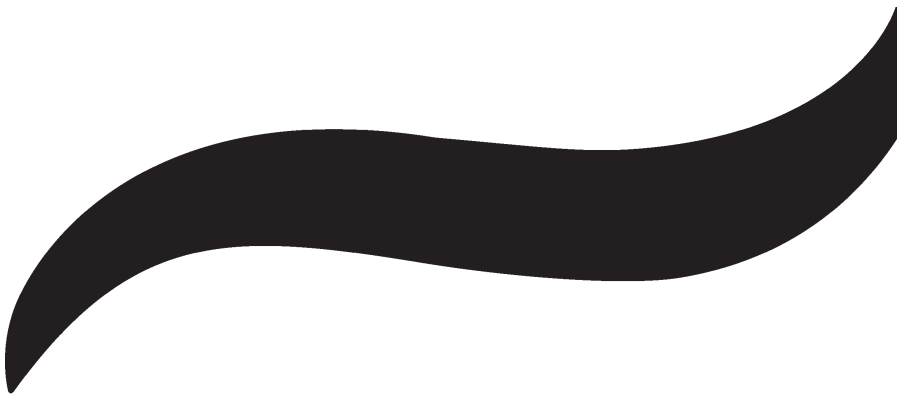


Depression

Information for clients



WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Most people feel low, “down in the dumps” and lacking in energy at times. However, if this feeling lasts for most of the day for more than two weeks, this could be depression. When this happens, it can be difficult to do things you used to manage.

How you might feel if you are depressed:

- ❖ Tearful
- ❖ Sad, guilty, numb, in despair
- ❖ Unable to cry
- ❖ Irritable
- ❖ Lonely
- ❖ Unmotivated

What you might notice happening in your body:

- ❖ It might be hard to concentrate
- ❖ You might be forgetful
- ❖ Your appetite might increase or decrease
- ❖ You might find it hard to get enough sleep
- ❖ You might find that you are sleeping much more than usual
- ❖ You might find that you do not have much energy

What you might think:

- ❖ You might have critical thoughts about yourself.
(For example, “I am a waste of space”)
- ❖ You might make negative thoughts about the future.
(For example, “Things are never going to get better”)
- ❖ You might think things are hopeless
- ❖ You might have suicidal thoughts or thoughts about harming yourself

How you might act:

- ❖ You might spend a lot of time by yourself
- ❖ You might avoid doing things that you need to do or previously enjoyed doing
- ❖ You might spend a lot of time in bed
- ❖ You might find it difficult to do quite simple things

If a lot of these seem familiar, it may be that you have symptoms of depression or low mood. Depression is really common. One in five adults will experience these symptoms of depression at some point in their lives. It is the most common reason for people to visit their GP.

It is important to know that people will react to depression in different ways. Not everyone with depression will suffer all of these symptoms.

It is normal to feel these symptoms after distressing events. This could be the loss of someone close to you or a relationship breakdown. When events like these take place, it is helpful to talk over how you are feeling with a person you trust. If you are finding it difficult to cope, you should also visit your GP.

How can this leaflet help me?

When people are depressed, it is very common to feel bleak about things getting better. There are things you can do to improve how you are feeling. This booklet will give you a bit of information about why people get depressed. It will explain some of the common symptoms of depression and some steps you can take to feel better. This booklet will also give you information about who to get in touch with if you need more help.

One of the symptoms of depression is poor concentration. Don't worry if you find it difficult to read this booklet. Try to read a small section at a time.

WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME DEPRESSED?

There is no single reason why people become depressed. It can be due to many reasons. These are different for each person.

Biological reasons may play a part. You may be more likely to suffer if a family member has had depression. This does not mean that you will develop it. It means you may be more vulnerable to depression.

Our early experiences can have an affect on the chances of us developing depression. You may become depressed if you have had difficult experiences in your early life.

Depression can also be caused by some brain chemicals being less active than they should be. This can affect sleep, appetite, sexual drive and mood.

Difficult life events can make people stressed and this can lead to depression.

Stressful situations can be:

- ❖ Unemployment
- ❖ Relationship breakdowns
- ❖ Illness
- ❖ Financial difficulties

One in ten women will have depression after having a baby. This is called post-natal depression (you can find details for further help at the back of this booklet).

Another type of depression is bipolar disorder (also known as manic depression). People with bipolar disorder have periods of time where they feel really low and other periods where they feel very excited, confident and often act in an uncontrolled way. (You can find details for further help for manic depression at the back of this booklet).

Depression can develop out of the blue with no reason as to why you are feeling depressed. There are things you can do to improve how you are feeling despite what has caused the depression.

THE VICIOUS CYCLE OF DEPRESSION

Our thoughts, bodily symptoms, mood and behaviour all affect one another. They can work together to become a vicious cycle.

