

# MOOD MATTERS

## SESSION 1 COURSE WORKBOOK



Welcome to the Wellbeing. Learn practical strategies for managing low mood with our clinically proven online course.

## **SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION TO DEPRESSION**

### **What is depression?**

Low mood is common and affects us all. Indeed, everyone feels low from time to time. Low mood usually goes away when circumstances change. However, when this doesn't happen or you find yourself feeling low much of the time, it may be becoming a problem.

Here is a quick depression test. In the past few weeks, have you:

- Felt down, flat or hopeless?
- Felt like you have little interest or pleasure in doing things?

Some of the common signs of depression are:

- Loss of interest in activities
- Feeling sad, worthless, irritated or guilty
- Brooding and being self-critical
- Poor Sleep and Fatigue
- Changes in appetite and weight loss/gain
- Poor concentration and feeling easily confused
- Having low confidence/low self-esteem
- A decline in sexual feelings

Sometimes people experience anxiety symptoms at the same time (e.g. avoidance, fast heartbeat, finding it hard to relax and worrying often)



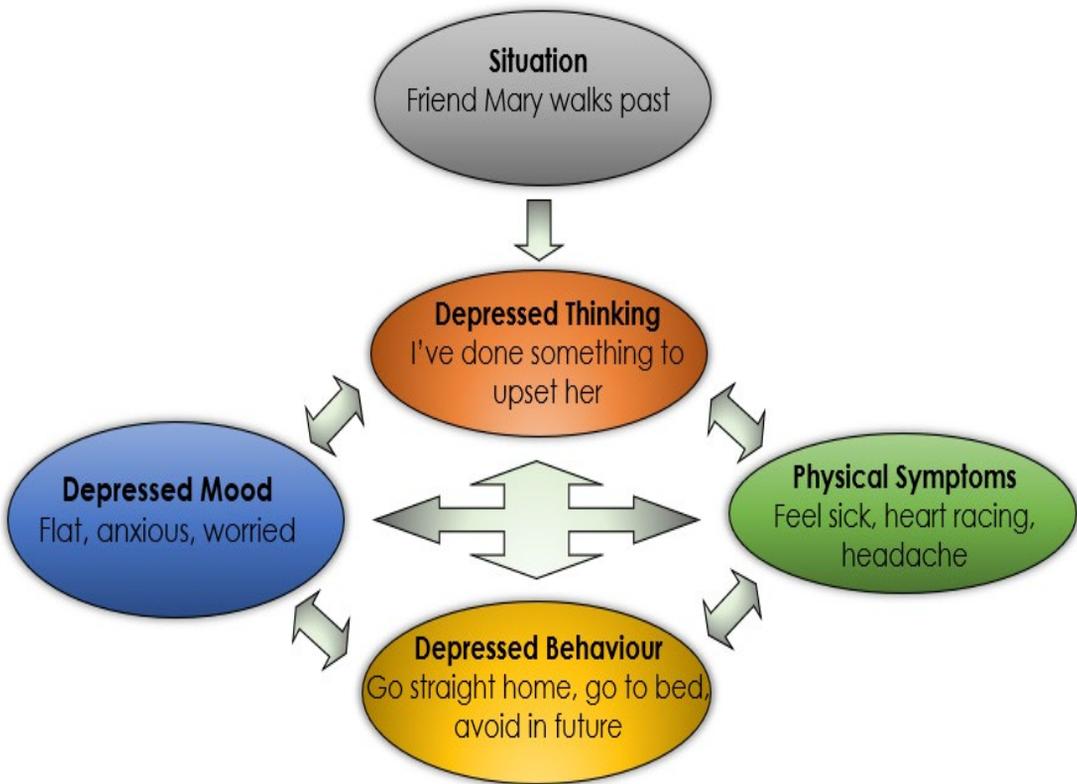
## How does depression affect us?

Depression can affect us in 4 main ways. It affects our:

- Body – the physical sensations you experience when you are depressed
- Thoughts – what goes through your mind when you are depressed
- Feelings – the emotions that you feel when you are depressed
- Behaviour – how you act/what you do/what you avoid when you are depressed

These 4 areas (body, thoughts, feelings and behaviours) are all tied to each other and each can affect the other. The following diagram illustrates what we call the **'VICIOUS CIRCLE OF DEPRESSION'**.

### CBT Vicious Circle of Depression



This diagram shows us that what we think about a situation affects how we feel physically and emotionally and changes what we do, (behaviour). If we begin to identify and recognise our unhelpful patterns (what keeps our vicious circle going), we can start to make changes and by doing so hopefully we can begin to weaken the circle.



### **Common Questions about depression:**

1. What's wrong with me?

Nothing is wrong with you. There are reasons that you are depressed that have to do with your life. We will have much more to say on this later.

2. What's causing me to feel this way?

Depression rarely has one cause. Research shows that it is not often necessary to determine the cause in order to end depression. Rather than what caused it, it is much more helpful to look at what is keeping it going.

