

LIFT YOUR LOW MOOD



IS THIS WORKBOOK FOR YOU?

Low mood can be caused by many things such as biological factors or life events. Sometimes it can be difficult to pinpoint a reason for why you're feeling this way.

If your low mood is due to a specific problem that you're finding hard to solve, for example financial issues like debt, then it may be worth considering whether support with these areas may be beneficial.



WELCOME!

Well done, you've taken your first step to improve your low mood.

This workbook is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), an evidence-based psychological therapy. It focuses on the here-and-now and helps people who are down, lack energy and have low motivation to understand the way they're feeling and make changes to get back to their old self.

The workbook will guide you through a technique called Behavioural Activation that has helped many people who have experienced low mood.

It's designed to be worked through with the support of a mental health professional specifically trained to help you get the most out of this technique. Across England this will often be a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) working within an Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service.

You may have come across this workbook on your own, or it may have been suggested by a mental health professional supporting you to work through it. Either way, you're in control of how you decide to use it.

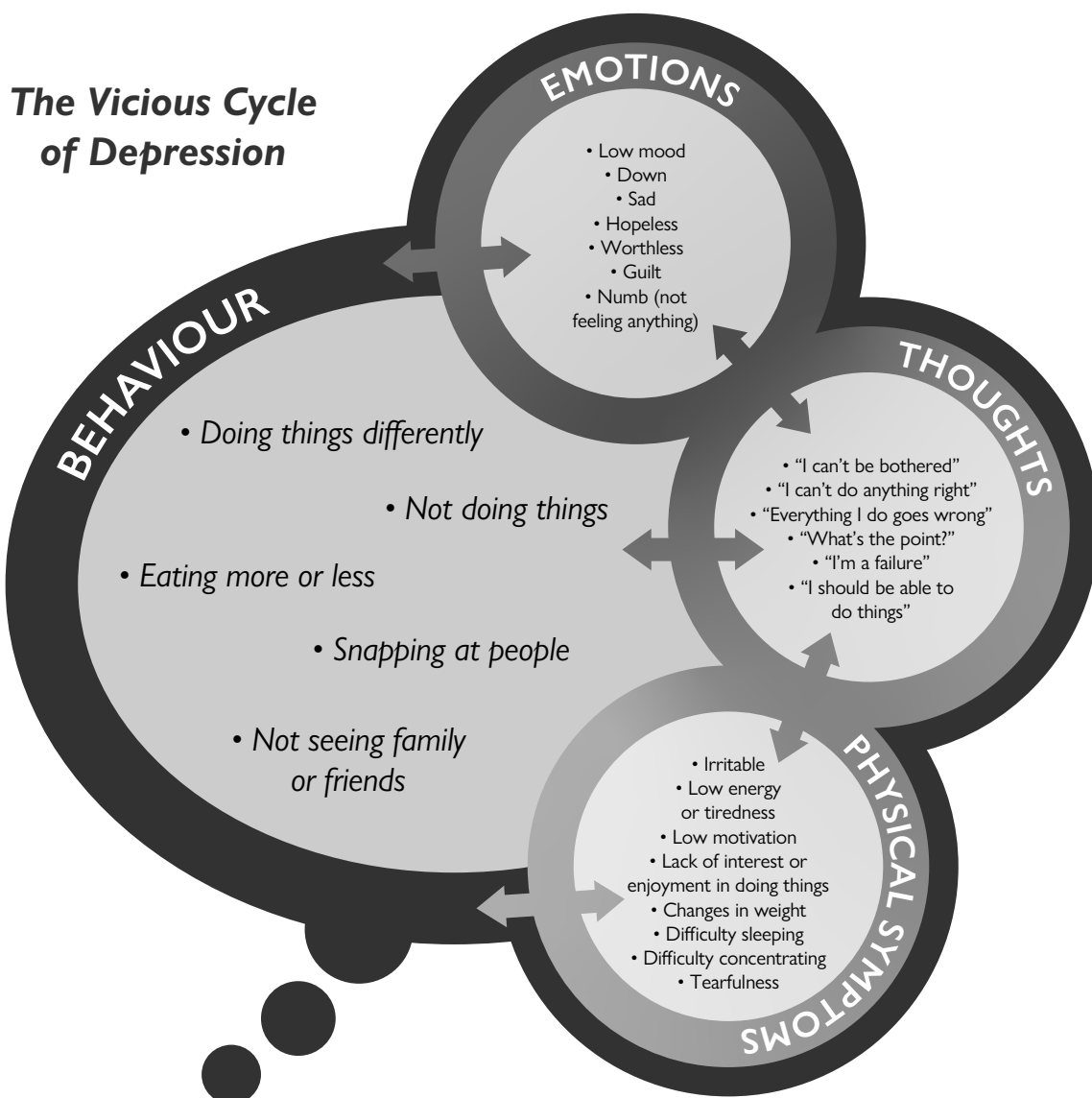


WHAT DOES LOW MOOD LOOK LIKE?