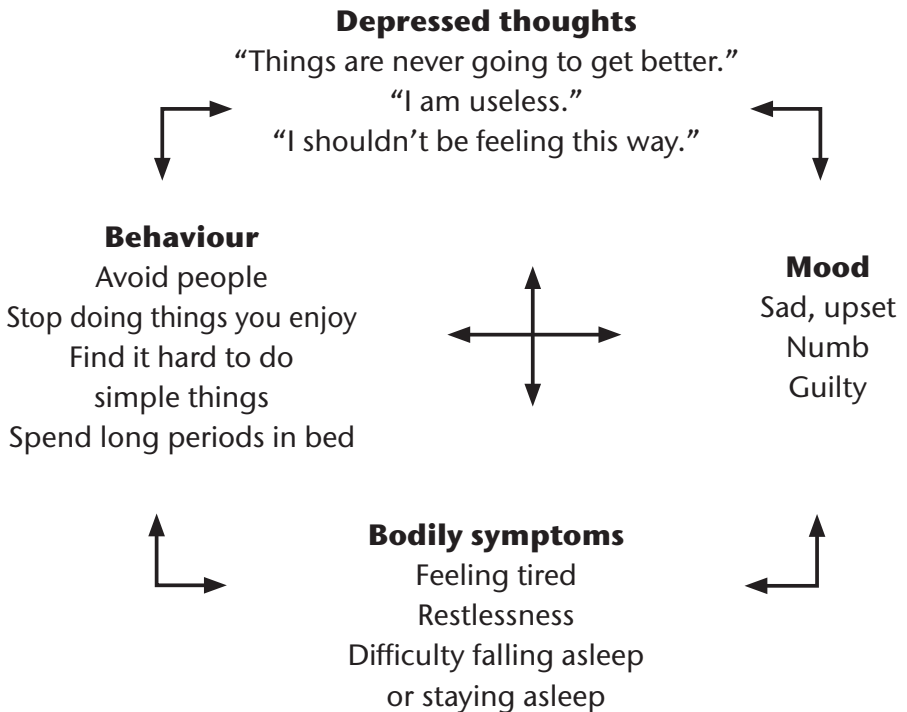
Here is an example of a vicious cycle below.

The vicious cycle of depression

Outside world

- ❖ Frustrating events/situations
- ❖ Practical problems, for example, financial difficulties
- ❖ Change in circumstances
- ❖ Stress
- ❖ Loss

Leads to...



BREAKING THE VICIOUS CYCLE — THINGS TO DO TO MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER

The good news is that there are lots of things that you can do to break the vicious cycle.

1. Physical Exercise

When you exercise, your body actually produces natural anti-depressants, so exercise can be a really helpful way to improve your mood. If you are depressed, you may experience reduced energy levels and lower motivation, but physical exercise can actually help you to feel less tired.

Try to do 20 minutes of exercise at least three times a week. You could gradually build up the intensity or length of time that you exercise for. Spend some time thinking about what type of exercise you might enjoy doing. It could be something you have enjoyed in the past or something you have always wanted to try.

Make a note of some types of physical activity that you think you might enjoy:

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2. Get the balance right

You might find it difficult to carry out some of your everyday tasks, spend time with others and do things you enjoy when you are depressed. There is lots of evidence to suggest that doing activities that give you a sense of achievement, closeness to others and pleasure can help you to feel better.

Here are some examples of these types of activities:

Achievement:

- Finishing a pile of ironing
- Completing a puzzle or jigsaw
- Sorting through bills and letters you have been putting off

Pleasure:

- Having a nice hot bath
- Going to the cinema
- Listening to a favourite CD

Closeness to others:

- Calling a friend for a chat
- Visiting relatives
- Going to a social group or club

What things could you plan to do?

Achievement	Pleasure	Closeness to others

3. Set achievable goals

Because depression can sometimes cause low motivation, reduced energy levels and poor concentration, some tasks that you used to be able to manage, can feel overwhelming. To help you achieve these, it can be helpful to break big tasks into smaller, more manageable steps. So rather than telling yourself to do all of the housework, try to break it down into smaller steps, for instance, clean the kitchen worktops, put a load of washing on, tidy the bedroom,

- ❖ Try to make a list of things that you would like to do or that you have been avoiding
- ❖ Choose the easiest or most important one
- ❖ Write a series of steps to tackle the situation, starting with the easiest and ending with the hardest
- ❖ Work your way through the steps, if one is too hard; try going back one step or breaking the step down
- ❖ If you have a set-back, don't be put off. Try again soon or make the step a bit easier
- ❖ Congratulate and reward yourself when you have done well

By breaking tasks down, they are more manageable, you are more likely to achieve them and then feel good for having done so.

A good rule to follow is to do what you have planned despite how you feel. Afterwards, go and ask yourself "how do I feel? Do I feel better, worse or the same as before?"

If the answer is worse, then you could try something else that you have put on your list.

