

MOOD MATTERS

SESSION 6 COURSE WORKBOOK



Session 6

Mood-dependence, Setting Goals and Putting It All Together

- Your moods are different collections of feelings that you experience.
- When you are experiencing depression, you may feel any combination of sadness, guilt, hopelessness, pessimism, anger and so on.
- You may also experience some positive emotions from time to time when you have depression e.g. happiness, relief, humor.
- Being dependent on your mood means letting your mood dictate how you will behave and what goals you will pursue.

Exercise 1: Do you tend to be mood dependent?

This tendency to rely on your mood for guidance can become a real problem when you are depressed. After all, when you are depressed, your mood is telling you not to do anything! Below are some examples of mood dependent behaviour. Put a tick next to behaviours that describe what you do:

- Waiting until you feel less depressed to begin a chore
- Lying in bed or on the sofa when you feel fatigued, rather than getting active
- Avoiding making commitments or plans with others because you're not sure how you'll feel at the time
- Cancelling plans or activities at the last minute because you don't feel up to it

What are some other behaviours that you do that may be mood-dependent?

The Power of Mood Dependence

Danielle was a high school history teacher in a large city. One of the reasons she decided to become a teacher was so that she could enjoy the long holidays in the summer months. However, over the last couple of years, she has begun to notice a certain level of low mood creeping into her summer holidays. Although she continued to do things that she enjoyed, such as going for walks on the beach and getting together with friends, she did them less often. Instead, Danielle spent more time at home, worrying about the coming school year and feeling guilty for not putting more time into developing her lesson plans. Despite the guilt and worry, she left most of the work for the last few weeks until school started. On some level, Danielle recognised that all the worrying and feeling guilty didn't help her to get more accomplished. However, she just couldn't seem to bring herself to start working. In her words *"I just feel too depressed to do any of this stuff"*.

Waiting for her mood or her motivation to improve played a big part in keeping Danielle stuck. The less active she was, the worse she felt, and the worse she felt, the harder it was to become active and engaged in her life. Something had to change. One morning toward the end of the summer, Danielle woke up feeling really anxious about the start of the school year and guilty about not starting her preparations sooner. Her first impulse was to lie in bed and read a book. However, on this particular morning she said to herself *"I can't do this anymore, no matter how awful I feel, I've got to get up and do something."* Danielle ate a quick breakfast and took off for the beach feeling anxious and guilty the whole way there. Surprisingly, once she was at the beach taking a walk, Danielle noticed that her mood improved a great deal. She barely felt guilty or anxious at all. Once she observed the shift in her mood, Danielle realised something important: if she had waited for the anxiety and guilt to go away before taking action, she would never have made it to the beach. And in all likelihood, her mood would not have improved.

Can you relate to Danielle's story?

Exercise 2: What do you think is stopping you?

Think of an activity that you have recently avoided, but that you suspect would be helpful to you in the long run. Some examples might be getting a CV together, starting to exercise regularly, seeing friends or family more often, or confronting a difficult situation at home or work. In the space below, write the activity or behaviour that might be helpful in the long run but that you have been avoiding:

Plans and Goals, Craig's example...

Craig had been recently made redundant from a senior position in a building firm. Although such changes were common in his field, Craig took it personally and experienced a big blow to his self esteem. He knew that he needed to look for a new job, but he couldn't bring himself to do it. Craig had made many connections with other agencies over the years, and he was reasonably confident that he could find a new job if he could just get on the phone and begin calling people. The problem was that whenever he thought about picking up the phone, he felt extremely depressed. All he could focus on was the shame he would feel when telling people he was made redundant.

With the help of his therapist, Craig came up with a plan for working on finding a new job. To keep things manageable, Craig decided to spend fifteen minutes over

the following three days (from 10.00 to 10.15am each morning) phoning people that might have leads for him. The important part was that no matter how awful he felt, Craig would stick to his plan and continue to make his calls. He wrote down a commitment to pursuing this goal and signed it to help himself keep the commitment. He also wrote out a script for himself so that he would be better prepared. The first fifteen minutes were awkward but Craig was surprised how much easier making calls came after he had practiced. He also noticed that his mood improved more than a little as a result of taking this bit of action.

Exercise 3: Turning Reactive Behaviour into Proactive Behaviour.

Under the first heading below, write down examples of your behaviour that are very dependent upon your mood. E.g. if you choose not to exercise because you don't feel up to it, you could write "not exercising because I'm not in the mood." For each reactive behaviour, write down a corresponding proactive behaviour in the right hand column. Continuing with the previous example you could write "exercise on Monday, Wednesday and Friday no matter what mood I am in".

Reactive Behaviour	Proactive Behaviour

Exercise 4: Finding Your Goals

In the space below, write down as many goals as you can think of. Don't worry at this point whether they are short or long term goals, whether you are capable of achieving them, how hard they will be, or anything else that distracts you from your current goal, which is to think of as many goals as you can!



SMART Goals

SPECIFIC

Be precise in what you want to achieve. Consider breaking the goal down into simple stages.

MEASURABLE

How will you know when you have accomplished your goal? What will you be doing at that time? What will others observe you doing? What will be different? What will you have begun to do or be doing routinely? What will you be doing less of or have stopped doing?

ACHIEVABLE

Ensure your goals are not too complex. Don't set yourself up to fail! Think about setting smaller goals on your way to the big one. Celebrate your achievements. If you don't achieve what you set out to, then ask what you could do differently, what would make it more likely to be a success next time?

REALISTIC & RELEVANT

Is this achievable and what resources I have? Are there any other resources you need before you can, or to help you, achieve your goal? How can you access these resources? What issues might you have? What can you do to reduce the likelihood of those issues?

TIME BOUND

Set a reasonable time limit to achieve your goal. 1 week, a month, 6 months, a year, 5 years?
Consider different (shorter) time limits for simpler steps.

What about the times when you are so depressed that you can't do anything?

Perhaps you have had times when you felt so depressed or sad that it felt like you couldn't do anything except sit and stare or lie in bed. The key word here is 'felt'. Even though it feels like you can't possibly do anything, in fact you have the ability to engage in other activities. Moods such as severe depression can be very strong and can almost convince you that you have no choice in how you behave. At such times, it helps to remember that if the incentive were strong enough, you could do any number of things such as exercise, clean the house, spend time with friends or family or go for a walk. Ending depression can be a very worthwhile goal. Reminding yourself of your ability to choose what you want to do with your time can help you keep the goal in mind.

Isn't it false to act like you're not depressed when you are?

When you act according to your goals rather than according to your mood, it may feel awkward at first. You may feel that you are acting in the sense of pretending you are someone that you are not. This feeling is to be expected. It does not mean that you are being false or untruthful to who you are. In fact, the truth is that you are someone who is pursuing a goal and choosing, regardless of your mood, to act on it. Don't fall into the trap of assuming that your moods are the best reflection of who you are. Moods are like the weather; they always affect how you see things, but they aren't necessarily the best indicator of what's true or important in a particular situation. Just like there is nothing false about smiling and talking to people when you are depressed.

So you are just supposed to pretend you are not depressed?

This question is similar to the one above. You don't need to pretend to be happy to break free from mood dependence. The idea is to feel what you feel and continue pursuing your goals. It's as if you're saying 'I know that I am in a depressed mood right now and I'm going to continue with my plan to...'

HOMEWORK

- Practice your CBT skills regularly.
- Try to recognise the early signs of depression.
- Remember it won't always be plain sailing but you have the skills to take control again.