



# What is Depression?

# Depression

## About this leaflet

- This leaflet will help you understand what depression is
- It will help you identify symptoms of depression
- Provide you with strategies for breaking the cycle of depression using a behaviour activation technique

## What is Depression and low mood?

Depression and low mood can happen to anyone at any point in their life. Some people will experience depression once in their lifetime and others may experience it multiple times.

Depression and low mood can be triggered by several social and environmental changes. For example changing job, money worries and family difficulties. As a result of these difficulties one may find that they are having more negative thoughts about themselves and others around them.

## Cycle of depression

When we are depressed, we experience a cycle of unhelpful thoughts, emotions, physical symptoms, and behaviour. Our feelings and symptoms of depression may be triggered by an unpleasant situation or event that we would have experienced, but sometimes there may not be a trigger.

Below are some of the symptoms that we might notice when we are feeling depressed:

## Thoughts

When we are feeling depressed, we are more likely to experience negative thoughts. The negative thoughts can often be about ourselves. They can sometimes be about others or can be about situations. We can perceive situations to be worse than they are. Below are examples of thoughts:

- 'I feel hopeless'
- 'The situation is not going to change'
- 'No one wants to talk to me'
- 'I am not good at anything'
- 'Every day feels the same'

## Emotions

Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. We can experience a bleak outlook that nothing will ever get better and there is nothing can be done to improve a situation. Below are examples of feelings we experience when we are depressed:

- 'Low mood'
- 'Apathy'
- 'Hopelessness'
- 'Bored'
- 'Failure'

## Physical

Below are examples of physical symptoms that we can experience when we are depressed.

'Tiredness'

'Disrupted sleep or oversleeping'

'Problems with appetite'

'Poor concentration'

'Brain fog'

### Behavioural

When we fall into a cycle of depression we can start to use coping strategies which are unhelpful and which can feed into the vicious cycle of depression. Below are examples of behaviours we start to adopt, which are unhelpful

'Withdrawing from others'.

'Avoidance of daily activities'

'Using alcohol or other substances to cope'

'Self-neglect'

'Procrastination'

'Not having a meaningful routine'

'Snapping at others'

## Breaking the cycle through behavioural activation by developing a routine using 'Behavioural Activation'

One of the ways you can break the cycle of depression is to start to develop a helpful daily routine, by introducing daily activities that give you a sense of meaning. Activities that give us a sense of meaning are those that are enjoyable and give us a sense of achievement.

### Step 1 – Identify

You can identify what gives you a sense of meaning by thinking of hobbies and activities that give you a sense of meaning. Activities that give us a sense of meaning can either be routine, pleasurable or necessary, below is a description of the types of activity.

**Routine** – Some of the things that we avoid when we are depressed are routine activities such as cooking, cleaning the house, food shopping etc. Bedtime and sleep routines can also be disrupted.

**Pleasurable** – When depressed, we often stop doing the things that we previously would have enjoyed such as seeing friends, exercising, and engaging in hobbies. These are the things which can boost the mood and make us feel well.

**Necessary** – Necessary activities are important such as paying the bills or facing difficult situations. Avoidance of these things may lead to negative consequences.

### Step 2 – list

When you identify activities that give you a sense of meaning, list those activities from easiest to most difficult. This step is important because it can help you develop a graded approach to start introducing activity to your daily schedule.

➤ Easy

➤ Medium

➤ Hard

### Step 3 – Plan

The final step is to plan and do the activities identified in your list, starting from easiest to most difficult. It is important to start with the easy activities first because when we develop a gradual approach, we are more likely to work and achieve our goals, whereas if we take an inconsistent approach or try and do the difficult activities first, we are less likely to commit to the activities.

Below is an activity schedule that can help you plan daily activities. As you start to introduce and do activities, think about how it makes you feel. Notice any changes.

Activity Schedule							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							

<b>Afternoon</b>							
<b>Evening</b>							

### Step 4 – Reflect

How did you feel when you started doing new activity?

Did you notice any changes?

What will be next on your list?

Notice the progress you have made and the improvement in how you feel. Remember to reward yourself when you achieve your goals.

### Getting further help

If depression continues to affect you even after you have made changes and used the techniques, please consider the options below:

**Speak to GP**

**Visit [contact us page on MyIPRSHealth](#)**