

buzz

Manchester
Health & Wellbeing
Service



Improve Your Mood

A guide to managing
low mood and depression



Produced by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service
in partnership with Manchester Primary Care Mental Health Team.
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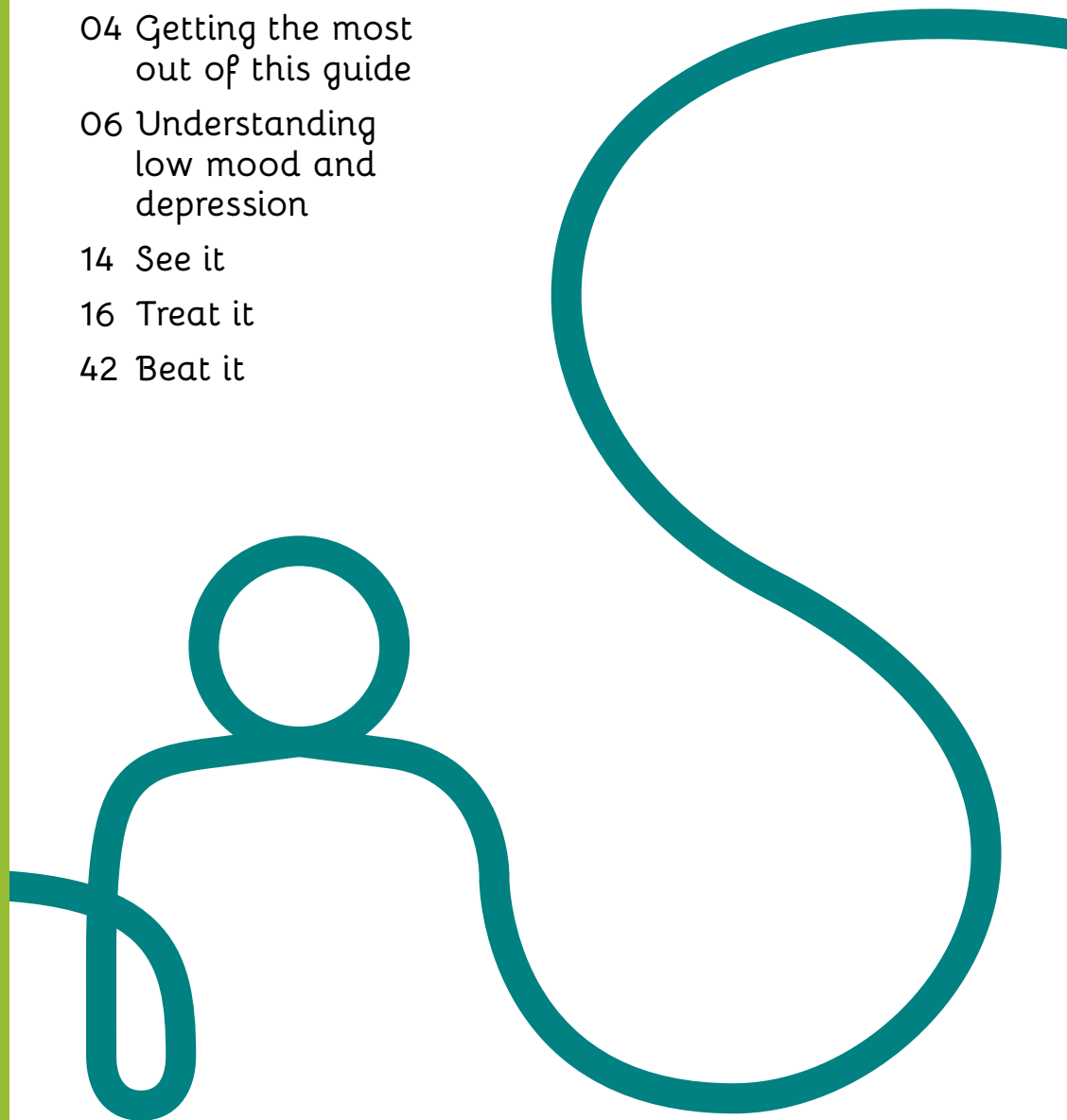
www.buzzmanchester.co.uk

This guide is one of a series about mental health and wellbeing by buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service. You can find more guides at www.mhim.org.uk

'Improve Your Mood' is about understanding low mood and depression and learning how to manage it. It's important to remember that depression and low mood are very common.

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Getting the most out of this guide

This guide aims to:

- Help you understand low mood and depression
- Help you see how low mood and depression can affect your life
- Give you tools to help you manage low mood and depression
- Give you tools to help you overcome low mood and depression

There will be a number of tools for you to try which aim to help you improve your mood and find out what works best for you.

