

BUSTING THE BLUES

Help yourself to lift your mood

By Josie Bannon



It can be hard to ask for help when you are feeling low. Well done in taking the first step towards trying to tackle the problem and lift your mood.

This booklet is aimed at any student who struggles with low mood or depression. It includes a student example to illustrate different ideas and techniques. All the techniques in the booklet are based on the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach. We will talk more about what that is later in the booklet. CBT has a lot of research to show that it can be very helpful for improving mood. You may be working through the booklet as part of the 'Busting the Blues' course or one-to-one with the support of a practitioner from the Wellbeing Centre. It can also be helpful to talk to someone you trust such as a family member or a friend so you have their support through this process.

You will be able to talk through how you have got on using the different techniques and any problems that arose with your practitioner. You can work together on how to solve these problems and progress with the techniques.

Tackling low mood can be a difficult and challenging process and there may be times where you feel as though you aren't getting anywhere. Just remember that we all have good days and bad days so try not to let the bad days feel as though you have taken 'two steps back'. Just keep on using the techniques in the booklet to stop yourself from sinking back into a longer period of low mood.

CBT techniques can seem difficult at first but much like exercise, the more you use them the easier they become, until they don't seem like any effort at all. Again, like exercise it is also important to keep up with these techniques as much as possible so they become more of a habit and feel more natural to use.

The idea of this booklet is to give you the information you need to help yourself tackle low mood. This means that you need to have a go at all the techniques to find out which ones are the most helpful for you.

About low mood and depression

Everyone feels sad from time to time, however depression involves more persistent feelings of sadness, often accompanied by feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Some people describe it as a black cloud that follows them around.



- It is estimated to affect one in six people at some point over their life time.
- It is particularly common around the usual University age.
- Some people will already be experiencing depression when they come to University, whereas others will start to feel depressed during their time at University.

Research into depression has found a number of potential causes that might affect whether someone develops depression, however most people agree that it is often a mixture of causes rather than one thing alone.

- **Genetics:** Research has found that there can be a genetic link to depression, so if a member of your family suffers with it then you might be more likely to as well. However just because a family member has depression does not mean that you will also experience it as well.
- **Hormones:** People can be susceptible to depression during times of hormone change like puberty, pregnancy and the menopause.
- **Brain Chemistry:** People who are depressed have been found to have low levels of the chemical serotonin. Serotonin affects things like appetite, energy, sleep and libido.
- **Stress:** Constant stress where it feels like there is no solution can lead to depression.
- **How we think and what we do:** Thinking about things in a negative way and doing less of the things we would normally do .

Symptoms of depression...

Feelings of guilt and self-criticism

Feeling guilty about things. Feeling that you are responsible or to blame for the things that go wrong. Sometimes people feel worthless, useless or inadequate.

Problems with concentration

Many people find that they have problems concentrating. This could affect things like reading, writing, talking to others or watching TV. Some people can find they can go over the same paragraph again and again and still not take in the meaning. Some people also find that they have trouble with their short term memory.

Changes in the speed of movements

Sometimes depression can affect people's movements or speaking. Sometimes this may be slower or it maybe feeling fidgety and restless and moving around more than usual.

Thoughts about death or self harm

This may involve thinking that life is not worth living or that it would be easier not to be alive, or it may be more active thoughts about ending your life.

Changes in appetite

Some people find that they have no appetite at all and struggle to eat, others find that they eat more than they would normally.

Loss of interest or pleasure in doing things

Where nothing seems fun or enjoyable. Motivation is low and things you used to enjoy now seem like a chore or pointless.

Feeling down, depressed or hopeless

Everyone feels sad sometimes but with depression this feeling is stronger and more persistent. People can feel hopeless like there is no way out and no end to how they are feeling. Or helpless as though they have no power to change things.

Sleep problems

Either trouble getting to sleep, trouble staying asleep or waking up too early. On the other hand some people sleep too much, either for longer periods or through the day.

Feeling overly tired or fatigued

This may or may not be to do with how much sleep you are getting. People often describe feeling drained of energy or actually feel heavier in themselves when they move. Things that were easy before can seem like an effort.

Not everyone who is depressed will experience all of these symptoms. People will vary in what they experience when they have depression.

Myths about depression



Nothing bad has happened to me, I haven't got any reason to be feeling like this

Truth: Depression can be linked to many different things and sometimes it is hard to figure out 'why'. You may feel it is your fault you feel like this however there is normally always causes, sometimes people need a little help in trying to get to the bottom of it.

Many people suffer from depression and it is often a 'normal' response to what is happening in life. You may feel that you are just being lazy and that you are letting your family down for feeling this way, however it is not your fault and you are doing what you can in trying to improve your mood.

I have let my family down for feeling like this

Depression is a biological thing which can not be changed, it is like a disease

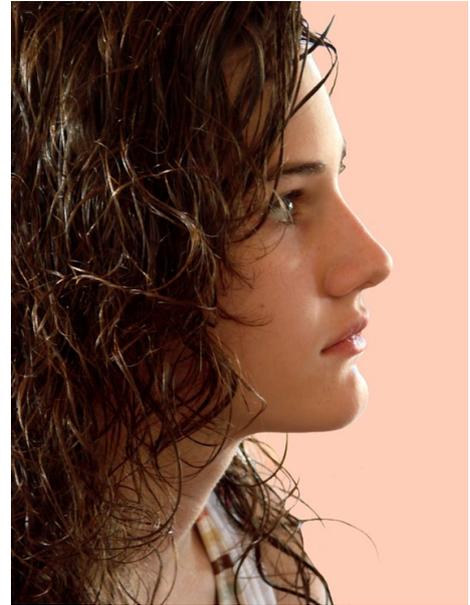
Although some research has found that depression can be linked to lower Serotonin levels (a neuro-transmitter in the brain), it is also true that you are able to change your brain chemistry by changing your thoughts and behaviour.

Some people find that medication can improve their mood, however it is not essential to take medication to tackle depression. Many people decide they do not want to take medication and still have successful recoveries.

Only medication can help with depression

Kate's story:

Kate came to Exeter University a year ago to study English Literature. When she was 14 she moved secondary schools, she left a good group of friends and found it hard to 'fit in'. She felt really isolated at the time and started to feel quite down.



Kate noticed that she started feeling less interested in things she used to enjoy like playing the guitar and reading. She found she couldn't concentrate on anything for long and got really frustrated when she made a mistake.

