- Is there a different solution that you have yet to consider?
- Can you ask someone else if they have any ideas or advice?
- Can you combine any of your solutions?

It is useful to remember that not all problems are within our control. This can make it really difficult if not impossible to resolve using the steps above. Perhaps you will have to wait, or ask someone else to take action instead. In such a situation, try not to worry. Nothing can be gained from worrying about something that you have no control over.



Identify Your Problem

Problem Solving

Identify a problem and try to come up with solutions to overcome it. By considering all of the options you will hopefully come up with the best solution.



Possible Solutions



For

Against



Chosen Solution

Steps Required

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Recognising your qualities and achievements

Throughout life we often only remember the bad things that people have said about us or the times we feel like we have failed. This unsurprisingly lowers our mood and self-esteem. You can change this by beginning to remember the skills you have, the qualities you have and the achievements you have made. The evidence is there if you look for it!



It can help to consider:

- Things you do well.
- Things you have achieved.
- Times you did something even when it was hard.
- Things you know a lot about.
- Things you can do easily and quickly.
- Evidence that shows you are good at something.
- Things that you do that people have thanked you for.
- Times you were helpful to others.
- Evidence that people like you.
- Compliments you have been given.
- Qualities you have.
- Anything that shows you have been appreciated.
- Times when people have been nice to you or did you a favour.



Note down the evidence

Start by considering the evidence from the past and present and noting it down; it may look something like this:

- I always have time for my friends.
- I stay calm in a crisis.
- My friend always says I'm funny.
- I was invited to my work mates' house for tea.
- I'm normally really well organised.
- My boss asked me to take on an extra project last week.
- My work mate brought me back a souvenir from their holidays.
- I have a responsible job.



Keep adding to the list

- Continually add more examples to the list as they happen in the future, no matter how small they may seem.



Keeping these examples in mind

- Study the list everyday, especially at times when you are feeling low.

Final Word

We hope that you found some of the ideas in this booklet useful. You can continue to use the techniques you found helpful long into the future and they should continue to benefit you. If some of the ideas are not particularly helpful at first, it is perhaps worth sticking with them for a few weeks to give them a chance to work. If however you feel your situation remains largely unchanged or if you did not find this booklet useful, you should speak to your GP who can tell you about the other options available which you could find helpful.



Further Information and Resources

For further information and self-help resources go to Moodjuice online:

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk>

Moodjuice is a website designed to offer information and advice to those experiencing troublesome thoughts, feelings and behaviours. In the site you can explore various aspects of your life that may be causing you distress and obtain information that will allow you to help yourself. This includes details of organisations, services and other resources that can offer support. This self help guide comes from a series that you can access and print from Moodjuice.

Other titles available include:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Assertiveness
- Bereavement
- Chronic Pain
- Depression
- Obsessions and Compulsions
- Panic
- Phobias
- Post Traumatic Stress
- Shyness and Social Phobia
- Sleep Problems
- Stress