If you find it hard to work through the guide, you might find it useful to talk to someone. This could be a health worker such as your doctor or practice nurse. At the end of the guide there are details about where to get more information, help and treatment.

Understanding low mood and depression

This section looks at how to recognise low mood and depression and explains how people can end up in a vicious cycle of low mood and depression.

See it

This section will help you see how low mood and depression can affect your life.

Treat it

This section has a range of tips to help you deal with low mood and depression.

Beat it

This section gives you more ideas on how to make progress. It also lists where you can get further support.

As you read this guide, it will ask you to think about what is going on in your life and how you are feeling. There are spaces in the guide for you to write things down. You may find that this helps you think more clearly about how you feel.

What you'll need:

- A pen and maybe a notebook for extra notes
- Time for reading and thinking about how you can help yourself
- Somewhere quiet to read and think
- To keep going and pace yourself by taking one step at a time
- Support from a family member, friend or health professional if needed

Understanding low mood and depression

Depression is very common. It affects roughly one in ten adults in the UK. It can affect anyone at any age, including children and teenagers.

Everyone experiences changes to their mood sometimes. A lot of people go through a range of feelings and emotions on a daily basis, depending on what is happening in their life. You might feel sad, unhappy, fed up, down or 'have the blues'.

For most of us, after going through a low period, our mood will gradually start to lift again and we feel better.

However, if your low mood carries on or gets worse, you may have become depressed. Long-term negative thoughts about yourself and your future are common. Many symptoms can affect how you are able to function in day to day life.

Why do people get depressed?

There are many causes of depression. We do not know all the reasons why people develop depression. What we do know is that it can run in the family and can be due to how you have been treated growing up. It can also be caused by stressful life events or big changes to your daily life.

You might just experience depression once in your lifetime. Or it could return again over time and you could have a constant battle with it throughout your life.

Stressful changes or events could be:

- Debt
- Poor health
- Disability
- Redundancy
- Being a carer
- Poor housing
- Discrimination
- Traumatic events
- Being out of work
- The end of a relationship
- Not having a lot of money
- Death of a loved one
(Depression is not the same as grief following the death of a loved one)



What are the signs of depression?

Depression can affect many areas of your life; your thoughts, your emotions, your body and your behaviour.

Here is a list of some of the ways depression can affect people. Please tick any boxes that apply to your own life.

You feel...

- Sad, upset, numb, guilty
- Angry and irritable about little things
- Less interested in things you once enjoyed
- Like things are out of your control
- Like you are not really there
- Like you are alone

Your mind is...

- Forgetful
- Going over and over things
- Racing/hard to switch off
- Imagining that the worst will happen
- Hard to focus and jumps from one topic to another

Your thoughts might be...

- 'I can't cope'
- 'I have no confidence'
- 'Everything is hopeless'
- 'Things are out of control'
- 'The worst is going to happen'
- 'I can't be bothered'
- 'I hate myself'

You might behave by...

- Not doing everyday tasks
- Finding it hard to sit still/relax
- Doing things slower than usual
- Being snappy and irritable
- Putting things off
- Self-harming
- Avoiding friends and family
- Eating and sleeping more or less
- Not doing the things you used to enjoy
- Drinking, taking drugs and smoking

Your body symptoms are...

- Can't sleep/sleeping too much
- Butterflies in the stomach
- Need to go to the toilet
- Feeling sick
- Headaches
- Tired
- Tearful
- Tense muscles
- Lower sex drive
- More pains in the body

If you have ticked a number of these boxes, you seem to be having symptoms of low mood or depression. However, don't be alarmed, this is very common. There are things you can do to improve your situation.

You will find some useful tools in this guide. Sometimes these symptoms can be caused by medical problems e.g. an under active thyroid, diabetes, a head injury, stroke, chronic pain, or a lack of vitamins and minerals like Vitamin D. You should see your GP to be sure that your symptoms are not related to a medical problem.

The vicious cycle of depression

There are five areas of depression that create a vicious cycle:

- Your thoughts
- Your emotions
- Physical symptoms
- Your behaviour
- Situations that you put yourself in or deal with on a daily basis

Each of these aspects has an affect on the other which can keep depression going. That is why it is called a vicious cycle.

There are many reasons why the vicious cycle keeps going:

- Poor coping
- Poor motivation and low energy
- Negative beliefs or hopelessness

Meet Sara. We will find out more about Sara and her depression throughout this guide.

Sara's situation

Sara is going through a stressful time at work and it is making her feel down and empty. She can't fall asleep at night because she keeps thinking about work. She feels very tired during the day and doesn't want to talk to anyone. This makes her feel lonely and hopeless.