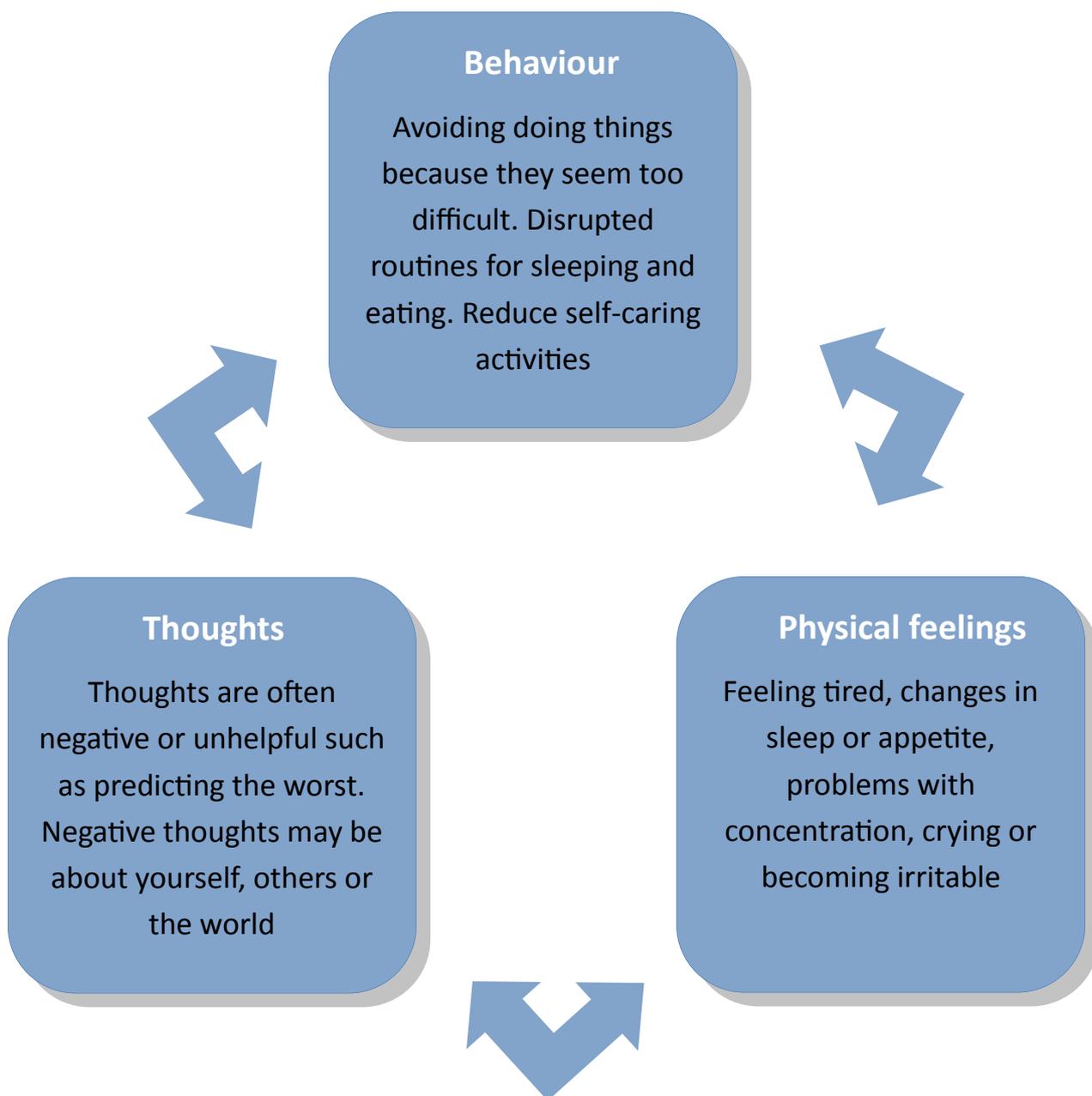
Kate had always worked hard at her studies but was finding it really difficult to do the course reading because she couldn't concentrate. She also found that she stopped caring as much about literature. When her friends asked her if she wanted to go on nights out she made up excuses about having work to do but just ended up staying in her room and watching TV. As time went on she started to get fewer invites as her friends started to assume she would have work to do.

In the days Kate felt exhausted but she struggled to sleep at night, she would have a lot of thoughts going around her head about how she is ruining her chances of getting a good degree and how she is letting her family down.

Since she was 14 Kate has struggled with depression on and off. Although she felt excited about coming to university the transition has been difficult and she has started to feel low again.

Throughout the *Busting the Blues* book we are going to be referring to Kate to help illustrate the different ideas and techniques. Hopefully by seeing how these things apply to Kate it will make it easier to know how they might apply to you.

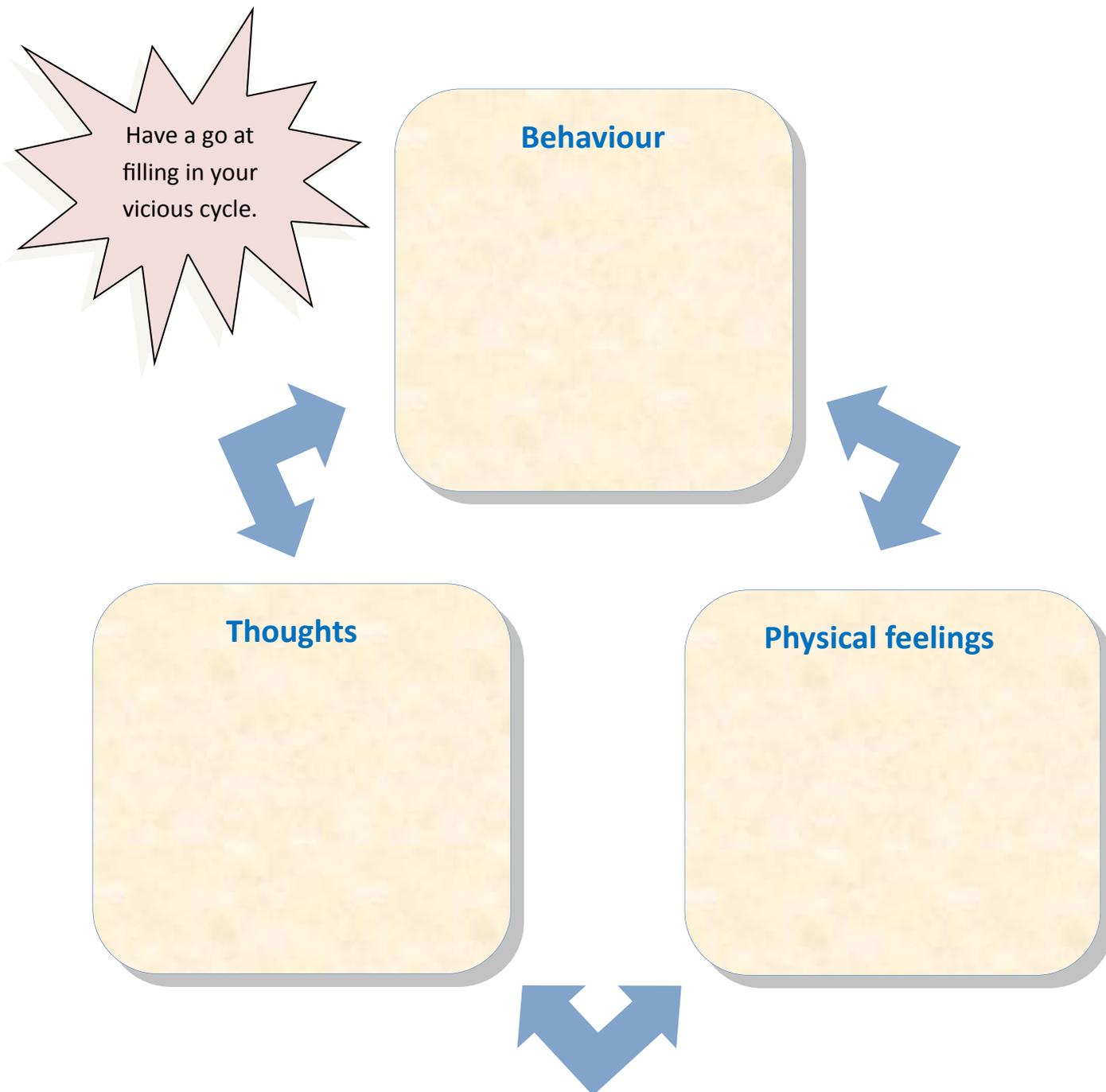
What's affected by low mood or depression



All of these three areas can be affected by depression or low mood then each area can start to have additional 'knock on' effects on the other areas. If you physically feel tired and have no energy this might mean it is harder to do things day to day. If you start to miss things this might then mean that you start to think that you are useless or that your friends don't want you around. This is only going to make you feel worse.