When our mood is low, we may notice things such as not doing as much as we used to, tiredness, poor concentration, unhelpful thoughts and maybe eating more or less than usual. Experiencing things like this is perfectly normal when feeling down.

We all feel down from time to time!

However, when experienced for more than two weeks and we notice this beginning to impact our lives then it may be **'depression'** setting in. Each of the things we're struggling with can begin to have a negative effect on others, leading to a 'vicious cycle of depression'.



Each of these areas has a knock-on effect on the others. This can lead to people becoming stuck in the vicious cycle.

Everyone's experience of low mood is different. But if you think you may be stuck in the vicious cycle this workbook can help.

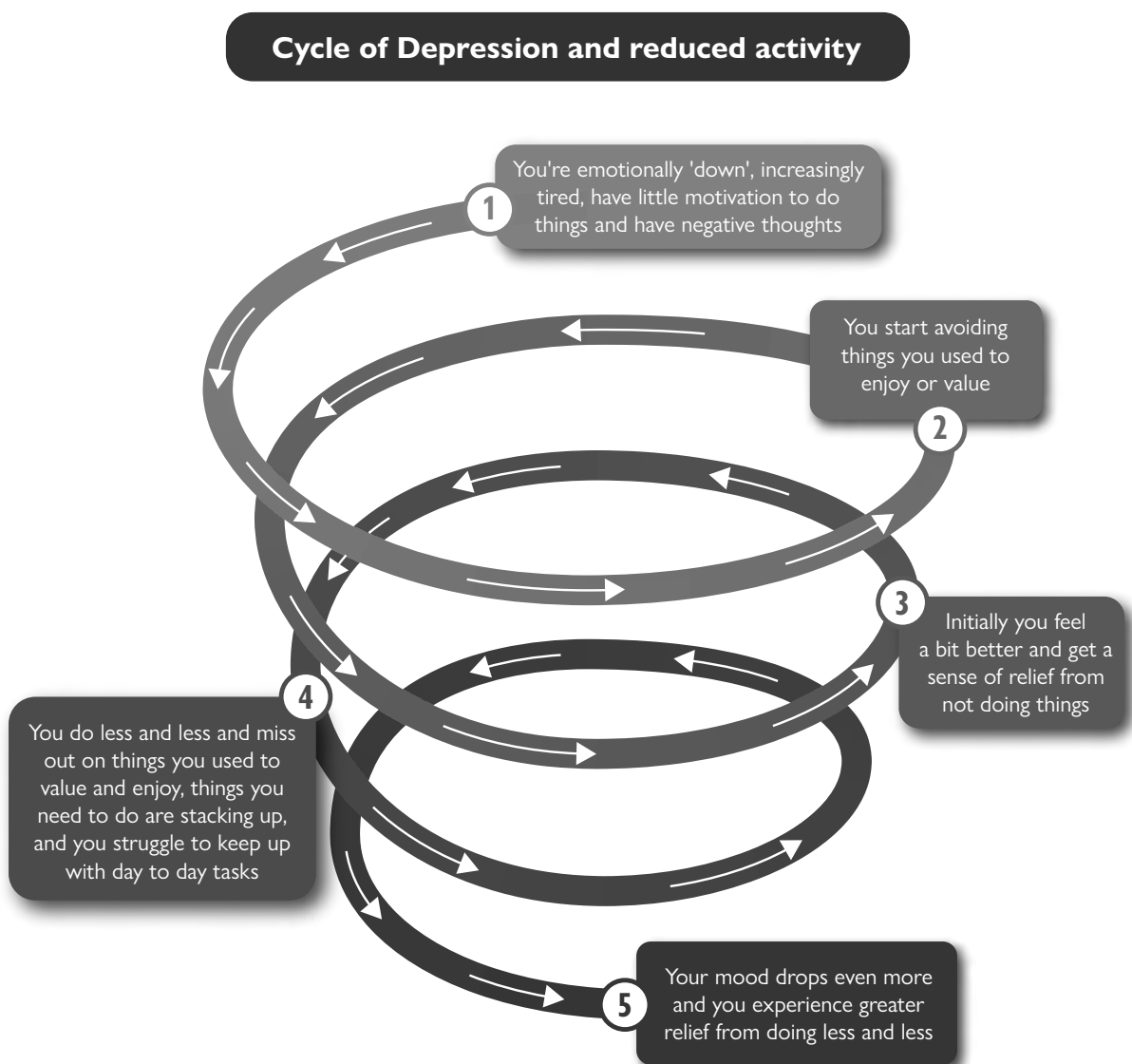


UNDERSTANDING AVOIDANCE WITH DEPRESSION

When low in mood and experiencing a lack of energy and interest in doing things, it can be common to avoid things you used to enjoy or value. This can lead to a sense of relief. By doing less you feel less tired and irritated, and you don't feel motivated to do them anyhow.