Sara thinks that it's all her fault and her body aches all the time, so she stops looking after the house. Soon the house is a mess which makes her think that she must be an awful person to let things get this bad. She pours herself some wine and tucks into a tub of ice-cream.

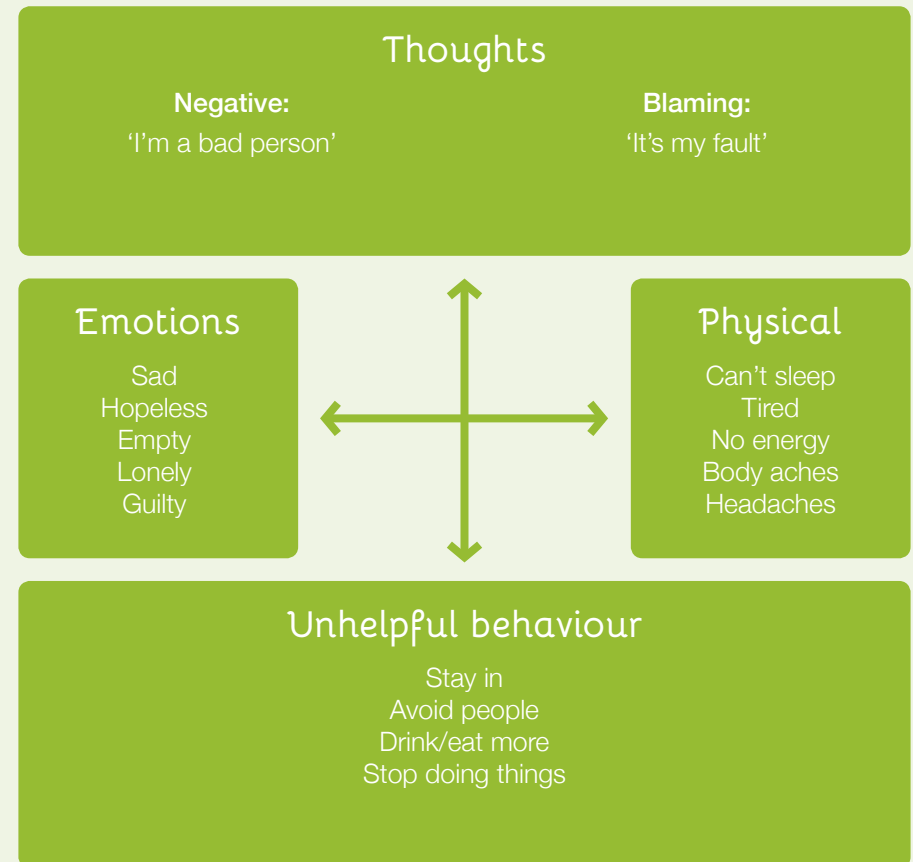
After she has finished comfort eating and drinking she feels extremely guilty which reinforces her thought that she is a bad person. She then starts to avoid people even more and her vicious cycle of depression continues...

Sara's situation



Sara is having a stressful time at work and is finding it hard to focus.

The arrows in the diagram below show how each area can affect the other to create a vicious cycle.



Poor coping methods

Some people try to cope by using alcohol. This can make the situation worse in the long-term. For example, people could become addicted to alcohol. It could lead to financial or relationship problems. This makes the situation worse and the depression stays.

Poor motivation or low energy

People often stop doing things they used to enjoy. They lack motivation and have no energy, meaning that a vicious cycle develops as they do less and start to withdraw.

Negative beliefs or hopelessness

Some people don't seek help due to feelings of worthlessness. They may have thoughts such as 'why should anyone help me, I'm rubbish'. It could be because they feel helpless, for example, they may think things like 'nothing can change the way I feel'. Sometimes people don't know that they have depression. If this is the case it can't be treated.

“Depression is very common. It can affect anyone at any age.”



See it

In this section you will start to look out for any vicious cycles in your own life.

It is important to evaluate the sources of your low mood or depression before you can begin to make any changes.