The above diagram shows how you can get 'trapped' in a vicious cycle that can be very difficult to break out of.

How does your depression or low mood affect you?



The techniques in this booklet are based on the idea of this vicious cycle. Because all of the areas together form the cycle it is possible to tackle low mood by focusing on any one specific area. The booklet includes techniques focusing on thoughts and behaviour as a way of breaking the cycle. This is where the term 'Cognitive Behavioural Therapy' came from.

Cognitive refers to things such as thoughts, memories and attention.

Setting yourself goals to work towards...



It can be really helpful to think about what you would like to achieve from this process. What sorts of things have you stopped doing since you started to feel low? What would you imagine yourself doing more of if you were feeling better? Circle how well you think you can achieve this currently from 0 (not at all) to 6 (anytime). When writing these goals think about whether you would be able to achieve them in a few months time, it is important that goals are achievable. We will then revisit these each session to see if you are getting any closer to your goal.

Today's date: _____

Goal One:

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Today's date: _____

Goal Two:

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Kate's examples...



Behavioural

Avoiding going on nights out
Not doing course reading
Stopped playing the guitar
Stopped reading for enjoyment
Not sorting out my finances

Thoughts

"I am wasting my time at uni"
"I'm letting my family down"
"I haven't made enough friends"
"Everyone else is coping so much better than me"

Physical feelings

No energy
Tired in the day
Irritable
Not that hungry
Heavy muscles

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M
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R
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Specific - Be as clear as you can, you may want to 'feel better' but ask yourself what 'feeling better' means you will be able to do e.g. go for more walks.

Measurable - How will you know when you have achieved this goal?

Achievable - It needs to be something you really want or need to do so that you feel more motivated. Is it a small enough step?

Relevant -- It needs to be relevant to you, it should match your values.

Time bound - You should have a clear idea of when you want to achieve this goal by.

Today's date: 27.08.14

Goal one: to go on a night out with my friends again. Within a months time.

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all)

1

2 (occasionally)

3

4 (Often)

5

6 (Anytime)

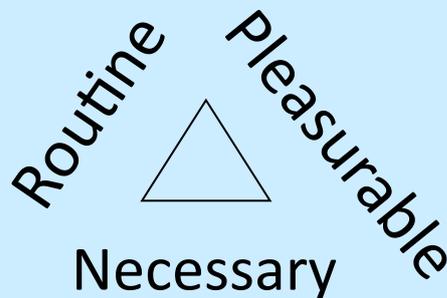
Behavioural activation: Getting active

Research has found that becoming more active can help to improve our mood. Although this may seem like common sense, if you're feeling low or depressed the idea of doing more activities can also seem quite daunting. The technique 'Behavioural Activation' is a step by step treatment that allows you to gradually get more active. Many people have found Behavioural Activation very helpful in improving their mood. Research also suggests that this is an effective technique.

Why doing less contributes to depression

When we are depressed we tend to do less and less. This might be because everything is a real struggle so avoiding certain activities like doing the laundry provides temporary relief. Also because we don't feel motivated we may avoid activities that we would normally enjoy or get pleasure from. This means that we are not getting that enjoyment from life that we used to and we may start to lose fulfilment, we may start to lose friendships and our day to day life becomes more depressing!

Behavioural Activation involves increasing activities in three important areas...

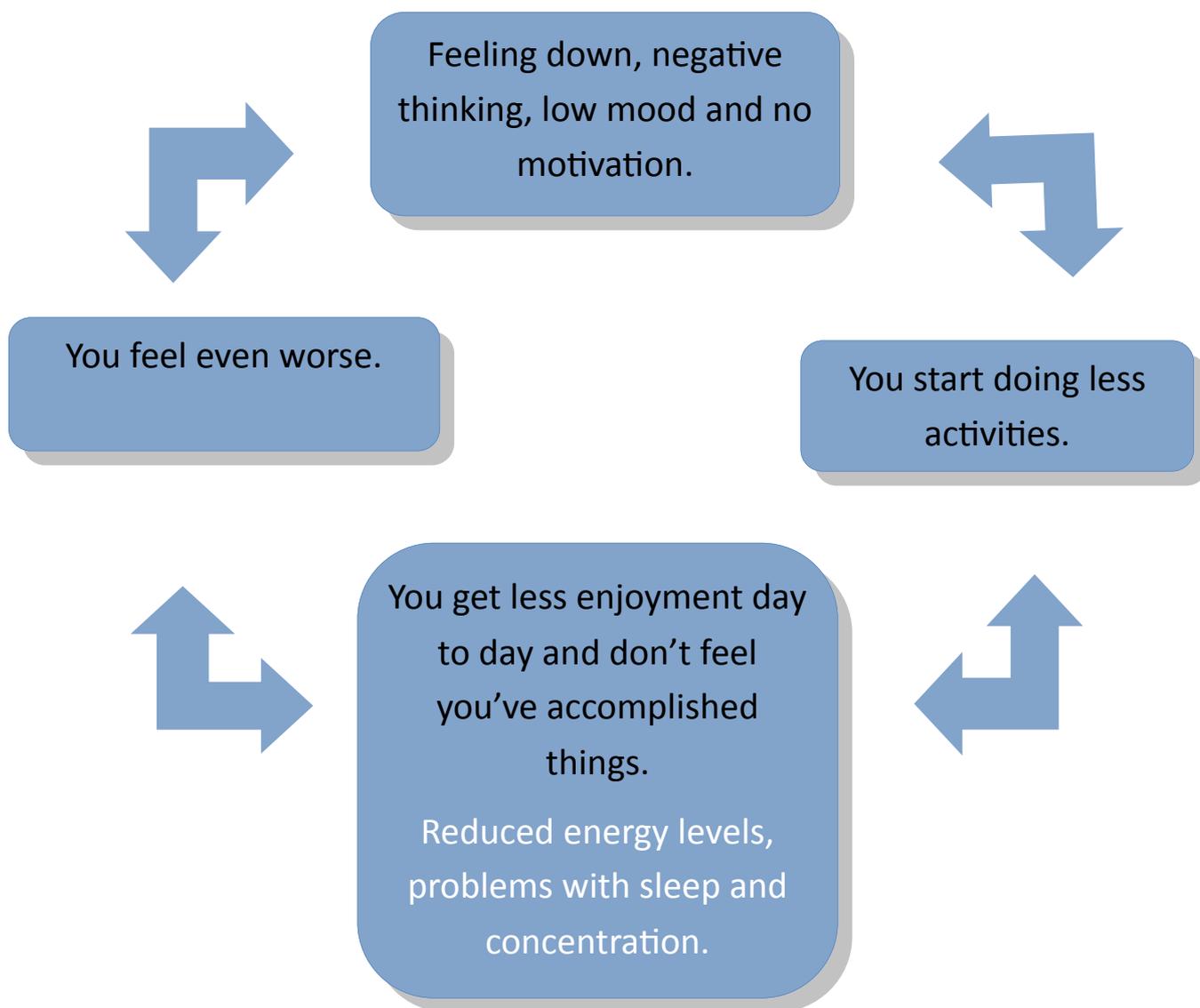


But I feel so tired
this might make me
feel worse!

