

# Depression Group Handbook

Developed by Mind in Bexley

## Depression group

### Session 1 agenda

- Introductions
- Health and safety / Group agreement
- What is depression?
- Introduction to CBT and 5 areas model
- Smart goals
- Homework – 5 areas model

### Session 2 agenda

- Unhelpful/ helpful behaviours
- Behaviour in depression
- Behavioural activation (BA)
- Homework - BA

### Session 3 agenda

- Review of BA
- Overcoming barriers
- Homework - BA

### Session 4 agenda

- Cognitions in depression
- Unhelpful thinking styles
- Homework – thought diary

### Session 5 agenda

- Thought challenging
- Homework - thought challenging

### Session 6 agenda

- Review of topics covered in the last week
- Maintaining progress plan.

## **Client Agreement**

Mind in Bexley Ltd through its Being Well in Bexley Primary Care Service provides Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and other talking therapies to the residents of Bexley. CBT is aimed at reducing distress by looking at unhelpful thinking patterns and behaviour which have a negative effect on how we feel. It is a solution-focused collaborative form of therapy, involving working together and guided discovery. You will be asked to carry out tasks between sessions in order to practice what you have learned. We offer both group and individual sessions.

### **Client Records and Confidentiality:**

Computer records are kept on a very secure IT system, accessed only by the Being Well in Bexley team. Some of the data collected is made anonymous and can be used to evaluate the service and for research purposes. Client records are maintained in accordance with the *Data Protection Act 2018*. Any request for a copy or sight of these records under the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*, can be made in writing to the Director of Mind in Bexley Ltd. Numerical data and statistics are reported to the Department of Health and may be used for research purposes. Anything that you tell us is confidential within the Being Well in Bexley team, unless we have concerns about the immediate safety of yourself or anyone else, in which case we will discuss this with senior staff and may need to involve other people. If this becomes necessary we will try to talk to you about this first. It is a condition of this service that we are provided with the name of your GP, so that we can contact them if we have any concerns and we usually provide the GP with a report. If there is a specific reason for you not wishing this report to be sent, please discuss this with your therapist.

### **Attendance at sessions and DNA Policy:**

In order for therapy to be consistent and effective, it is important that you attend regularly. If you are not able to attend a booked appointment, please give us as much prior warning as possible so that this appointment can be offered to another client. This allows us to use therapist time well and helps to keep waiting lists down.

**Cancelling with less than 24 hours' notice will be treated as a DNA (Did Not Attend). You can do so by calling our main number, 0208 303 8932. If you do not attend **one** appointment without at least 24 hours' notice then we will discharge you from the service so that a slot can be offered to someone on the waiting list.**

We understand that sometimes there are genuine emergencies that prevent clients attending appointments and cannot be foreseen. Should this happen, please contact us within 24 hours of your scheduled appointment to explain the reason for not attending. Please leave a clear message on our answer phone if your call is not answered in person.

**If you cancel more than two sessions with adequate notice, then your therapist will discuss with you whether now is the right time for you to be engaging in therapy and you may be discharged from the service. Future re-referrals are welcome.**

### **Complaints Procedure, Monitoring and Evaluation:**

We encourage clients to provide both positive and negative feedback in order to improve our service. Evaluation forms are distributed at the end of therapy. Anonymous data on outcomes are collected and collated and may be used for research purposes and for articles for publication. You can decline to consent to this. If you feel you have cause to complain about the service you have received, you can contact the Chief Executive of Mind in Bexley on our main

number or ask for a complaints leaflet. Making a complaint will not adversely affect the service you receive.

**I understand the above points and am willing to proceed with therapy:**

**Client's Name:**

**Client's Signature:**

**Date**

**I consent to data collection and use for research, evaluation and publication:**

**Yes/No**

### **Taking Care of Yourself**

Remember to give yourself time and space to make use of the therapy or classes and ensure you are getting enough rest and nourishment.

Sometimes during the course of therapy, difficult emotions can come up or events can happen in the week which can cause more distress. Your safety and support is very important to us.

If emotions are becoming very overwhelming it is important you let someone know how you are feeling. Think about who you could tell (e.g. a friend or relative) in order to support you.

You can also contact your therapist or group leader on the above number. You can also contact:

- **Oxleas Urgent Advice Line:** 0800 330 8590
- **Samaritans:** 116 123

If you wanted to talk to someone face to face, you can come to our **Crisis Café**. It is a safe place you can come to if you are experiencing severe emotional distress, to access support and advice from mental health and wellbeing professionals.