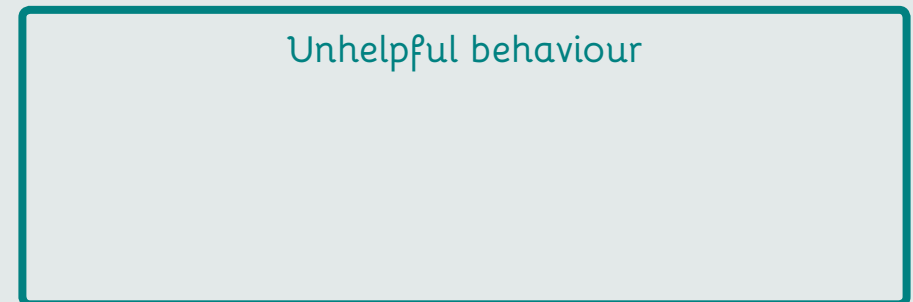
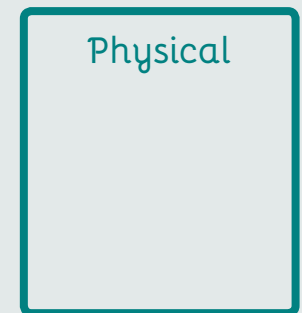
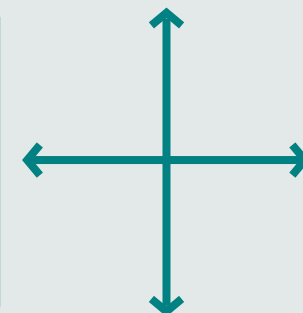
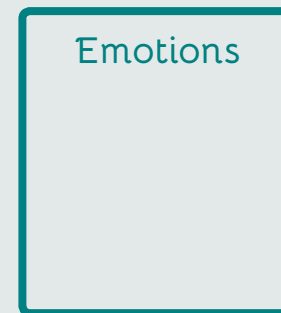
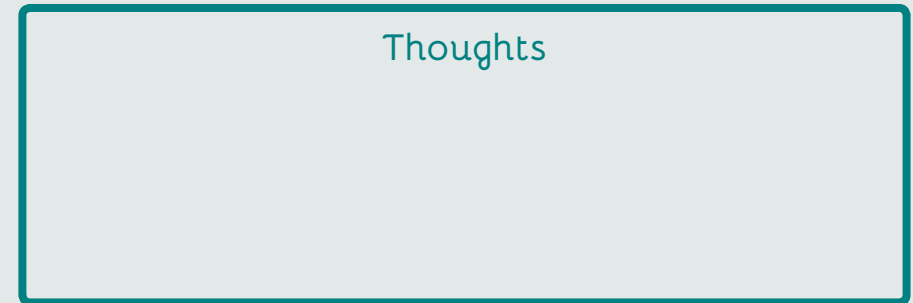


Your situation



Have a go at drawing your own cycle on the blank diagram below.

Use the symptom checklist from page 8 and 9, or think of the last time you felt low.



Treat it

To beat low mood and depression you need to break your vicious cycle. You can do this by changing something in one of your 'five areas'.

The key is to take small steps, one at a time. A small positive change in one area can have a positive effect on the other areas. So you can create a positive cycle.

Start by making small changes in:

- What you do
- How you feel about things
- How you think
- What is going on in your life
- Your physical health



Sara's situation



Sara decides to talk to a friend about the stressful time she is having at work.

It helps to relieve some of her stress by venting to someone she trusts. Her friend is able to reassure her that she is doing the best she can and things will get better. Below is her positive cycle.



Working with physical symptoms

Depression affects your body and your mood as well as your thoughts and emotions.

You might experience:

- Changes to your appetite (eating more or less)
- Changes to your sleep patterns (sleeping more or less) leading to a lack of energy and feeling tired
- Aches and pains or becoming more aware of physical pain that you may already suffer with

Other things that can affect your body and mood include:

- Illnesses
- Medicines
- Alcohol and other drugs
- What sort of food you eat
- Exercise and activity levels
- The amount of sunlight you get

It is worth spending some time thinking about each of these things. Think about what changes you want to make. You may want help and support to do this.

The guide 'From Distress to De-stress' has lots of tips about how to reduce the physical impact of distress. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk



Working with behaviours

The first step to recovering from low mood and depression is to recognise the unhelpful behaviours that you are doing to cope better and find ways to reduce them.

There are many different things that people will do to cope with low mood and depression. Often people stop doing things that they used to enjoy.

They might not feel like going out with friends because they feel down so they become withdrawn and less sociable. It is also common to put off jobs, make excuses, drink more alcohol and comfort eat. These coping mechanisms might help people feel better in the short-term but they are very unhelpful and can actually end up making people feel worse in the long-term, feeding the vicious cycle of depression.

For example, eating a burger and milkshake will make you feel great immediately after but later on you might feel guilty, sluggish and bloated.

You will feel better if you make sure that you are keeping on top of things that you need to do in your daily routine e.g. doing the washing or weekly food shop. This stops you from feeling like things are out of control.

It is a good idea to think about positive things you could do to improve your mood (even if you don't feel like it).

Some examples include:

- Be more active
- Build relationships
- Get out of the house
- Talk to friends and family
- Keep in contact with the outside world
- Do enjoyable and pleasurable activities

If you feel like your current coping mechanisms are unhelpful, the table on the next page will help you to think about where you could make changes.