Whilst it's understandable to avoid doing things, the sense of relief it can bring is unhelpful.

Soon, however, our world begins to close in and we find ourselves not doing things we enjoyed, valued or indeed need to do. That's when our mood begins to drop and can stay low, leading us to become stuck in the vicious cycle of depression.

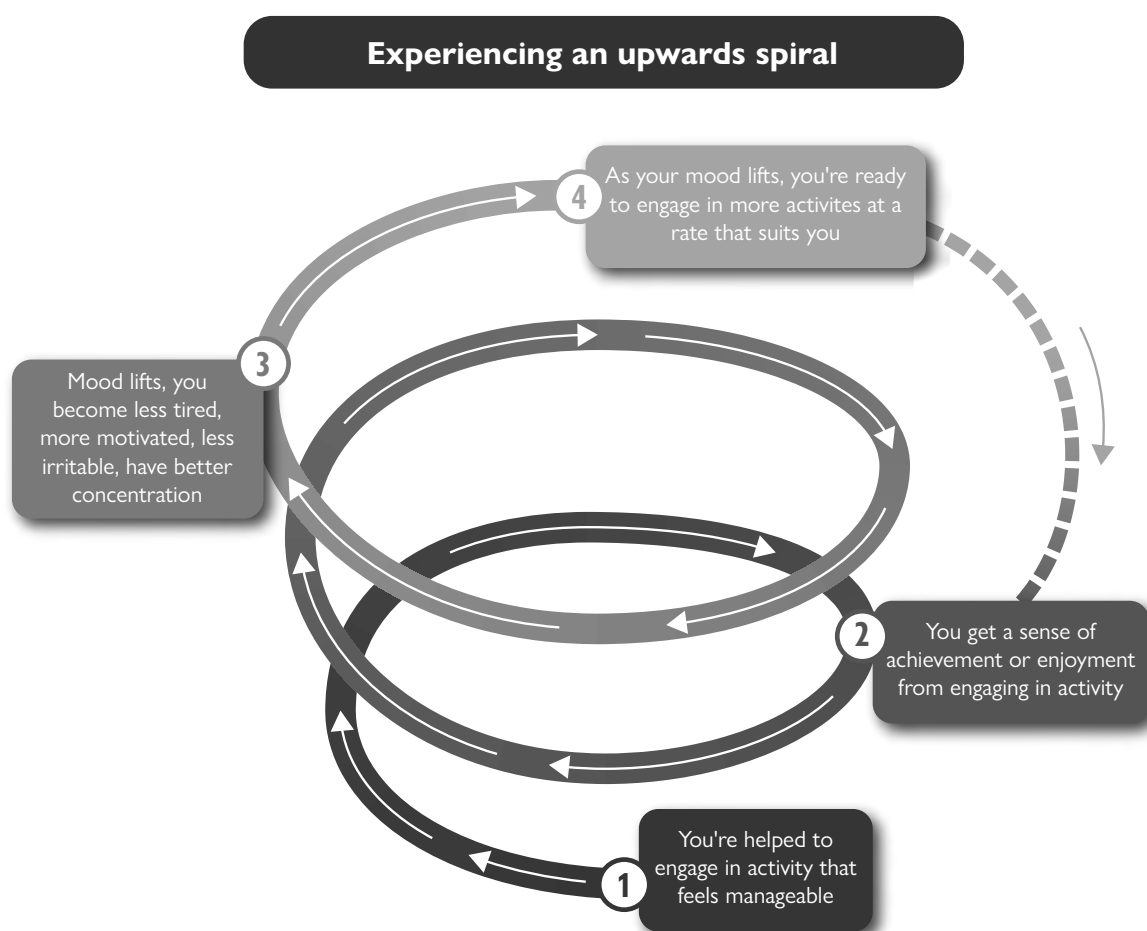


If this sounds familiar, don't beat yourself up for falling into this cycle.



HELPING TO BREAK OUT OF DEPRESSION: GETTING ACTIVE

Now we've considered how depression can be maintained, let's explore how the vicious cycle can be broken out of through an approach called Behavioural Activation. Behavioural Activation does what it says on the tin. It breaks the vicious cycle by tackling the reduced activity and avoidance that can maintain low mood. As areas in the cycle are linked, a positive change in **behaviour** can have a positive influence on the other areas and improve your **mood**.