- Hours: 6pm – 10pm Mon-Sun and Bank holidays
- Where: 2a Devonshire Road, Bexleyheath, DA6 8DS

**In the unlikely event that the feelings get worse and if you feel that you are at risk of harming yourself, or others, at any time, please make an urgent appointment with your GP or go immediately to Accident and Emergency and ask for an urgent mental health assessment.**

## **SESSION 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Mind in Bexley's depression group. Well done for attending, that's the first step on the road to recovery. This is a self-help group based on CBT principles, CBT stands for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. In this type of therapy we look at the way that thoughts, behaviours and physical sensations impact out emotions.

### **General rules**

#### **Confidentiality –**

Everything discussed in this session will be kept confidential within the service. We ask as a group participant that any personal information that is shared is kept confidential within the group.

#### **Risk –**

If you are scoring one or more on question 9 of the PHQ-9 could they please come and speak to the facilitator after the session. It is your responsibility to make us aware of this, if you do not come and speak to us we will call you before the next session to ensure that you are not at risk. A safety plan may have been agreed at assessment along with crisis numbers supplied to you, please follow these guidelines if you are having difficulties with these at any point.

#### **Personal disclosure –**

Personal disclosure and insight is welcome during the group, however it is important to be mindful that the sessions are structured and at times we may have to move on due to time constraints. This is not to invalidate your experience, it is to ensure that the therapeutic structure and protocol is followed. The groups contain case studies that we are going to use, this also helps with us completing all the items on the agenda in a timely fashion.

### **What is depression?**

- Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days.
- Most people go through periods of feeling down, but when you're depressed you feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days.
- Some people think depression is trivial and not a genuine health condition. They're wrong – it is a real illness with real symptoms. Depression isn't a sign of weakness or something you can "snap out of" by "pulling yourself together".
- The good news is that with the right treatment and support, most people with depression can make a full recovery.

### **How to tell if you have depression**

- Depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms.
- They range from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, to losing interest in the things you used to enjoy and feeling very tearful. Many people with depression also have symptoms of anxiety.
- There can be physical symptoms too, such as feeling constantly tired, sleeping badly, having no appetite or sex drive, and various aches and pains.
- The symptoms of depression range from mild to severe. At its mildest, you may simply feel persistently low in spirit, while severe depression can make you feel suicidal, that life is no longer worth living.
- Most people experience feelings of stress, unhappiness or anxiety during difficult times. A low mood may improve after a short period of time, rather than being a sign of depression.

### **What causes depression?**

- Sometimes there's a trigger for depression. Life-changing events, such as bereavement, losing your job or even having a baby, can bring it on. People with a family history of depression are more likely to experience it themselves. But you can also become depressed for no obvious reason.
- Depression is fairly common, affecting about one in 10 people at some point during their life. It affects men and women, young and old.

These are some of the sign and symptoms of someone experiencing symptoms of depression are:

#### Emotions and feelings

- Feeling sad, guilty, numb
- Feeling alone
- Anger and irritability
- Loss of interest and enjoyment

#### Physical or bodily signs

- Lack of energy
- Tiredness
- Sleep problems
- Changes in appetite

#### Thoughts

- Thinking everything is hopeless
- Thinking that there is no point to anything
- Thoughts of suicide
- Focusing on the negative

#### Behaviour

- Not making decisions
- Avoidance
- Not doing anything
- Sleeping excessively
- Isolating oneself

**What is CBT?**

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be used to treat people with a wide range of mental health difficulties.

CBT is based on the idea that how we think (cognition), how we feel (emotion) and how we act (behaviour) all interact together. Specifically, our thoughts determine our feelings and our behaviour.

Therefore, negative and unrealistic thoughts can cause us distress and result in problems. When a person suffers with psychological distress, the way in which they interpret situations becomes skewed, which in turn has a negative impact on the actions they take.

CBT aims to help people become aware of when they make negative interpretations, and of behavioural patterns which reinforce the distorted thinking. Cognitive therapy helps people to develop alternative ways of thinking and behaving which aims to reduce their psychological distress.

**CBT Example**

One of the most important aspects of CBT is that situations are neutral and its thoughts, behaviours, physical sensations and emotions that make a situation, good, bad, positive, negative, helpful, unhelpful and determine the level of impact that these have on a person.

Thoughts are the statements that you make to yourself in your mind, they act as a dialogue and add context to the situation that you are in. They are often opinions rather than facts.

Emotions can be described in one word and can be communicated by facial expressions and communicate how you feel in a situation.

Physical sensations are what you experience in your body and are internal, you have no control over these and they are involuntary.