Your situation



Fill out the boxes below to help you see your current situation and where you could make changes.

Things that I do now in order to cope:

Things that I need to do to keep on top of my life:
(Plan these into your week)

Things that I enjoy or would like to do:
(Try to do more of these)

Motivation follows action

When you're feeling down or depressed, even simple tasks can seem like a huge burden.

Depression can sap your energy and make you feel tired and lethargic. Your thoughts may be telling you 'there's no point' or 'I'll do it later'. It becomes harder to get into healthy and enjoyable routines and stay active.

There is proof that being more active is a great way to beat depression but when we feel down it is a real effort to get going. However, once we do make a start then we often feel like we want to do a little bit more. This is true no matter how small the start is. If we wait until we feel like doing something before we start, then we may wait for a long time!

You might often hear or use the phrase 'I'll do it tomorrow'... and tomorrow never comes!

Over the next few pages are some examples of ways to get motivated and stay motivated.



Start a routine

A good routine can help you to look after yourself. It can improve your sleep and help you feel more in control of your life. The body works better when its basic needs are met.

The brain needs a lot of energy to function. Without enough food, it won't work well. Some people need to take medicines at a regular time. It is important to plan all of these things into your day.

Make sure you have:

- A regular bedtime and wake up time
- Periods where you are active
- Periods where you rest and relax
- Regular times to eat

Below is an example of how to plan your daily routine:



7-8am	Get up, shower and eat breakfast
1-2pm	Lunch
5-6pm	Dinner
7-8pm	Go to the gym or go for a walk
9-10pm	Read a book, watch a TV programme and prepare for bed
11pm	Bed

Activity scheduling

Symptoms of low mood and depression can be helped by planning enjoyable activities that will keep you motivated and help boost your self-esteem.

Activities can be grouped in what's called the 'fabulous four', they should be:

- Pleasurable
- Fulfilling
- Physical
- Sociable

Think about some activities that could fit into the 'fabulous four' groups:

- Pleasurable activities could include: reading or going to the cinema
- Fulfilling activities will give you a sense of achievement. They could include: learning a new skill, decorating your home or cooking
- Physical activities could include: going for a run, swimming, walking the dog
- Social activities could include: meeting friends for lunch or inviting people round to your house

There is an activity diary over the page that will help you schedule more activity into your week.

It might take a lot of practice to find the combination that works for you. Just remember to try to keep a good balance of activities from across the 'fabulous four'. Keep it realistic, don't try to do too much at once. Keep to one activity a day to start.

Activity diary



Fill in the diary below with what you aim to do for the next week:

- Include the time of when you will do the activity
- State whether you managed to do the activity or not
- Write down how you felt about it, or what got in the way

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Pleasurable							
Fulfilling							
Physical							
Sociable							

One small step at a time

Getting yourself out of the depressive cycle takes time and patience, the likelihood is that you won't feel better overnight so don't try to do everything all at once.

Doing simple tasks can feel like a huge effort and thinking about all the things you have to do may be daunting.

You could start by breaking things down into smaller stages to help make it seem less scary. Depression can affect your memory too, so ask someone to remind you to do things, to help keep you on track.

Try giving yourself a time limit for certain activities. This will help you to stay motivated. For example, you could plan to go for a short ten minute walk to start with, and slowly build up the time as and when you feel comfortable. Make sure to time yourself so you know when the ten minutes is up (you can always extend the time if you feel up to it).

Sara's situation

Sara decides to see more of her friends. She texts them first and then plans to phone them. She feels that she can cope with that and it builds up her confidence. Sara then asks her friends to come round to see her at home. Once she feels okay doing that, she plans to go out somewhere with them.

Try it yourself. Think of something small that you have been putting off and break it down into even smaller parts.

In the next example we have broken the activity down into three steps. You can do each of these steps whenever you feel like it, but each time it brings you a bit closer to finishing the task.

Washing the dishes

Example

Step one

Collect any dirty dishes up from around the house

Step two

Place them by the sink

Step three

Wash them or put them in the dishwasher

The problem solving tool on page 35 can help you to break down tasks step-by-step.

Working with your thoughts

Negative automatic thoughts

With depression your thinking tends to become more negative. You might have what are called 'negative automatic thoughts'. These just pop into your mind and make you feel more depressed. Some examples include: 'I'm no good', 'they don't like me' and 'nothing will help'.

This type of thinking can make you see things in negative ways. When you are down, these thoughts seem true and reasonable. But really they are unrealistic and untrue. So it can help to question your thoughts. You need to make sure that you aren't making yourself feel worse.

Unhelpful thinking styles

There are many types of unhelpful thinking styles. They are very common and we all do them from time to time. Try to keep an eye out for when you are using any of them.