Going at a pace that suits you and engaging in activities that feel manageable provides you with an opportunity to improve your mood. Over time, you'll get back to doing things you used to, those you enjoy or value, were part of your daily routine or need to do. Or maybe you will want to start new things you're interested in.

Behavioural Activation isn't about throwing yourself back into everything at once. Starting with easier activities and doing little and often leads to the best results. If Behavioural Activation sounds interesting, why not read Sam's story and give it a go.



Remember: Support may be available from mental health professionals to help you use this workbook.



SAM'S STORY

I hadn't been feeling myself for a few months. The company I work for was doing well and whilst I should be pleased about this, it meant my workload increased. I was working longer hours and there was less time to do things after work and I was too tired after a long day anyway.

Rather than doing things I used to enjoy in the evenings, such as playing tennis, I found myself just watching TV on my own, then going to bed early. I was still meeting my friends at the weekend however, as they would arrange it so it wasn't too much effort.

At first, I noticed small changes, such as my mood lowering, becoming more tired and eating a lot of snacks. I was also struggling to concentrate at work and meet the demands placed on me, and my boss started to notice. Over time, however, things quickly spiraled downwards, my mood got lower and lower, and even at the weekends I was now doing less and less. Although my friends tried to keep including me with going to play tennis and meeting up, I simply didn't want to see anyone. Everything seemed too much, I felt I needed more rest and thought "why would they want me there anyhow, I'm no fun to be around". I even couldn't be bothered getting showered or changing my clothes to go out and see people. It felt much easier if I simply didn't bother and soon I stopped replying to their messages and felt alone.

All this continued for several months. As my mood got lower and lower, I was doing less and less. I really started to worry when I found myself struggling to wash my clothes and get shopping and my boss Ebony had a word with me about the quality of my work. Ebony could see that I was now really low and mentioned the Good to Talk IAPT service that had helped other workers she managed before. Although I really didn't want to and doubted it would work, I realised I needed help and Ebony supported me to make a referral online. I soon heard back, with an appointment made for the next week. I was really pleased as they said the appointment could be over the telephone.

As you work through this workbook, you'll be able to see how Sam used Behavioural Activation. This can help if you're using it on your own or get stuck between support sessions.



SETTING GOALS

Before you start using Behavioural Activation, it can help to set some goals you'd like to work towards and achieve by the time you complete the workbook.

When setting goals, it's important to keep the following in mind:

Be *Specific*



It can be common to set general goals such as "To feel better" or "To feel like myself again". However, it can be difficult to know when you've achieved this goal. Instead, it can be more helpful to think about how you'd know if you were feeling like yourself again. What would this look like? For example, "Play tennis with my friends every week".

Be *Realistic*



Set yourself *Short Term goals* you think can be achieved in the next few weeks. These goals may feel just out of reach now, but doable in the next few weeks or so. Then work towards these, moving on to Medium and Long term goals in time, as they start to feel more achievable. Medium and long term goals give you something to work towards, with short term goals being a stepping stone along the way.

Be *Positive*



It can be tempting to set goals in terms of stopping or doing less of something. For example, "Stop watching as much TV". However, it can be more helpful to set goals in a positive way, as working towards something is often more motivating. The above could be changed to "To wash my clothes at least every four days".

Remember: Setting goals can appear challenging, especially when we're low and things seem more difficult. Just take your time and think about a few key things you'd like to be different to how they are now. When rating if you can currently achieve your short-term goals, if you find yourself thinking you can't do them right now try not to be disheartened. These goals are something to work towards over time.





MY GOALS WORKSHEET

GOAL 1	TODAY'S DATE: _____						
	I CAN DO THIS NOW (CIRCLE A NUMBER)						
	0 <small>NOT AT ALL</small>	1	2 <small>SOMETIMES</small>	3	4 <small>OFTEN</small>	5	6 <small>ANYTIME</small>
GOAL 2	TODAY'S DATE: _____						
	I CAN DO THIS NOW (CIRCLE A NUMBER)						
	0 <small>NOT AT ALL</small>	1	2 <small>SOMETIMES</small>	3	4 <small>OFTEN</small>	5	6 <small>ANYTIME</small>
GOAL 3	TODAY'S DATE: _____						
	I CAN DO THIS NOW (CIRCLE A NUMBER)						
	0 <small>NOT AT ALL</small>	1	2 <small>SOMETIMES</small>	3	4 <small>OFTEN</small>	5	6 <small>ANYTIME</small>
GOAL 4	TODAY'S DATE: _____						
	I CAN DO THIS NOW (CIRCLE A NUMBER)						
	0 <small>NOT AT ALL</small>	1	2 <small>SOMETIMES</small>	3	4 <small>OFTEN</small>	5	6 <small>ANYTIME</small>
GOAL 5	TODAY'S DATE: _____						
	I CAN DO THIS NOW (CIRCLE A NUMBER)						
	0 <small>NOT AT ALL</small>	1	2 <small>SOMETIMES</small>	3	4 <small>OFTEN</small>	5	6 <small>ANYTIME</small>