Although it can be difficult at first we often get more energy from doing more activities (as long as we don't overdo it). We tend to feel more lethargic on days when we have not done that much.

You cannot wait to feel better to do things again. You have to do things first, as a way of making yourself feel better!

The downward spiral of reduced activity and low mood...



Behavioural Activation aims to break this cycle and reverse the downward spiral that maintains depression or low mood.

The three steps of Behavioural Activation...

- 1 Writing down activities
- 2 List activities in terms of difficulty
- 3 Planning activities

1 Writing down activities

Firstly, you need to brain storm all the things that you are avoiding completely, not doing as much as you'd like, or things which you have never done but would like to try. Think back to the things you would have done before you started feeling low. What you included for your goals might also give you an idea of what to include. The three main areas to think about are below.



Routine:

Things that make you more comfortable day to day. You may not enjoy doing them but often feel better for getting them done. Routine things might include doing the dishes, doing the laundry or food shopping.

Pleasurable:

Things that you enjoy doing, either with other people or on your own. Pleasurable activities might include reading, playing an instrument or going for lunch with friends.

Necessary:

Things that need to be done where there will be a negative consequence for not doing it. Necessary activities might include doing university work or paying bills.

On the next page try to think of as many activities as you can to put under each heading. You don't have to do all of this in one go, it might be helpful to have a good think about first or talk to someone like a friend or parent about the activities you used to do when you were feeling better. Don't worry if you're not sure which category an activity will fall under, just make sure you have it written down under one of the three headings.

Behavioural Activation: Worksheet A

Routine Activities (e.g. Washing the dishes, food shopping)

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Pleasurable Activities (e.g. Meeting friends, any hobbies)

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Necessary Activities (e.g. Going to lectures, paying bills)

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2 Listing activities in terms of difficulty



Step 2 involves making a hierarchy of activities from those you wrote on worksheet one. The hierarchy should go from the activities you find least difficult to those you find most difficult. The Behavioural Activation process includes a hierarchy so that you can start increasing activities beginning with the least difficult ones, then gradually build up to those which you find more difficult. This makes the process that much easier and more achievable.

What if I think all the activities come under the 'most difficult' heading?

Try to break bigger tasks down into smaller, more manageable tasks. Often there are a number of smaller 'parts' to a task and we don't always need to do them all in one go.

Cleaning my room could be broken down into:

- Hoover the floor
- Dust the surfaces
- Sort out the desk

You can break a task down until you feel it is manageable and can go into the easy section. Sometimes you can make tasks easier by spending a smaller amount of time on them, such as **revising for 20 minutes**.

On the next page have a go at listing the activities from worksheet A into a hierarchy from the least difficult all the way up to the most difficult.



Behavioural Activation: Worksheet B

Most Difficult:

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Medium Difficulty:

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Least Difficult:

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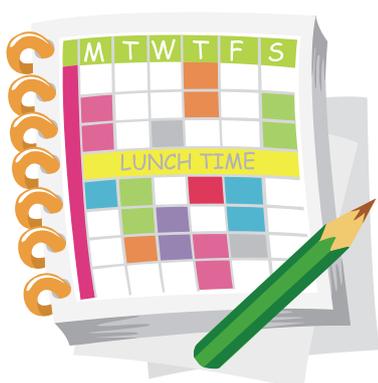
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3 Planning Activities

Now you have filled out worksheets A and B it's time to plan to do these activities. The weekly diary on the next page is a good tool to do this. Start with those in your 'least difficult' section and try and get a mixture of 'routine', 'pleasurable' and 'necessary' activities throughout the week.

As the weeks go on and you start to have more energy you can start to add activities from the 'medium difficult' and 'most difficult' section of your hierarchy, but only increase activities at a rate that feels comfortable for you. Only you can decide this.



- You might need to use the first week as a bit of a tester to see how you feel, sometimes we might over estimate or underestimate how much activity is best to start with .
- If we do too much too soon then we might end up feeling more tired, also sometimes we have 'good days' where we feel we want to do everything, however this can leave us feeling drained the next day which can make us feel worse.
- Some weeks will be difficult and won't go as well as others. Don't worry, this is to be expected, just have a think about what might have made that week harder, its all a learning curve.

What
When
Where
With who

When you are planning activities in the diary it is helpful to make them as specific as possible. This makes it easier to do them.
Always use these 4 W's!