Once you have recognised an unhelpful thought, you can start to do something about it. You can learn to demand evidence (see page 30). You can then dismiss the thought because you will know it is not true.

Sometimes your thoughts might be linked to long-term beliefs. These could be about you, about other people or about the world. They may hold you back in your recovery. If so, you may need to talk to someone like your GP, a counsellor or therapist. The guide 'Build Yourself Up' goes into more detail about unhelpful thinking styles. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.co.uk

Sara's situation

Sara's friend, Yasmin, walks past her in the street and ignores her. Sara's first reaction is to think that Yasmin has fallen out with her so she starts to feel angry and upset.

Sara's thoughts are all opinion. The only fact is that Yasmin walked past her. There could be many reasons why Yasmin did not say 'Hello'.

Sara needs to learn how to challenge her thoughts, by realising her thoughts are just an opinion she will be less likely to get upset in a similar situation.

Sara uses the questions below to help challenge her unhelpful thoughts and opinions.

What is the unhelpful thought?

'Yasmin hates me'

What evidence do I have?

'She walked past me today and did not say hello'

Is my thought opinion or fact?

'Opinion'

What type of unhelpful thinking am I doing?

'I am jumping to conclusions: mind reading'

Is there another way of seeing this?

'She might not have seen me. She did look busy'

What would I say to a friend who thought this?

'That doesn't sound like her. You are both really good friends. Maybe she had other things on her mind and just didn't see you'

What are the chances that my first thought was true?

'Low'

What is a more realistic thought?

'I get on really well with Yasmin. She probably didn't see me'

What really happened?

Yasmin was late picking up her kids up from school that day. She was in a rush and hadn't seen Sara. Sara had spent two days feeling upset about nothing

Demand evidence

Do not just accept a negative or unhelpful thought when it pops into your head.

Learn to question the thoughts or ideas that bother you. Instead, take another look at the thought and see if it is backed up by reality and then check whether it is a helpful thought.

In the table on the previous page you have seen the questions that Sara asked herself to help challenge her beliefs.

It might help you to make a note of these questions so that you can also ask them in the future, when you feel stuck with a certain thought or are worried about what might happen in a situation. You can use the 'Your ideas' section of this guide on page 45.

By doing the questions you can calm yourself down when needed. They can help you to develop a more balanced way of thinking. The table on the next page shows what would have happened to Sara if she had challenged her negative thoughts in the beginning.

Sara's situation

If Sara had challenged her unhelpful thought straight away, she could have changed how she felt. Her negative automatic thought made her feel upset. If she took time to assess the thought she could see it was not true. Her more realistic thought would make her feel calm and relieved.

When you are feeling down, unhelpful thoughts can get in the way of making change. The table below shows how challenging your thoughts can prevent you from dipping into a low mood or depression.

Example one	Example two
Negative automatic thought	
'Yasmin hates me'	'These ideas will never work'
Emotions	
Down Angry Upset	Down Hopeless Demoralised
Alternative thought	
'Yasmin looked like she was in a rush. She just didn't see me'	'I've got nothing to lose by trying. It might take my mind off my problems'
New emotions	
Relieved Calm	Curious A bit more hopeful A little motivated

You can dismiss your unhelpful thought. You know it is not true. You can replace it with a better one.

The booklet 'Unwind Your Mind' has more tools to help you deal with unhelpful thoughts. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Working with our environment or situation

'No man (or woman) is an island', as the saying goes.

Each of us is connected to the world and the people around us. When tackling depression it is important to remember that the things that go on in your life can have a big effect on your mood and often people get depressed because things happen to them that feel out of their own control.

Your environment or situation includes things other than your thoughts, emotions, body and behaviour.

Here are some examples:

- Work
- Support
- Housing
- Relationships
- Organisations
- Money and debt
- People you know
- Things that have happened to you

When people are depressed, they find it hard to do normal, everyday things. This can have a knock-on effect on other parts of their lives. It can also have an effect on the people around them.

Use the table on the next page to identify your current situation and come up with ways to help you stay on top of things.



Answer the following questions to help tackle problem areas in your life.

Think about the environments and situations mentioned on page 32 that could be affecting your mood.

What current environment or situation are you struggling with?

What has helped you in the past?

What could help this time?

You may need to seek extra support and advice.

Write down details of people who could help and make a plan to contact them.

Problem solving

When you feel low, it can feel like there is too much to deal with.

It is hard to work out what is best. You may feel stuck and not know what to do.

Problem solving can help you to work out what to do. It helps to work through a problem in a structured way. Once you have a plan to deal with a problem, you can try it out.

What is the problem?