4. Talk to others

Telling someone who you trust how you are feeling can be really helpful. You might be surprised to find out that others have felt in a similar way before and they may be able to provide advice and support.

It can be helpful just to have someone listen to how you are feeling and help you think things through. You might find it helpful to give them this booklet to read to help them understand how you might be feeling.

5. Take care of yourself

It may be tempting to drink alcohol, misuse medication or take illegal drugs to help you cope and provide some short-term relief, but in the long term this can result in psychological and health problems.

Diet can have an effect on mood. Foods high in sugar and fat can provide a short burst of energy but can cause irritability and mood swings.

Caffeine can give us a boost when we are feeling tired, but the effects can last for six hours and so try to avoid caffeine in the late afternoon and evening. Caffeine in excess can also cause some feelings of anxiety and agitation.

6. Challenging negative thinking

When we are depressed, we often have negative thoughts about:

Ourselves:

"I can't cope with this."

"I am useless; I shouldn't be feeling this way."

About others:

"No-one likes me."

"Everyone copes so much better than me."

The world:

"Life is so unfair."

"The world is a cruel place."

And the future:

"Things are just going to get worse and worse."

"I will fail at that, there is no point in trying."

Our thoughts are **opinions**, they are not **facts**. Sometimes they can be inaccurate and unhelpful, particularly when we are depressed and feeling low.

A fact is, *"I had a meeting at work today."*

An opinion is, *"Everyone thought what I said in the meeting was really stupid."*

Try to identify when you have one of these negative, unhelpful thoughts. Don't just accept these thoughts as being true. Try to think of why these thoughts may not be true. Depression means that we often look at things from a negative viewpoint. Try to take a step back and look at things in a more balanced way and challenge those negative thoughts.

Situation	Thought	Balanced perspective
Argument with a family member.	"I am such a horrible person why can't I just get along with my family?"	"I have argued with my brother before and we always make up. Arguments in families happen all the time."
An old friend walks past me in the street and doesn't wave.'	"I bet she didn't say hello because she doesn't like me. She probably thinks I am boring and stupid."	"She looked like she was busy thinking about something and probably didn't see me. I have no reason to believe that she doesn't like me we always got on quite well."

Situation	Thought	Balanced perspective

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE THERE FOR DEPRESSION?

The first step for depression is normally visiting your GP. Your GP may recommend you to take anti-depressant medication or to receive a talking therapy or both of these.

Talking therapies

Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) is a talking therapy that is commonly used to treat depression. During CBT, patients identify and challenge unhelpful thoughts and are supported to increase activities that they find rewarding and enjoyable to improve their mood.

Antidepressants

You may be prescribed anti-depressants by your GP or another health professional to help you with your depression. These have been shown to be helpful for helping people experiencing depression.

Anti-depressants affect the chemicals in your brain and help reduce your depressive symptoms. They are not addictive. Anti-depressant medication usually takes 2-4 weeks to start working. They will not start working straight away and it is important to keep taking these as long as your doctor advises you to. Your doctor will be able to tell you about any possible side effects of anti-depressants. It is also important to talk to your doctor before taking any other medication, drugs or alcohol with your anti-depressants.

It is important to talk to your doctor before stopping or making any changes to your medication, he or she can help you to make a plan do this.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Elament website: www.elament.org.uk

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)
www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) www.samaritans.org
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) www.nhs24.com
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),
0800 019 2211 (National),
www.healthyworkinglives.com
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) www.childline.org.uk
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 www.nhsinform.co.uk
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22
www.children1st.org.uk/parentline
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234

WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a new programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Stress Control Classes in communities
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx

HEALTHY READING

All public libraries have a healthy reading section making it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. All libraries across Lanarkshire have resources to help us get the most from life such as living life to the full, sleeping better and becoming more confident or overcoming and coping with mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, dementia and panic. There are also resources for all ages including supporting young people, adults and older people as well as items on positive parenting. Simply pop into your local library.

GUIDED SUPPORT:

Stress Control Classes

Stress Control classes will help develop skills and techniques to manage common issues caused by modern day living such as stress, anxiety or low confidence.

The classes are delivered in local community facilities and consist of six sessions lasting 90 minutes each. We will not need to speak about our issues during the class. Just sit back and listen about helpful stress control techniques. Feel free to bring someone along with you for support. To find your nearest class and book a place, call **0300 303 0447**.

Living Life to the Full - Online Course

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at **www.lltff.com** and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit **www.aod.lltffionline.co.uk**

Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).

NHS Lanarkshire - for local services and the latest health news visit www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk
NHS Lanarkshire General
Enquiry Line: 0300 3030 243

NHS inform - The national health information service for Scotland.
www.nhsinform.co.uk
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 3030 243 or e-mail info2@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk



www.patientopinion.org.uk

Pub. date:	September 2015
Review date:	September 2017
Issue No:	01
Produced by:	MMMHP