Behavioural Activation: Worksheet C

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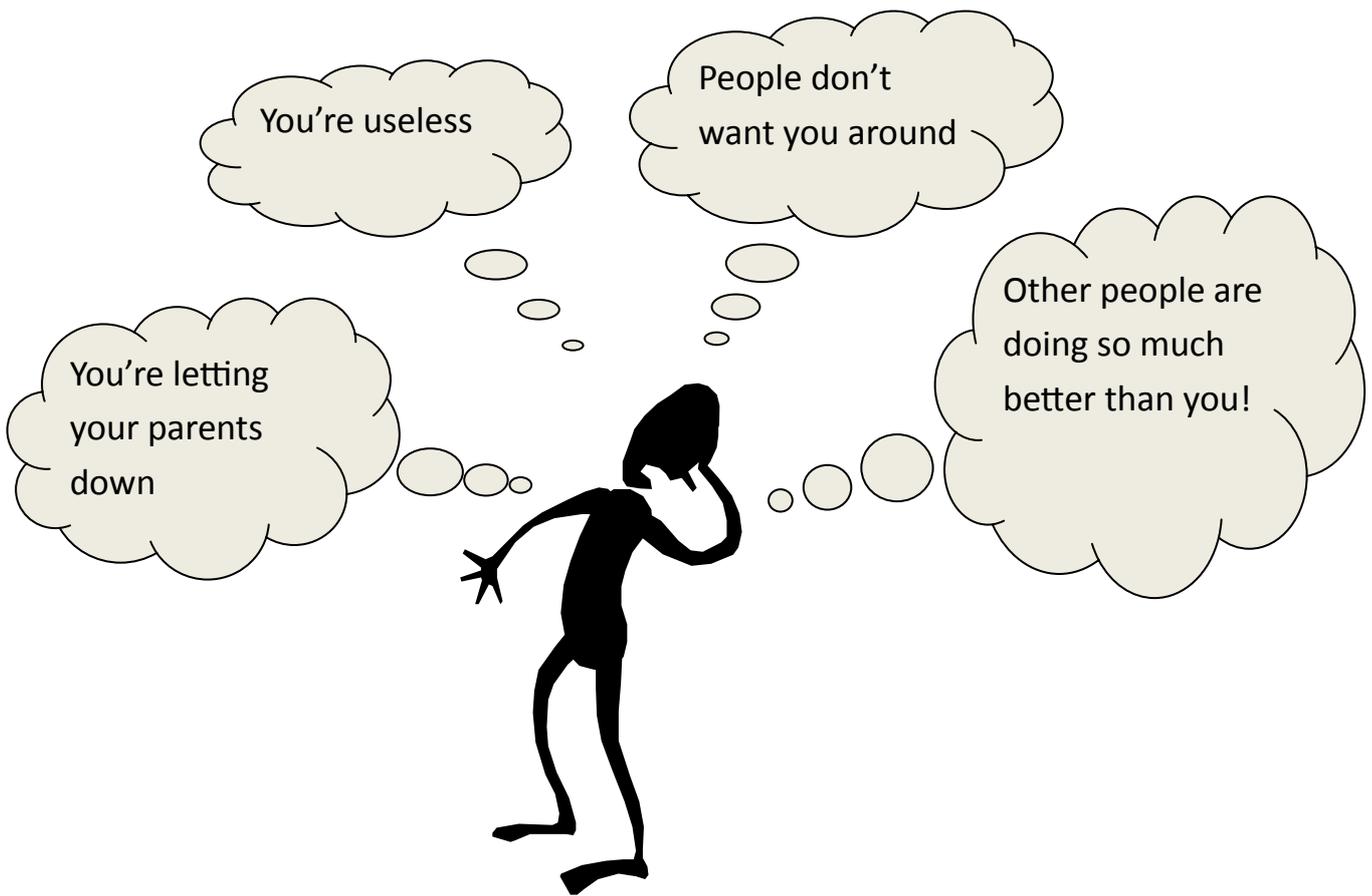
Kate's examples for worksheets A and B

<p>Routine Activities</p> <p>(e.g. Washing the dishes, food shopping)</p>	<p>Most Difficult</p>
<p>Tidying my room</p> <p>Cooking dinner and preparing lunch</p> <p>Doing the dishes</p> <p>Sorting out my lecture notes</p>	<p>Going out with friends for nights out</p> <p>Doing the course reading</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>Sorting out my finances</p>
<p>Pleasurable Activities</p> <p>(e.g. Meeting friends, any hobbies)</p>	<p>Medium Difficulty</p>
<p>Playing the guitar</p> <p>Going out with friends for coffee and on nights out</p> <p>Reading</p> <p>Having a bath</p> <p>Shopping</p> <p>Having friends around for the evening</p> <p>Going for a run</p>	<p>Tidying my room</p> <p>Doing the dishes</p> <p>Shopping</p> <p>Talking to my parents on the phone</p> <p>Attending all lectures</p> <p>Having friends around for the evening</p> <p>Cooking dinner and preparing lunch</p>
<p>Necessary Activities</p> <p>(e.g. Going to lectures, paying bills)</p>	<p>Least Difficult</p>
<p>Doing the course reading</p> <p>Sorting out my finances</p> <p>Attending all lectures</p> <p>Talking to my parents on the phone</p>	<p>Going for a run</p> <p>Going out with friends for coffee</p> <p>Playing the guitar</p> <p>Having a bath</p> <p>Sorting out my lecture notes</p> <p>Doing the dishes</p>

Kate's diary for the first week

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning	<p>What Where When Who</p> <p>Meet friends for coffee at 10:00am Emma and Sian</p>			<p>Go to Lecture L23 At 10:00am Meet Toni before</p>			<p>Do the Dishes Kitchen At 10:00am</p>
Afternoon		<p>Go to Clinical Lecture. Room One 12:00pm Meet Louise outside</p>				<p>Go for a run By the quay At 1:00pm With Sophie</p>	
Evening	<p>What Where When Who</p> <p>Play Guitar In my room At 7:00pm for 30mins. Just me</p>			<p>Sort out Lecture Notes, in my room At 8:00pm</p>			
	<p>What Where When Who</p> <p>Have a Bath At home After dinner</p>						

About negative thoughts...



When feeling low, negative thoughts are very common. We may think negatively about ourselves, others, current situations, as well as the future, these negative thoughts only makes us feel worse. Its part of the vicious cycle that we can get trapped into.

Some people describe depression as having a dark cloud that follows them around. It can be hard to notice the good things that happen as all our attention is focused on what is not going well. Sometimes we are able to change how we feel by changing how we view a situation. This is another way of breaking the cycle.



Characteristics of Unhelpful Thoughts:

Automatic: We don't think them on purpose; they come into our minds involuntarily. **Believable:** They seem real at the time. **Unhelpful:** They are the kind of thoughts that would be upsetting to anybody. **Biased:** They are not accurate reflections of reality but based on how we feel at the time.

Challenging negative thoughts...



We have looked at how to break the cycle of low mood by focusing on behaviour, now we are going to move onto another technique to break the cycle...challenging negative thoughts.

Challenging negative thoughts can be difficult at first, but over time it gets easier and easier. Writing everything down can be really helpful to start with. The first step is to keep a thought diary to see what thoughts are going through your head. Once you have the thought diary you can start to examine individual thoughts and think about whether there's any evidence for or against the thought. Worksheet A is the thought diary and worksheet B is the evidence sheet.

1 Thought Diary

Each time you notice a drop in your mood complete the initial three columns of the Thought Diary. In the first column write down a brief description of the situation you were in when you had the thought i.e. where you were and what you were doing. In the second column write down one word to describe the feeling you had as a result of the thought e.g. sad, anxious or angry. Also rate how strong that feeling was on a scale of 0-100%, where 0 is not at all and 100% is the worst you could ever imagine feeling. In the third column write down exactly what the thought was i.e. the words that went through your mind or the image that occurred. Then rate how much you believe that thought to be true, where 0 is not at all and 100% is totally believe the thought.

Keep the thought diary over a week. Only record the thoughts you have when you are feeling low.

The page after the thought diary contains all the different thinking patterns or 'styles', we can all find ourselves doing, have a look and see which ones apply to you.

Worksheet A: The Thought Diary

Situation: Where you were and what you were doing	Feeling: Emotion experienced and rating of how strong it was (0- 100%)	Thought: Words that went through your mind and rating of how much you believe this thought (0- 100%)	Revised Thought: Words of new thought and rating of how much you believe this thought (0-100%)	Feeling: Emotion experienced and rating of how strong it was (0- 100%)

Unhelpful thinking styles

Have a look through the thoughts you have recorded and see if any of these thinking styles apply, these can be helpful to refer to when trying to generate evidence.