UNDERSTANDING YOUR VICIOUS CYCLE OF DEPRESSION

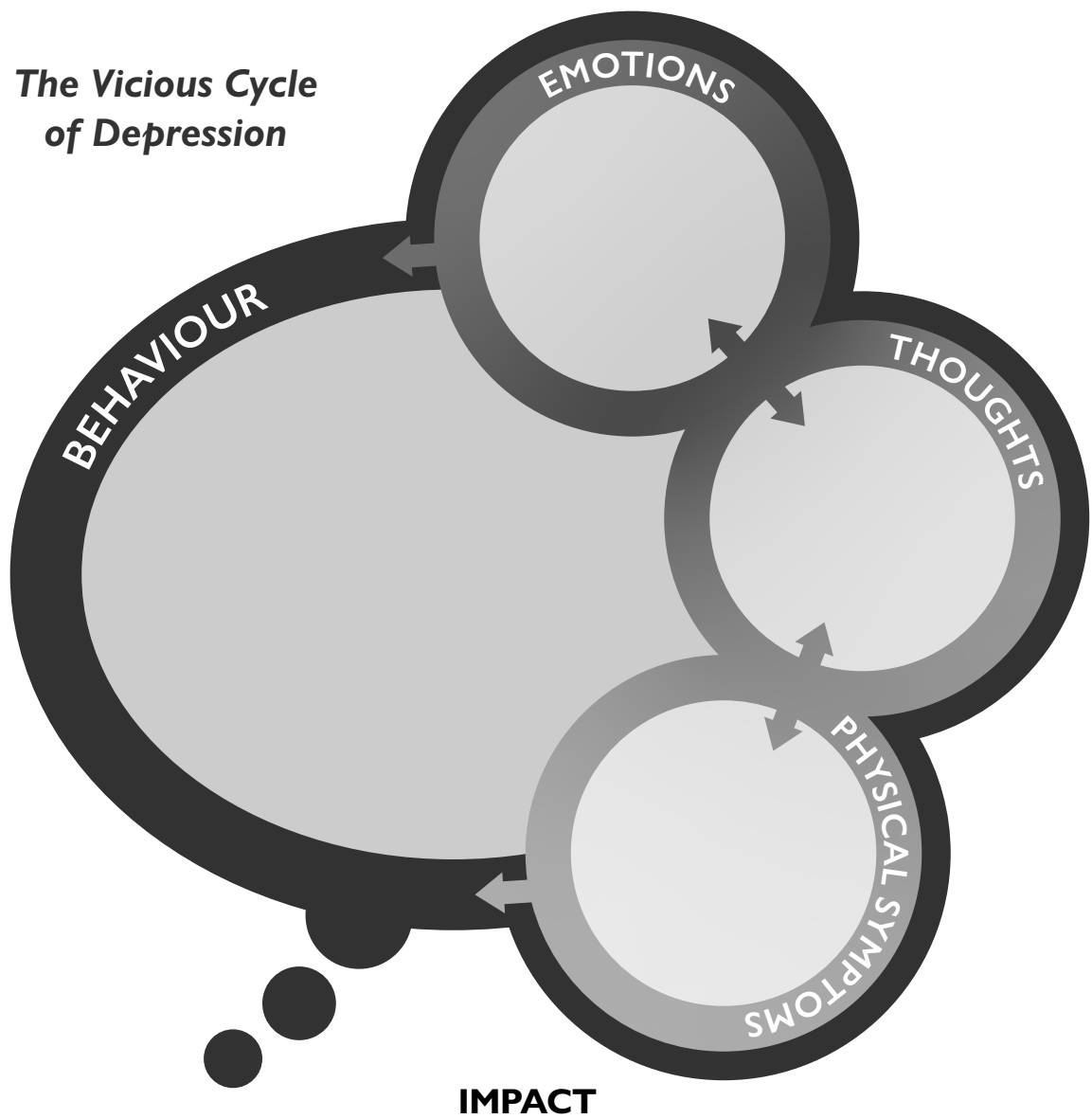
You might have already noticed the impact that what you're doing when feeling low has on your thoughts and how you feel physically.

Now, let's help you see how these link together in your own vicious cycle of depression.

MY SITUATION

.....

The Vicious Cycle of Depression



.....

Remember: If you're being supported with this workbook, your mental health practitioner can help you think about your vicious cycle if you're struggling.



LET'S MAKE A START TO GET ON TOP OF YOUR LOW MOOD

This may feel daunting, but remember, go at your own pace. Sometimes progress will be slower than you'd like, or at times you may experience setbacks. This is common – when any of us make changes, we can experience bumps along the way.