Behaviours are how you decide to behave, you have control over this, it might not seem that you do but it's the choices that you make in relation to the way you feel and think.

Within CBT we use a model called 'the hot cross bun' (page 10).

For example take the following, you walk down the street and see a friend across the road, you decide to shout their name and wave at them, they don't acknowledge you shouting and waving and continue walking.

How might someone react to this that might be unhelpful?

What Thoughts might they have?

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What Emotions might they feel?

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What Physical sensations might they experience?

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How might they behave?

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Now consider how someone else might respond to this situation in a more helpful way?

What Thoughts might they have?

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What Emotions might they feel?

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What Physical sensations might they experience?

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How might they behave?

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All situations are neutral, thoughts, behaviours, emotions and physical sensation all impact on each other and help maintain each other.

**Situation**

*Where? When? Who were you with? What was happening?*

**Thoughts**

*what thoughts were going through my mind? What images were going on in my mind? What distressed me? What meaning did I give to this situation?*

**Physical Sensations**

*what was happening in my body?  
What did I feel?*

**Emotions**

*what emotions did I experience? How  
intense were they (0-100%)?*

**Actions/Behaviours**

*What did I do to cope? What didn't I do or what did I avoid doing? How  
did my behaviour change?*

Have a go at classifying these in to thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and behaviours:

I'm happy	
I can't be bothered	
Heart palpitations	
Staying in bed	
What if I'm late	
There's no point in doing anything	
I'm sad	
Arguing	
Sweaty palms	
People are going to look at me	
I'm anxious	
Avoiding doing things	
Butterflies in the stomach	
I won't enjoy it	
This isn't going to work	
Drinking alcohol	
Avoiding speaking to friends and family	
Pins and needles	
What if the car breaks down	
I'm excited	
Tiredness	
People are going to think I'm stupid	

### **Case study**

*Sam, Sarah and Joe all work for the same company, they are roughly the same age and have the same level of education and experience with the same salary. There have been rumours that the company is having financial difficulties and that there are potentially going to be redundancies.*

*Sam hears about this and immediately thinks that "it's going to be me, why would they want to keep me". Sam starts to withdraw at work and becomes isolated from colleagues. At home after work, Sam avoids working on a CV or looking for a new job and instead sits on the sofa, putting off doing the laundry and thinks about how awful it will be without a job.*

*Joe starts to worry and thinks "I'm going to lose my job, if I lose my job then I won't be able to pay the bills, if I won't be able to pay the bills then I'll lose my house". Joe feels sick and on edge. He is unable to sleep and can't do anything because he is focused on his worry.*

*Sarah hears the news and thinks "I might be made redundant but this might be an opportunity to move on to something new and this could be the right time for me to do this". She feels positive and starts to update her CV and looks for jobs on the internet.*

- Which one of these might represent anxiety, which one depression and which one is a more helpful reaction to the situation?

### **Task**

- Now that you have learned more about how depression may present, complete a 5 area model of a recent time when you experienced depression or low mood. You can use the blank model on page 10 for this.
  
- This is one of the most important steps in treatment. If you can identify the elements of your own 5 areas model, then effective change can take place. However, remember that this takes time and practice - be consistent and be patient with yourself!

## **SMART goals**

Establishing goals can help give a clear direction to work towards and give a focus in therapy.

Goals also show us the progress that we are making and help keep us motivated but in order to do this we need to follow the principles of SMART.

For example, people often set New Year's resolutions but don't achieve them. For some it's 'I want to get fitter', for others 'I want to lose weight'. These aren't SMART and often lead to people not achieving their goals. Making 'I want to get fitter' SMART might look like:

Long term SMART 'I want to run 10km in under 45 minutes by the end of the year'.

Short term SMART 'in 3 weeks' time I want to be able to run a 1km in 5 minutes'

### **Specific**

Be clear in what the aim is, it might be better to break it down in the smaller chunks

### **Measurable**

How are you going to know you have met your goal, what changes will you see? What will you be doing differently? Will you have stopped something or doing something more regularly

### **Achievable**

Think about where you are now, is it possible to achieve this? If a friend said that wanted to do this in your position would you say that it is achievable to them?

### **Realistic**

What are the obstacles to achieve this, are you able to overcome these and are the resources to achieve your goal available?

### **Time Boundaried**

What is the time frame you want to achieve this in?