<p>All or nothing thinking (sometimes called 'black and white thinking')</p> <p>Seeing only one extreme or the other. There are no in-betweens or shades of grey.</p> 	<p>Jumping to conclusions</p> <p>Mind-reading Assuming we know what someone else is thinking.</p> <p>Fortune telling Predicting what's going to happen in the future.</p> 
<p>Over-generalising</p> <p>Seeing a pattern based upon a single event or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw. Tends to involve the words always, everyone, never.</p> 	<p>Emotional reasoning</p> <p>Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true.</p> 
<p>Magnification and minimisation</p> <p>Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophising), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important.</p> 	<p>Shoulds and musts</p> <p>Putting unreasonable demands or pressure on yourself or others. Using critical words which make us feel guilty or like we have failed.</p> 
<p>Mental filter</p> <p>Only paying attention to certain types of information such as noticing failures but not successes.</p> 	<p>Personalisation</p> <p>Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault or blaming other people for something that was your fault.</p> 
<p>Disqualifying the positive</p> <p>Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done.</p> 	<p>Labelling</p> <p>Assigning labels to ourselves or other people.</p> 
<p>Compare and despair</p> <p>Seeing only the good points in others compared with the bad ones in yourself.</p> 	<p>Memories</p> <p>Current situations triggering memories of past upsetting events.</p> 

Thinking styles quiz

Kate sees her friend Hanna. Kate thinks, 'Hanna doesn't like me anymore, she's ignoring me. I must have done something to upset her. I've never had many friends – I guess I'm just not very likeable.'

Thinking Styles:

Tony used to play football on a Wednesday. He thinks 'what is the point of going, I will not enjoy it and I will play really badly' Dave is a way better player than me, he is way better at everything.

Thinking Styles:

John has just received a piece of course work back, the grade was what he wanted but he notices the feedback saying he needs to be more critical. He feels terrible about this and starts to think that he is not that good at writing essays. He starts to remember other times when he did not do well at essays, and thinks I should do better.

Thinking Styles:

I can't go to the pub with the people from my course. I have nothing to say and they will think I am boring. No-one will talk to me and I will be all on my own and look silly, I'm so useless I can't even go to the pub with friends.

Thinking Styles:

2 Evaluating the thought

After you have recorded your thoughts in the thought diary the next stage is to evaluate each individual thought using the evidence table (worksheet B). It can help to imagine that you are a judge in the court house and that evidence needs to be presented for and against the thought. In court cases evidence provided needs to be factual and concrete, it is exactly the same for the evidence here. We want to get to the bottom of whether this thought is based on the facts or whether its based on how you feel.



It can be really difficult coming up with concrete evidence to start with, particularly against the thought as you may be more in the habit of looking for evidence to support your negative thoughts! Below are some tips for generating evidence.

What alternative views are there?

- If you rate the belief in your thought as 75%, what makes up the remaining 25%?
- How would a friend or someone who cares about you view this situation?
- How would I have viewed this situation before I felt depressed?
- How would I view someone else in my situation?

Does this thought fit with any of the thinking styles on the previous page?

- If it does then this means you are only looking at this from one perspective, what is the other perspective?
- E.g. if you notice the thought fits into a 'self blaming' style of thinking then write down all of the other external factors which might have been involved.

Are there any good reasons to be so worried?

- Have you been wrong about similar things in the past?
- Will this problem matter in a week/month year?

Worksheet B: Evidence Table

Thought	% Belief
Evidence For	Evidence Against

3 Revising the thought

Now that you have come up with all the evidence for one of the thoughts the next step is to weigh it up and come up with a revised, more helpful thought. Write the new thought down in the fourth column of the thought diary so you can look back at the original thought and see the revised thought next to it.



Next to the revised thought record how much you believe this thought on a scale of 0 -100. Sometimes you might not believe the thought that much to start with, but over time your belief in this thought will increase.

To start with its best to come up with the evidence and do the revised thought at a time when you are not feeling as low, or when you are removed from the situation. This can make it easier to look at things from a different perspective.

Once you have the revised thought and the evidence written down you can refer back to this if you have the same negative thought again. The more you do this the easier it will be to bring the evidence and new revised thought to mind.

You can think about thoughts like pathways in a field: the more you have a thought the more entrenched the path becomes, until it becomes the automatic route you take. By challenging these thoughts, you are stopping yourself going down that automatic path and instead creating a new path. This might feel weird at first because you have not used this 'path' before (or thought in this way), but the more you use it and the less you use the 'old' path (or thought), the more entrenched it will become and the more 'overgrown' the old path will feel. Eventually the new way of thinking will be the one which you automatically go down.

Kate's example of worksheet A and B

Situation: Where you were and what you were doing	Feeling: Emotion experienced and rating of how strong it was (0-100%)	Thought: Words that went through your mind and rating of how much you believe this thought (0-100%)	Revised Thought: Words of new thought and rating of how much you believe this thought (0-100%)	Feeling: Emotion experienced and rating of how strong it was (0-100%)
Sitting at my desk trying to revise	Frustrated (80%) Depressed (70%)	"I am useless at everything" (60%) "I am letting my parents down by not doing well enough" (80%)	I am good at a number of things, it was just this one piece of work that made me feel bad about myself	Frustrated (30%) Depressed (40%)

Thought	% Belief
"I am useless at everything"	60%
Evidence For	Evidence Against
I didn't get the grade I wanted on the last piece of course work I lost some work off my laptop because I didn't back it up onto my USB	But that was just one piece of work and I have done better in others. I am probably falling into the overgeneralising thinking style, or black and white thinking I have done better than expected in some pieces of work I am at grade 5 on the guitar, so I'm not useless at EVERYTHING! My friends say that I am a good cook, especially baking cakes

Noticing the positives

When we feel low sometimes we pay more attention to the negative or stressful things that happen to us each day.

Noticing and remembering the positives is a way of trying to re-balance our attention and improve our mood.

Before going to bed write down 5 things that happened that day that were positive - They can be anything, however big or small.

This can also help to put you in a more positive mind set which might mean falling asleep is easier.



5 positives from my day

1. Not getting stuck in the rain on my way home
2. Having a nice chat with my Mum
3. The view from the top of the hill
4. The gingerbread latte from Costa
5. My favourite song was played on the radio

Problem solving

There may be specific problems that you are worrying about or that are making you feel low. These problems can feel overwhelming and it can feel impossible to find a solution. This problem solving technique can help you to think through the problem in a step by step way and hopefully come to a practical solution. This might also be a helpful technique to use if you find you have more evidence for a negative thought than against it. If the thought is based on the facts then it is more helpful to think about what can be done to overcome this problem rather than simply change how you think about it.

7 Steps to problem solving

- 1 Problem identification** - What is the specific problem?
- 2 Solution identification** - What are all the potential solutions? Even those that sound absurd!
- 3 Strengths and weaknesses analysis** - What are the strengths and weaknesses of each solution?
- 4 Solution selection** - Which solution is the best?
- 5 Implementation plan** - Plan what, where, when and who?
- 6 Implementation** - Carry out the planned solution
- 7 Review** - Review the original problem. Has this made a difference?