Identify a problem you want to tackle. You may need to break down a big problem into small, bite-sized pieces to tackle one by one.

What could work?

Come up with as many ideas as you possibly can.

Work out the good/bad

Work out what is good about each solution and then what is bad about each solution.

What will you try?

Choose the one that seems to be the best. Look at the things that are good or bad about each solution to help you decide.

What will you do?

Include what you are going to do and when you plan to do it. It is a good idea to try to think about anything that might get in the way of your plan. You can then think of a step-by-step plan to overcome any obstacles.

What happened?

Review what happened and see how well it worked. If it hasn't, then you can go back to another solution and try that.

Your situation



Use this table to problem solve a worry or problem you have.

The steps on page 34 will help.

What is the problem?			
What could work?	What is good?	What is bad?	What will you try?
			What will you do?
What happened?			

“Start by
making small
changes.”



Treatments and support for depression

Antidepressant medication

Antidepressants do not cure depression but antidepressant medication is a common way to treat it. The medication reduces the symptoms and can help you feel more able to deal with depression in other ways.

Antidepressants can improve:

- Mood
- Sleep
- Appetite
- Energy levels
- Concentration

You can take them while you try other things to tackle your low mood. This includes the tips and tools in this guide. It also includes going to counselling or other therapies. You can talk to your doctor about what your options are.

It can take time for antidepressants to start working. It may take two to six weeks before you start to feel the benefits. You need to take them every day for them to work.

You may feel some mild side effects when you start taking them. They can include headaches, dry mouth and blurry vision. Some people feel sweaty, dizzy and/or sleepy. These effects often disappear in seven to ten days. The side effects of different antidepressants vary. It is a good idea to ask your doctor about what to expect. They can tell you what to do if you have a problem. If the side effects don't go, your doctor may ask you to lower your dose. You may need to change to another antidepressant.

If you are thinking of stopping your medicine you should speak to your doctor first because you may need to slowly reduce how much you are taking to give your body time to adjust.

If you just stop taking them you may experience withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, worrying, not being able to sleep, feeling sick or being sick.

Talking treatments or therapies

You may want to access a service that can help you improve your mental health. Your doctor can suggest services that can help. In Manchester you can also ask to see a therapist yourself. More information about the range of these services can be found at www.mhim.org.uk

When you attend a service they will listen to how you are feeling. They will help you to see what impacts on your mental health. They will support you to make changes to improve your mental health. Some therapies may be quite brief. Others continue for longer periods.



Look after yourself

You can look after yourself well in many ways. The skill of 'looking after you' and being aware of your needs is important.

Some people feel guilty when they take care of their own needs. But, taking care of yourself is a good thing. You will be better able to deal with the ups and downs that life will throw at you. You will also be more able to support others when you feel strong and well rested.

Eat well

Your brain uses up more than 50% of the energy in the food you eat. That is why it is important to eat starchy food like rice, pasta, bread and potatoes. When you do not eat well, your brain cannot work properly. Eating your five-a-day helps improve physical and mental health. It includes fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit and vegetables. It is also important to eat protein such as meat, fish, beans, tofu and Quorn. Omega 3 oils found in oily fish and dark green vegetables are vital for a healthy brain. So is drinking enough liquid each day. The guide 'Food and Mood' has more information. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Vitamin D

There is very little Vitamin D in the food we eat. Our skin makes Vitamin D from sunlight. However, this only happens between the months of March and October. You only need to spend 20 minutes in the sun each day, if you have pale skin. If you have a darker skin tone you may need to spend longer in the sun. Many breakfast cereals and all margarines (but not low fat spreads) have Vitamin D added to them. Just check out the label. You can also buy Vitamin D tablets to take once a day.

Get active

Physical activity is great for releasing stress. It can make you feel fitter and more confident. Choose something that you enjoy and can fit into your lifestyle. It could be walking while you listen to an audio book. The guide 'Physical Activity and Mood' has tips about getting started. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Sleep well

Sleep lets the body and mind recuperate and rest. When you don't sleep well, your brain doesn't work properly. You can use relaxation and breathing techniques in bed to help you fall asleep. Read the guide 'Sleep Well' for more information. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Relax

Relaxing helps the body and mind recover and rest. You can relax in many ways. Some people read; others paint and draw; some people knit and others spend time with animals. Try to find a way that works for you. Breathing skills can reduce the effect of stress on the body. Read the guide 'From Distress to De-stress' for more information. You can download a free copy from www.mhim.org.uk

Connect

Building bonds with people can help you feel supported. It can also allow you to feel closer to others. We have always lived together in groups. Having a good set of friends and family can improve your wellbeing.