Short term goals:

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Long term goals:

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**To help with this you can ask yourself some useful questions:**

- *What do you want to achieve by the end of the group?*
- *What would you be doing differently if you did not feel this way?*
- *Is there anything that you have stopped doing because of how you have been feeling?*
- *Is there anything that you wish you did more often?*
- *How would your life change if you were feeling better?*
- *Is the way you are feeling a barrier to doing anything? What is that?*



**Homework task**

The first step is to be able to understand your own 5 areas cycle, especially increasing your awareness of your own thoughts and behaviours. Complete the attached diary on page, and see if you can start to identify any patterns in your thinking and behaviours or situations that make you feel down, depressed or low.

Situation	Thoughts	Emotions	Physical sensations	Behaviours

## **Session 2**

### **Behaviour**

#### **Behaviour in depression**

When we experience episodes of low mood and depression it can make us feel lethargic, tired and lacking in motivation. The knock on effect of this is withdrawing from activity and engaging in risky and sometimes destructive behaviours. We often avoid doing things that seem overwhelming and cause us anxiety.

We end up in a cycle of engaging in unhelpful behaviours and avoidance. Some of the behaviours we engage in feel helpful at that time, however this can be in the short-term and in the long-term they may actually have unforeseen consequences.

#### **Helpful and unhelpful behaviour**

Working out if your behaviours are helpful or unhelpful is key to understanding how they are impacting our mood. Unhelpful behaviours are those that keep the problem going, even though sometimes they might seem helpful. As mentioned above, this might just be in the short-term, and actually in the long-term it keeps the problem going. Helpful behaviours on the other hand address the problem and can help changing our mood and the way we think.

#### **Have a go at classifying these behaviours as helpful and unhelpful:**

Contacting that friend you haven't spoken to in a while	
Paying bills	
Drinking alcohol	
Cooking a family meal	
Opening letters	
Telling people how you feel	
Exercising	
Avoiding telephone calls or emails	
Staying in bed	
Procrastination	
Going for a walk	
Planning to spend some time with family/friends	



## How do we change our behaviour?

### Behavioural activation

Behavioural activation also looks to create a balance of activities in life. It does this by focusing on 3 types of activities Routine, Necessary and Pleasurable.

Routine – this creates a sense of mastery in someone’s life. These activities are those that we engage on a daily or weekly basis, for instance the morning routine before going to work and the weekly household chores.

Necessary – these activities are those that we have to do in order to prevent future negative outcomes, for instance dealing with difficult situations that are causing us some level of distress.

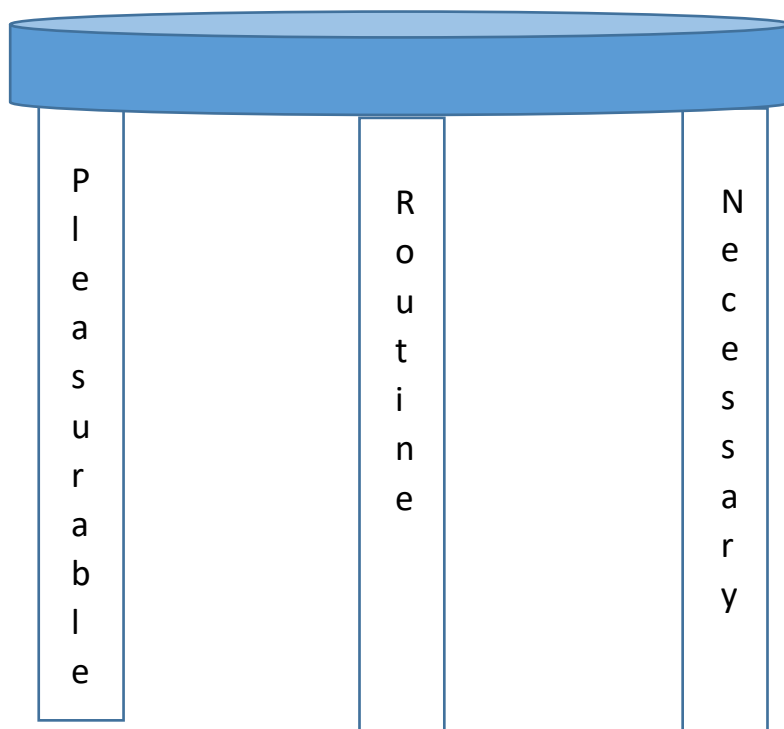
Pleasurable – these are activities that we do for enjoyment, and may be with people or on our own. With this we are able to reduce stress, increasing helpful emotions and counter-balancing unhelpful emotions.

With a balance of these activities we are able to create a baseline to improve our mood.