Problem Solving Worksheet A

Step 1: Problem identification (write your problem here)

Step 2: Solution Identification (write down as many different solutions as possible– use additional sheets if necessary)

Step 3: Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis (write down the advantages and disadvantages of each solution here – use additional sheets if necessary)

Step 4: Solution selection (choose one solution)

Step 5: Implementation plan (write down the steps you will take to apply your chosen solution – use additional sheets if necessary)

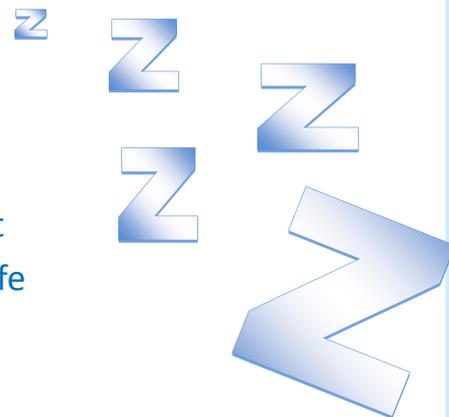
Step 6: Implementation (Carry out the Plan)

Step 7: Review (write down how the plan went)

Problem Solving Worksheet B: Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis

Choice? Yes/No/Maybe					
Weaknesses					
Strengths					
Solution					

Sleep problems



Sleep problems are really common, most people will have problems with their sleep some point in their lives. Being at University can also make sleep more difficult, the student life style can mean it's harder to keep a routine and stick to healthy sleeping habits. A lot of people who experience depression have problems with not sleeping enough, or sleeping too much which can then make everything seem much harder.

There are 4 main types of sleep problem:

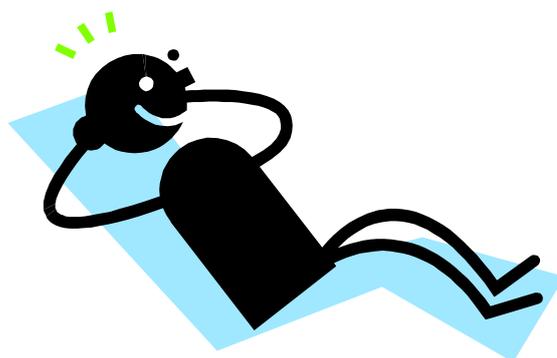
- Falling asleep
- Staying asleep
- Non restorative/light sleep
- Waking up to early

Problems with sleep can form part of the vicious cycle of low mood and depression, if we are feeling tired or groggy then we are more likely to think negatively and less likely to want to do any activities.

Preparing for sleep...

It is really important to allow yourself time to 'wind-down' after each day. Otherwise your body and mind will still be active when you try and sleep. Without wind-down time you may end up lying in bed with loads of thoughts going through your head.

Wind-down time should last at least an hour. During this time try and do relaxing and enjoyable things, avoid all uni work or anything that makes you feel stressed. Doing the same thing each night can help your body to recognise triggers that suggest you will be sleeping in an hour.



How to improve your sleep: Lifestyle habits

Another way to improve sleep is to look at the things you could improve in your lifestyle. Below are some examples of different things that might influence your sleep.

Alcohol interrupts the quality of sleep a person has and can cause more waking in the night. It can also lead to tiredness in the day.

Getting up at the same time each day is one of the most important things you can do to improve your sleep. Even if you haven't slept much the night before!



Going to bed full up or hungry can interfere with sleep, best to have an early dinner and a light snack before bed .

Physical activity is great for improving sleep; but avoid 4 hours before bed time.

Nicotine and caffeine are both stimulants and can interfere with getting to sleep. Try to avoid 4-6 hours before going to bed.

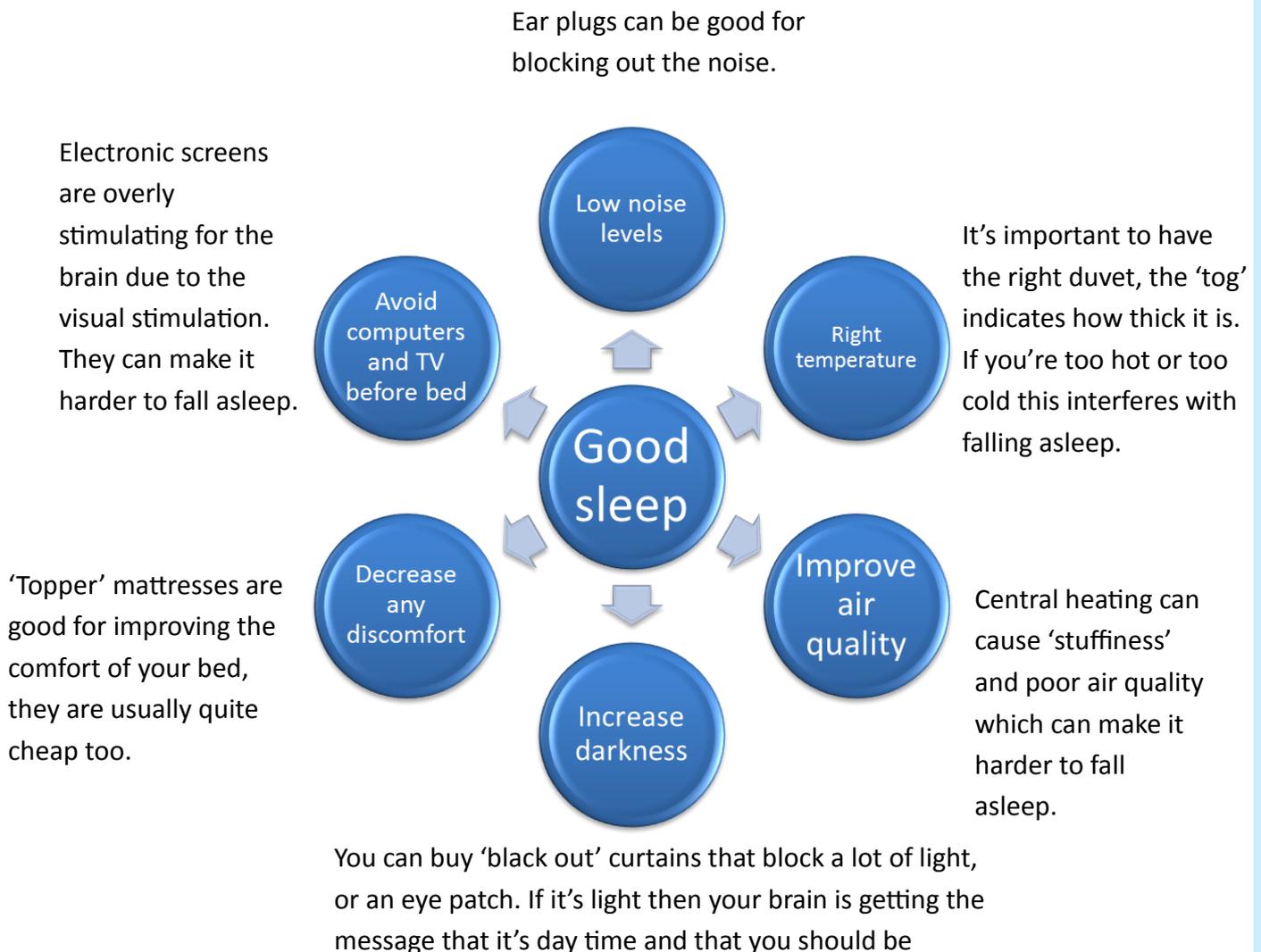
I'm going to Change:

How to improve your sleep:

Things in the environment

Another way to improve sleep is to look at what you might be able to change in your environment. Below are some examples of environmental factors that might influence your sleep.