To help break your vicious cycle of low mood, Behavioural Activation will take you through six steps to help you improve your mood.

STEP 1: IF HELPFUL, UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY DOING

STEP 2: IDENTIFY ACTIVITIES YOU'VE STOPPED DOING, REDUCED, OR WOULD LIKE TO DO

STEP 3: ORGANISE ACTIVITIES BY HOW DIFFICULT THEY WOULD BE TO DO NOW

STEP 4: PLAN ACTIVITIES BACK INTO YOUR WEEK

STEP 5: GIVE IT A GO

STEP 6: MAINTAIN PROGRESS

Remember:

If you're being supported, make sure you discuss difficulties if you experience them.



STEP 1: UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE CURRENTLY DOING

To make changes to your behaviour, it may be helpful to first find out what you're currently doing. This will help you identify activities you've stopped doing or reduced and see where there may be time in your week to add some activities back into your life. You may also find this helps you notice links between what you're doing and your mood.

However, if you already have a good idea of the activities you've stopped doing and what your week currently looks like, you may consider moving to STEP 2. Remember you're in control!



If you think it would be helpful, use the blank *Baseline Diary* to record what you're **currently doing** during the week. There are boxes for morning, afternoon and evening, so try to record things you do in each of these, being as specific as possible. Using the three 'W's can help add detail.

“What” were you doing e.g. watching TV

“Where” you were doing it: e.g. in the lounge

“Who” were you with: e.g. on my own

At the end of each day, there is a Comments Box. You may find it helpful to complete this looking back over your day. At the end of the week, you, and anyone supporting you, may find it helpful to recognise any relationship between what you're doing and your mood, thoughts and physical sensations.

You may notice your week doesn't have many activities at the moment or you're mainly doing the same things each day. This is common with low mood. But remember, this is just the starting point of how things are now and completing the diary will help you think about changes you can make to improve your low mood.





STEP 1: YOUR BASELINE DIARY

My Starting Point		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
		INSERT DAY HERE	INSERT DAY HERE	INSERT DAY HERE
Morning	What			
	Where			
	Who			
	What			
	Where			
	Who			
Afternoon	What			
	Where			
	Who			
	What			
	Where			
	Who			
Evening	What			
	Where			
	Who			
	What			
	Where			
	Who			
How did your day go and make you feel?				

Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
INSERT DAY HERE	INSERT DAY HERE	INSERT DAY HERE	INSERT DAY HERE

HELPFUL TIPS

Before moving on to Step 2, it can be useful to read some Helpful Tips. These have been developed by many people that have used this approach before.

Give it your best shot

It's all anyone can ask, including all you can ask of yourself.

Pace yourself as your activity begins to increase

Wanting to do more is a great sign that things are improving. However, if you've been doing less for a while, or find yourself doing new activities, it's important to ensure you take a little time out as you build the activities up.

People learn at different rates

You'll learn a lot using this workbook but we know everyone learns at different rates. So, work in a way that best suits your own learning style.

Involve family and friends

Family and friends can be a great source of help and support, even if they simply provide a different way to look at things or support problem solving.

Don't be disheartened when you have bad days

We all have bad days from time to time, and you may experience these when using this approach. But remember, sometimes we learn more when we have had bad rather than good days.

Avoid Boom and Bust

Working through this workbook, you should go at a rate best suited to you. However, trying to do too much at once can be unhelpful and lead us to feel worse. Often slow and steady works best.

Talk to other people you trust or think can help

Sometimes just talking to others that may have been through challenges you are facing can really help.

STEP 2: IDENTIFYING ACTIVITIES

It's time to start thinking about what you may have stopped doing or are doing less since you've been feeling low. You may also want to think about things you'd like to start doing for the first time.

When identifying activities, think about three main areas: **Routine**, **Necessary** and **Pleasurable**.

ROUTINE

These are things you do regularly, often everyday things that help you feel comfortable. They can include things such as cooking, cleaning, shopping for food, or self-care.

NECESSARY

These are important and if not done can lead to negative consequences. These may also be less regular than routine activities. Examples include dealing with challenging situations, paying bills or getting a prescription for a medical condition.

PLEASURABLE

These bring pleasure and can be things you value doing. They could be things you enjoyed before your low mood, but could also be new things you'd like to try for the first time. What you find pleasurable will be individual to you, but examples might include socialising, hobbies or helping at your local food bank.

Each type of activity provides us with something different, and therefore it's important to have a balance in our lives. **Routine** activities provide structure, **Necessary** activities can lead to negative consequences if not done and **Pleasurable** activities are enjoyable or bring value.

Tip!

Include all activities that come to mind here, even if you think you can't do them right now. We'll consider this in the next step.