3. Do I have some kind of chemical imbalance in my brain?

Some research shows a relationship between the amount of certain chemicals in the nervous system and the likelihood of being depressed. It may be that some form of chemical imbalance makes you feel or act depressed or it is also possible that feeling/acting depressed may alter the level of certain chemicals in your brain.

4. Is there something in my childhood or past that's making me feel this way?

For some people, experiences in childhood can increase the likelihood of developing depression as an adult. Nonetheless, the quickest way to remove the effects of the past is to approach life differently in the present.

5. Should you take medication?

Certain medications have been shown to be effective in depression. However, as with all treatments, some people benefit from them and some do not. Even if you think that depression is strictly a medical illness, there are effective ways to overcome it without the need for medication. If you think you might want to start taking medication, you should consult your GP.

6. Do other people feel this way?

Yes. One in ten people experience an episode of serious depression every year with one in four people experiencing mental health problems throughout their lifetime. Poor mental health can affect ANYONE at ANYTIME.

7. Will I ever be able to feel 'normal'? How can I overcome this?

There are a variety of effective treatments for depression that have been tested in controlled clinical research studies. This course's approach is based on the idea of behavioural activation, which is really a technical way of saying 'getting engaged with your life'. "Normal" can mean different things to different people but we certainly hope you will feel less depressed, more energized, more engaged in your life, and less down.



## GETTING STARTED

There are some things in our daily lives which increase the chances of us experiencing depression. Let's start by getting rid of the things that make depression worse.



### 1. Caffeine:

- Stimulant that affects the brain and central nervous system and can be found in drinks e.g. tea, coffee, fizzy drinks, red bull, pro-plus, and also in pain killers e.g. aspirin, some cold remedies and headache tablets.
- Too much caffeine (more than 4 cups per day) can leave us feeling nervous, irritable, restless, agitated, shaky, give us headaches, increase our heart rate, speed up breathing etc. Your body can get so used to caffeine that if you just cut it out suddenly you may experience withdrawal effects such as headaches, tiredness, sickness, anxiety.
- *If you think you may be taking too much caffeine wean yourself off it slowly, perhaps try switching to decaff tea and coffee, or from fizzy drinks to caffeine free drinks etc.*

### 2. Alcohol:

- Many people with depression misuse alcohol to boost their mood or avoid their feelings. If you drink alcohol to cope with depression you may begin to depend on it. Symptoms such as low mood, nausea, sweating, and shaking may be more to do with the withdrawal effects of alcohol than depression. Drinking too much alcohol will disrupt your sleep and make you more prone to depression.
- *Try to reduce your intake – seek advice from your GP if required.*



### 3. Poor sleep routine:

- Low mood often leads to sleep trouble but lack of sleep can leave us feeling even low and fatigued the next day.
- Try to get into a regular routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time every day – don't spend more than 8 hours in bed. 'Put the day to rest' in the early part of the evening – make a 'to do' list and deal with any problems or worries you have well before bedtime. Relax for at least 90 minutes before bedtime.



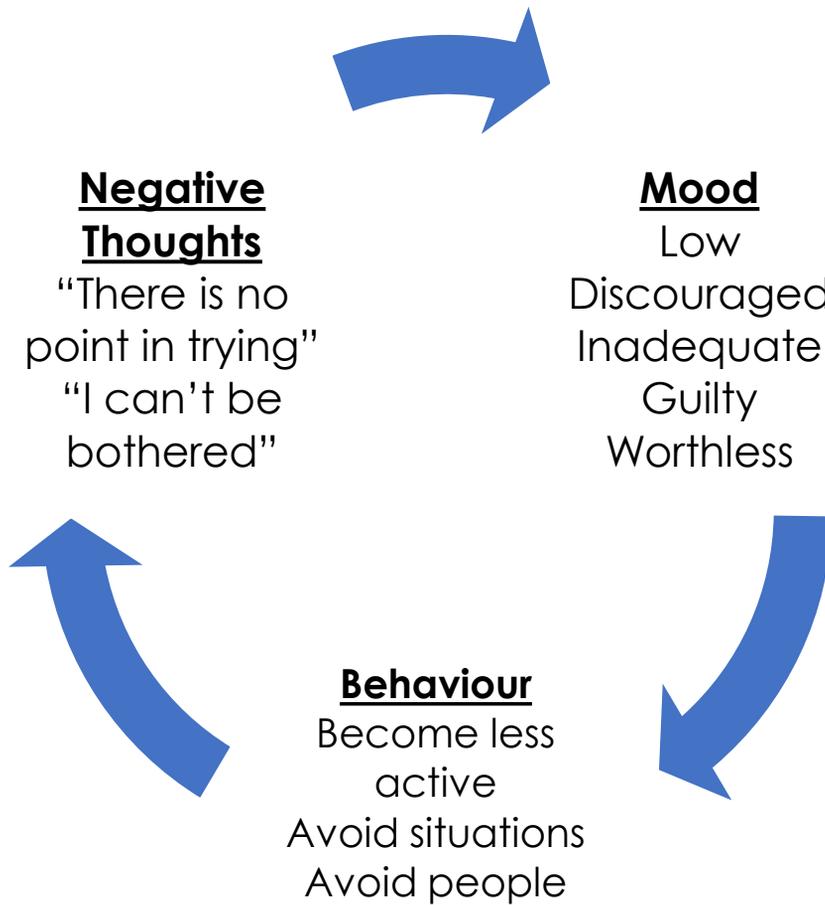
### 4. Lack of exercise:

30 minutes of moderate exercise each day can make a huge difference to our physical and psychological well-being



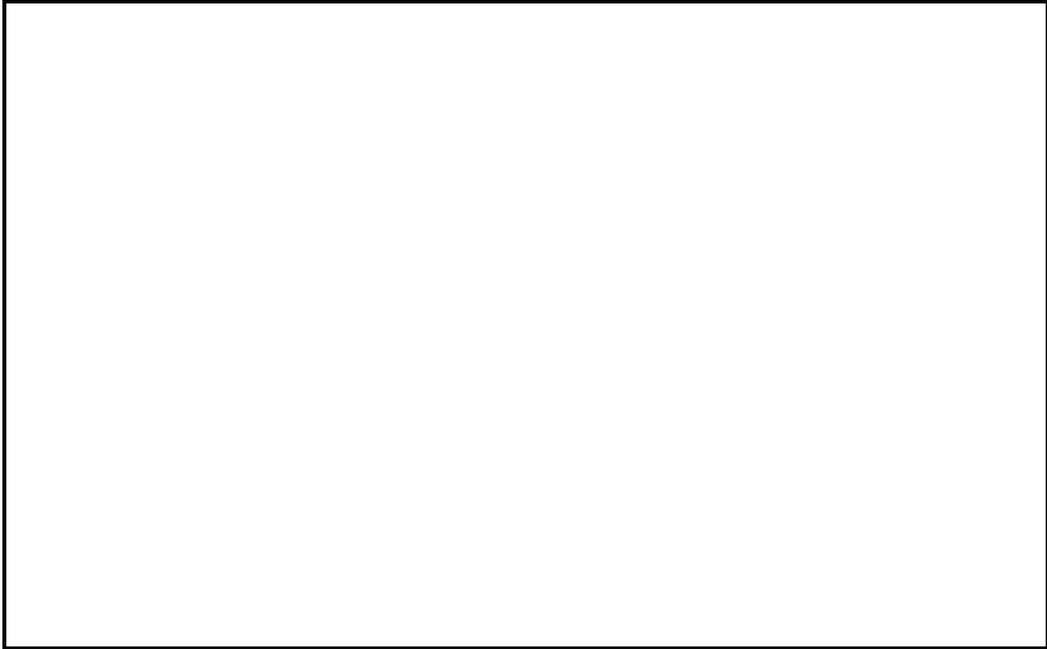
- *Physical benefits –*
  - Releases tension
  - Controls weight and improves body shape
  - Can reduce blood pressure, as well as the risk of heart disease, cancers and stroke
- *Bio-psychological benefits –*
  - Reduces levels of the body's stress hormones – adrenaline and cortisol
  - Stimulates the production of serotonin and endorphins – the body's natural mood elevators
- *Try to increase the amount of exercise you are doing. This does not always mean joining a local gym, it can also include walking, housework, gardening etc.*

Why does exercise help lift our mood? It helps us break the lethargy cycle:



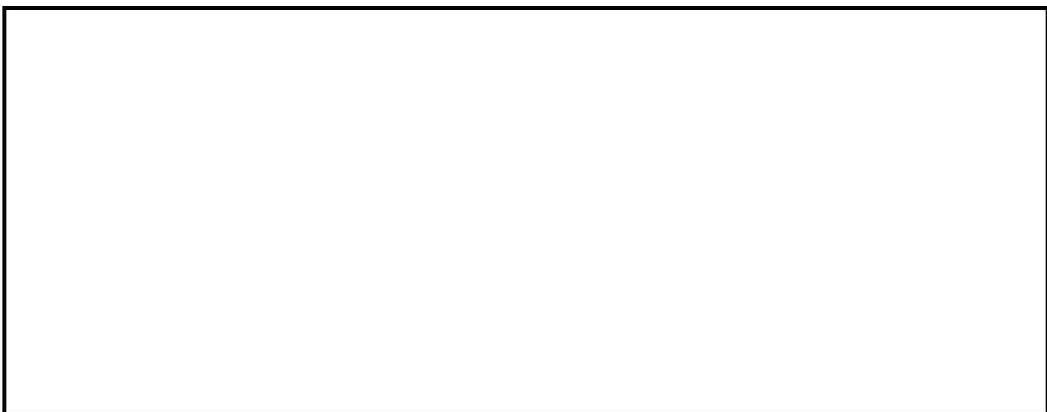
**TASK 1 (DISCUSSION)**

- 1. What kind of thoughts & behaviours help to keep your vicious circle of depression going?**



**Task 2**

**How could exercise help you?**



What are the main things stopping you?

### HOMework

- Try 10 minutes of exercise over 3 days over the next week.
- Keep weekly planner. Note mood.
- Make a mental note of the thoughts and behaviors that keep your depression going.