Give

This is about doing something nice for others. Helping others can make you feel good about yourself. It will make them feel good too. It could be as simple as smiling at a stranger or holding a door open for someone. You could help a neighbour or friend. You could even do random acts of kindness. It can feel great to volunteer at a local community group or charity. You could meet new people, learn new skills and gain valuable experience.

Keep learning

Learn or rediscover skills. It builds confidence and esteem. You will feel more able to cope with life.

Take notice

Noticing the world around you can put things in perspective and brighten your day. Often we can go around in autopilot and miss the little things that could improve our mood. Keep an eye out for rainbows, architecture and nature!

Beat it

Practice, practice, practice...

Things are not going to change overnight. It can be a challenge to make changes to the way you have been doing things for so long. But, with practice it will become easier and easier. In the end, the changes will feel like second nature as you get used to them.

There is a lot of information in this guide. It might be useful to read it more than once. Try each technique a few times and keep practising the ones that you find useful.

Do not expect too much too soon. It may take some time for you to change the way you think and feel. It is a bit like learning to walk as a toddler. We all fall over at first. You might even bang your head or graze your knee. Luckily, despite these setbacks, you kept going and eventually learnt to walk. It didn't happen overnight. It took time and practice. It is the same for overcoming low mood and depression. It is not going to happen straight away. But, it will be worth it in the end.

After a while, it is useful to go back and check your checklists. You will be able to see if there have been any changes.

Coping with setbacks

Everyone has setbacks. Life is like that! The trick is to find ways to cope with them. When they do occur, remember that it happens to everyone. It does not mean that you have failed, so it is important not to give yourself a hard time. If you do start to think things like 'I'm a failure', you can use the 'Demand evidence' section of this guide to challenge your thoughts.

When you have a setback, try to remember that you are not back to square one. It can be easy to forget about all the progress you have already made. Try to use it as a learning experience. We often learn more from things when they don't go quite right compared to when they go smoothly. Take some time to reflect on what has happened. Try to understand why it has happened and what you can learn from it. You may be able to find a pattern to what is going on.

You may be able to tell when a setback is likely to happen. Start to learn what your warning signs might be:

- Lots of things going on in your life
- Feeling like everything is too much
- Changes in your mood: feeling low, angry, upset, wound up etc
- Changes in your thinking: negative thinking, unhelpful thinking styles, giving yourself a hard time
- Getting more irritable: having arguments with others
- Changes in your body: feeling more tired, headaches, aching muscles
- Changes in what you do: doing fewer enjoyable things, avoiding people and places, being less active

Once you can see your warning signs, you can do something to deal with them. This can stop things from getting worse. You could even come up with your own survival guide with a plan to deal with each warning sign.

Finally – don't give up! Overcoming low mood and depression takes time and practice. It may take a while to notice some improvements. It is worth taking some time each month to look at the progress you have made.

Other sources of help

Books

- **Anxiety and Depression: A Practical Guide to Recovery**
by R Priest
- **Dealing with Depression**
by K Nairne and G Smith
- **Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison**
by D Rowe
- **Depressive Illness: The Curse of the Strong**
by Dr. T Cantopher
- **Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy**
by D Burns
- **Mind Over Mood**
by C Padesky
- **Overcoming Depression**
by P Gilbert
- **Overcoming Depression and Low Mood: A Five Areas Approach**
by Dr. C Williams
- **59 Seconds: Think a Little, Change a Lot**
by R Wiseman

You can borrow self-help books about low mood and depression from your local library.

Helplines

- **The Samaritans**
They provide confidential emotional support for people who are having feelings of distress, despair or suicidal thoughts.
Helpline: 116 123
(24 hour helpline)
- **Saneline**
Helpline: 0300 304 7000
(6pm to 11pm daily)

Websites

www.getselfhelp.co.uk

This website offers free Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) self-help information, resources and includes therapy worksheets.

www.llttf.com

The 'Living Life to the Full' website is a free, online life skills course. It covers a range of skills to help deal with everyday stresses.

www.mhim.org.uk

This is the 'Mental Health in Manchester' website. It has information about mental health issues and there are details of local services. It also includes information in a range of languages, and you can download the full range of self-help guides from this website.

buzzmanchester.co.uk

buzz Manchester Health & Wellbeing Service are experts in health improvement and self-care offering one to one support and training for a range of health and wellbeing issues.

www.cci.health.wa.gov.au

This website features free online self-help modules and resources.

ecouch.anu.edu.au

E-couch is a free interactive self-help program. It covers a range of topics. These include modules for depression, anxiety and worry.

moodgym.anu.edu.au

Moodgym is a free online self-help program. It covers a range of skills to help prevent and deal with depression.

www.rcpsych.ac.uk

This is the 'Royal College of Psychiatrists' website. It is an online mental health resource.