Looking back at the goals you set may help you think about activities to include here.

Before completing your own ACTIVITIES WORKSHEET it may be helpful to have a look at Sam's.

ACTIVITIES WORKSHEET

ROUTINE <i>e.g. cooking, wash dishes, food shopping, self-care</i>	NECESSARY <i>e.g. booking medical appointments, talking to manager at work, sort finances</i>	PLEASURABLE <i>e.g. socialising, hobbies, things you value</i>
<i>Regular food shopping</i>	<i>Talk to boss about my workload</i>	<i>Tennis</i>
<i>Cooking proper healthy meals</i>	<i>Book MOT</i>	<i>Meeting friends</i>
<i>Shower every day</i>	<i>Sort re-mortgage of house</i>	<i>Watching comedy box sets</i>
<i>Clean house</i>		<i>Helping with kids' tennis coaching</i>
<i>Wash clothes</i>		

STEP 3: ORGANISING ACTIVITIES BY DIFFICULTY

Using the list of Routine, Pleasurable and Necessary activities you made in STEP 2, you're now going to organise them based on how difficult they are to achieve. This will help you bring these activities back into your life. Rather than trying to do something too difficult too soon, starting with easier activities is the most helpful, before building up to more difficult ones when you're able.

- Think about how difficult you believe each activity would be to complete in the next week
- Write these down in the appropriate difficulty column

LEAST DIFFICULT

Activities you think you could manage in the next few weeks.

MEDIUM DIFFICULTY

Activities you would struggle to do in the next few weeks, but think you could just about manage if needed.

MOST DIFFICULT

Activities you believe are too difficult to complete at present, but you'd still like to work towards achieving them.

Before completing your own **DIFFICULTY WORKSHEET** it may be helpful to have a look at Sam's.

DIFFICULTY WORKSHEET

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY		
LEAST DIFFICULT	MEDIUM DIFFICULTY	MOST DIFFICULT
Book MOT	Talk to boss about workload	Clean bathroom once a week
Food shop once a week	Shower every day	Sort re-mortgage of house
Clean the kitchen	Cook proper healthy meals	Tennis
Wash clothes once a week	Meeting friends	
Watch comedy boxsets	Help with kids' tennis coaching	

It can be hard to decide how difficult activities are if they are too general, e.g. clean the kitchen. To make it easier, break general tasks down into more manageable tasks, e.g. do dishes daily, mop kitchen floor. This may also help to reduce the level of difficulty.

If a Necessary activity is urgent and needs to be completed quickly to avoid negative consequences, try breaking it down into less difficult activities.

HOWEVER, sometimes these tasks can't be made any easier but still need to be completed quickly. If this is the case, chat to family, friends, anyone supporting you or look for community organisations to help you get it sorted.

STEP 4: PLANNING YOUR BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION DIARY

Using your list of activities organised by difficulty you're now ready to start planning activities back into your week. It's important to pre-plan your week and be specific with this, rather than decide at the time what you will do. This could lead you to fall back into your vicious cycle of low mood. Pre-planning using the diary over the page and trying to stick to this plan as much as possible will help with this.

Here are a few tips that will support you to plan the diary in the most helpful way:

- Choose activities identified as Least Difficult or an urgent Necessary activity
- Write each Least Difficult or urgent Necessary activity you need to do in the diary, identifying the best day and time (Morning, Afternoon, Evening) to engage with it
 - To see the best times to plan activities some people tell us they've found it helpful to block out times where they've had other things to do
- When adding new activities, it can really help to be as specific as possible by providing detail on:
 - 'What' you're going to do: i.e. 'Go for a walk'
 - 'Where' you're going to do it: i.e. 'Park'
 - 'Who' you're going to do it with: i.e. 'Alice'
- It is helpful to plan your week so that there is a mix of Routine, Pleasurable and Necessary activities, as these all provide something different but important for your wellbeing
- As far as possible, spread out the activities you plan to do across the week
 - Avoid 'boom and bust' by overloading yourself on a few specific days whilst leaving other days with no activities.
- The number of activities you plan to do is up to you
 - You know best what's manageable for you, and it's best to build them up over time at a rate that's good for you.
- At times it's OK not to have any activities planned.

As you notice your mood beginning to lift when following these tips, great stuff! Continue to follow the tips to plan your next Diary and keep your 'upwards spiral' going.



STEP 5: GIVE IT A GO

Well done planning your diary.

As your mood's been low, getting this far is a real success. Now you're going to put your plan into place and do the activities you've written in your diary at the times planned. This will help start you on the upwards spiral out of depression we discussed earlier.

With low mood, sometimes people can find it hard to get started giving their diary a go or not feel like doing the activities that they're planned in. If this is the case for you, it's understandable, just think back to your Vicious Cycle! However, it is important that we follow the plan we have made as much as possible, even if we don't feel like doing the activity we've planned, as this will help to break this vicious cycle.