What could you change in your bedroom that could help your sleep?



I'm going to Change:

4 Rules for better sleep

The association we have between our bed and sleep can make a big difference to how easily we fall asleep. If we often lie in bed worrying and struggle to get to sleep we might start to associate the bed with stress rather than calmness and sleep. The longer we spend in bed awake, the weaker the association will be with sleep. Below are 4 different rules to strengthen the association between bed and sleep which will help to improve sleep.

1 The bed is for sleep rule

Everything else (except sex) is banned! So no reading; working; talking on the phone; looking at the internet; nothing in bed but sleep. Sometimes this might be difficult being a student; but its worth doing if sleep is a problem. Some people do find reading in bed helpful, however this is also about association. Good sleepers read to stay awake; poor sleepers read to get to sleep.

Healthy sleepers generally fall asleep within twenty minutes. If you are lying in bed unable to get to sleep for longer than this then the association between bed and wakefulness/ anxiety is strengthened. If you're not asleep within 20 mins; get up, go into a different room if possible and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again, then go back to bed.

2 The 20 minute rule

Feeling tired and feeling sleepy are different. You actually feel tired without feeling sleepy but you should only try and go to sleep when you feel sleepy. When you feel sleepy you might yawn a lot, have hot, heavy eyes that feel like they want to close and have heavy muscles.

3 The sleepy rule

Only sleep at night. Make sure not to nap in the day, no matter how much sleep you missed the night before. Napping in the day decreases the need to sleep at night and gets rid of the 'sleepy' feeling you need to fall asleep at night.

4 The night time rule

Increasing energy levels: physical activity

There are many benefits to physical activity, whether it's exercise, sport or any activity that involves using energy. Its another important thing that can help improve your mood and can keep you feeling better in the future.



Benefits of physical activity

- It can increase your confidence, setting and meeting goals or challenges, even small ones.
- It can boost your self confidence and make you feel better about your appearance.
- It can be a positive distraction; exercise can help break a negative cycle of worries that can feed anxiety and depression .
- Exercise can give you an opportunity to socialise with other people.

Additional benefits:

- Releasing feel-good brain chemicals like neurotransmitters and endorphins
- Reducing immune system chemicals that can worsen depression
- Gets oxygen to the muscles
- Improves fitness, energy levels and sleep
- Improves physique

Research has also found that green and blue spaces can help lift low mood. Being out doors, in nature, by a river or the sea may be particularly beneficial. Have a think about what physical activities you enjoy that you are able to do now. You might want to start adding these into your weekly diary. Try and build up how much you are doing each week, gradually building it up at a rate that you feel you can achieve.

Staying well

Well done on getting to the end of Busting the Blues! It can be helpful to look back over the weeks you have been working on these techniques and think about what has been the most helpful. There is no way of knowing if you are going to feel low again in the future, but hopefully working through this booklet has equipped you with some ways of coping if you do feel that way again.

What have you learnt?

Which techniques have worked best for you?

What are your signs of low mood or depression? (Thoughts/physical/behaviours)

What areas are you going to work on?

What techniques will you use to do this?

Setting yourself goals to continue working towards...



Sometimes it can be really helpful to think about what you want to continue working towards in the near future. There might be things that you have made a good start on whilst working through Busting the Blues, or maybe there are other areas of your life where you feel setting a goal would be helpful. Either way having a clear goal that you can measure and assess can really help you have a clear direction. It may also be helpful to give yourself a day a week or a month to look through this booklet again and to re-assess where you are with achieving your goals.

Today's date:

Goal One:

I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Today's date:

Goal Two:

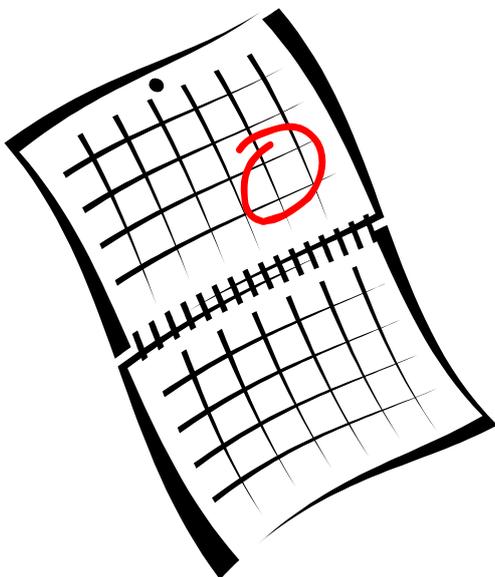
I can do this now (circle a number)

0 (not at all) 1 2 (occasionally) 3 4 (Often) 5 6 (Anytime)

Well done for working through Busting the Blues!

It is worth keeping an eye on your mood, it is perfectly normal to feel low or down sometimes, life is full of ups and downs. But we also know that depression and low mood can return. If you find that you have been feeling low for a while then you should try to do something about it. The important thing is that you have learnt some skills that you can use to keep yourself feeling well and to tackle any low mood if it does return.

You might feel as though you're still not where you want to be in terms of your mood. This is completely normal, it can take time for these techniques to reverse the vicious cycle of low mood. If you found that they have made any difference at all even if its small this is encouraging, just keep up the good work and as time goes on you will notice it getting easier. It might also be that further Cognitive Behaviour Therapy might be helpful.



It can be helpful to schedule in a day a month where you can focus on YOU! Where you can have a look back through this booklet to remind yourself of the different techniques and only do activities that are enjoyable and don't involve any stress. If you schedule it in you'll be more likely to do it, these things can easily get lost or forgotten about otherwise.

Josie Bannon (Lead Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner)
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Emergency support services

It is relatively common when people are feeling low to have thoughts that they would be better off dead or to hurt themselves in some way. These may just be brief passing thoughts or reflect a sense of feeling trapped, but without any intention to do anything.

On the other hand, some people find themselves thinking about death a lot, or having thoughts about ending their lives. They may have even had thoughts about how they might kill themselves or have made a plan to end their life. If any of these cases are true for you, we strongly urge you to talk to someone about these thoughts.

If you are having suicidal thoughts, please contact one of the services listed below. These services are available to help you during this difficult period.

During office hours you can contact:

Your GP to make an urgent appointment with a doctor. In an emergency, the GPs at the Student Health Centre on Streatham Campus can also see students who do not have a GP in Exeter

The Wellbeing Centre also offers daily duty appointments that can be booked at short notice - these can be booked by contacting the reception on 01392 724381

Out of hours you can contact:

Devon doctors – For urgent support when your surgery is closed call 111

The Samaritans – a confidential service and support for anyone in crisis - 01392 411 711 or www.samaritans.org.uk

Voice - a listening service run by students – available from 8pm to 8am every night during term time - 01392 724000 - www.exetervoice.co.uk

A&E You can also attend **A&E** for emergency support at any time

If you are having thoughts to self-harm there is a self-help booklet available :

Northumberland self help website: Self help: Self harm