There can be two things that get in the way of people getting started, but there are ways to overcome these.

I can't even get started!

You may be thinking you don't have the motivation to start, maybe even with the Least Difficult activities. When our mood is low, our motivation drops as well, and that's when the Vicious Cycle of Depression, starts. If you're struggling, consider the tips on the following page.

I don't have the motivation!

If we wait to feel motivated to do something, we can wait a long time! However, you may find your motivation slowly improves once you manage to overcome the motivation hurdle, and this will drive you to carry on and complete the activity. So, just making a start on the activity and overcoming that initial hurdle will get your momentum going to complete others coming up.

IF YOU NEED FURTHER HELP

When you come to do planned activities, you may find them more difficult than you expected them to be. Don't worry, this is common, especially if you haven't done the activity in a while. Make a note of this and then try considering the following tips.

■ Selection: Look through each activity listed by Difficulty

- If an activity appears too difficult, are there any ways you can make specific tasks easier still?
- We've already discussed breaking tasks down – can they be broken down further if needed?
- Difficulty rating isn't fixed, so you can always move the column an activity is in and consider it a hurdle to get over later on if it can't be made easier

■ Adapting: Consider ways to do the activity differently

- Sometimes there are ways to adapt activities to improve our ability to do them
- At times there may not be a different way to do the activity, so we may need to recognise it as being in the Most Difficult category currently

■ Resource availability:

- Are there any resources available to you that can help make tasks easier to achieve?
- This will vary by person and by activity, but sometimes people may find that things such as family and friends, community or voluntary groups, other professionals or indeed a person supporting you to use this approach can help

STEP 6: MAINTAINING PROGRESS

Hopefully your hard work is paying off and you're starting to notice your mood lifting little by little.

At this point, it can be easy to stop putting in the same effort towards making and maintaining the changes you've experienced. But if this happens, you, or friends and family, may start to notice your vicious cycle beginning to spiral downwards again. So, it's important to ensure the approach used in this workbook becomes part of your daily life.

Simple steps can help you do this.

Revisit your Vicious Cycle completed earlier in the workbook and write the content of each area below.

MY PREVIOUS WARNING SIGNS



My Behaviours
My Emotions
My Physical Symptoms
My Unhelpful Thoughts

Doing this can help you recognise the first signs that may indicate your mood is dropping again and help you make changes sooner rather than later to get things back on track.



STAYING WELL TOOLKIT

Now, write down the strategies and techniques you've found most helpful while using this workbook. If you notice early warning signs or low mood returning, this will give you some ideas of what can help.

MY STAYING WELL TOOLKIT WORKSHEET



What activities helped me feel better?

--

What skills have I learnt through this workbook?

--

What helped me put these activities, skills and techniques into practice?

--

CHECKING IN WITH HOW I'M DOING

As you come to the end of this workbook, it's helpful to set a regular time to check in with how you're doing. This can support you to notice Early Warning Signs and put your Staying Well Toolkit into place as soon as possible.



CHECKING IN

I will check in with myself about the emotion that has been troubling me every over the next weeks/months.

Since completing this workbook:

	Yes	No
Have I started doing more or less of the activities I started to do again?		
Am I experiencing any of the physical symptoms on my Early Warning Signs worksheet?		
Am I having any of the unhelpful thoughts on my Early Warning Signs worksheet?		
Am I struggling with my emotions again?		

If I think low mood is returning, what could I do to help? Is there anything from my Staying Well Toolkit that may help?



Remember: We all experience low mood at times, and if your mood does drop it doesn't necessarily mean you're going back to where you were. It can just be a bump in the road.

However, if you find the bump in the road goes on for a while and your mood remains low, it may be helpful to go back through this workbook, look at what you learnt last time that helped and try again.



AUTHORS

Professor Paul Farrand is Professor of Evidence Based Psychological Practice and Research and Director of the Low-Intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (LICBT) portfolio within Clinical Education, Development and Research (CEDAR); Psychology at the University of Exeter. His main research interests are in LICBT, especially in a written and mobile phone app format. Paul has developed a wide range of written CBT self-help interventions for depression and anxiety and is editor of *Low-Intensity CBT Skills and Interventions: A Practitioner's Manual* (2020). Related to these areas, he holds several Expert Advisor positions, including the NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme, and Psychological Practice in Physical Health Care, informed by his clinical practice with people experiencing physical health problems. He is also a member of several national committees developing a broader psychological therapies workforce and at an international level, Scientific Advisor regarding worldwide developments in LICBT.

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INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

We are exceptionally grateful to members of various Patient and Public Involvement groups for their invaluable assistance informing the development and design of this workbook.

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