### The three legged stool

Think of a three legged stool. A stool is stable and secure when weight is put on it, however if a leg is taken away the stool will wobble and eventually fall on the floor. If the same weight is put on but 2 legs are taken away it will wobble and hit the floor even more.

Think of the three activities of ROUTINE, PLEASURABLE and NECESSARY as the three legs on the stool. The weight of someone sitting on the stool is the stress and pressure of daily life. If all the legs are in place then the stool remains balanced and takes the pressure, but if any of the legs are removed the stool will wobble and eventually hit the floor.



It is also important to make sure that all the legs are balanced correctly - if one leg is smaller than the others it will lead to wobbling and lack stability, increasing the risk of falling over. This means that there needs to be a balance of the ROUTINE, NECESSARY and PLEASURABLE activities in a person's week.

How do we make the changes to our behaviour?

Step 1

List a number of activities that you would like to start doing or have stopped doing themselves and put them in to a relevant categories.

ROUTINE :-

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PLEASURABLE :-

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NECESSARY :-

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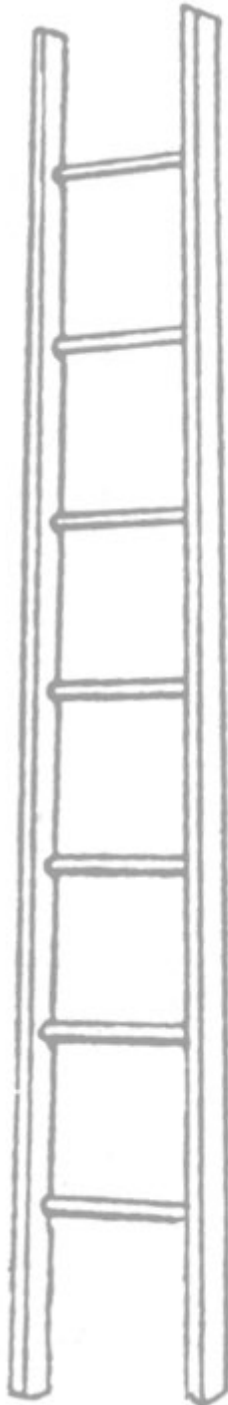
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## Step 2

When starting to become more active, we want to keep you motivated and engaged with the process. For this reason, the next important step is to list the activities from easiest to hardest. If we set ourselves a goal that is just too difficult to achieve at this point in time, this can lead to feelings of disappointment when we are not able to do what we had planned.

So, as we plan our activities we want to start with the easiest first, and gradually make our way through to the hardest.



**Hardest**

**Easiest**

### Step 3

Plan what you want to do and allocate times to do them. Write these down on the weekly activity sheet, think about what you want to do, when, where and who you want to do it with.

Be mindful of any obstacles that might get in the way of doing this. Make sure you write it down, if you do you are more likely to do the activity, think of it as a contract with yourself.

When doing the activity you might not feel like doing it, that's normal and is a response to how you're feeling.

But remember, it is important to **'Follow the plan and not your mood!'**

### **Remember!**

- Sometimes you will end up not carrying out an activity you previously scheduled for yourself. This happens, things might get in the way! However, this may lead you to fall into a pattern of not doing other activities you have scheduled - because you might feel like you have failed.

If this happens, it's okay. Be compassionate with yourself, and make sure you complete the next activity and continue with the plan!



### **Homework task**

Complete the activity diary, carry it out throughout the week and notice the effect this has on your mood.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Morning							
Midday							
Afternoon							
Afternoon							
Evening							
Evening							

### Session 3

### Behavioural Activation: review

#### Reflection

Reflect on what happened over the last week, any activities you may have carried out and any barriers you may have encountered. What worked for you? What didn't? Take 5 minutes to think about this; you may want to note down any positives or negatives.

*What worked well for me last week?*

*What was I able to achieve? (No matter how small)*

*Which activity did I struggle to complete?*

*What got in the way?*

Positives	Negatives

Discuss this with the group.

## Strategies to deal with barriers



### **Thoughts as a barrier**

As we learned in the first session, our thoughts can have a large impact on the way that we behave. The table below contains some of the common negative thoughts that people experience when activating themselves:

<b>Negative Thoughts</b>	<b>Possible Answers</b>
<i>I can't do anything – there are too many practical difficulties</i>	There are always practical difficulties involved in doing anything – it's part of life. What would I do about them if I wasn't depressed? Can anyone else give me advice?
<i>I can't keep a schedule – I've never been a record-keeper</i>	Keeping written records is a skill that I can learn. I may not have done this before, but that doesn't mean to say I can't do it.
<i>There's too much to do – I won't be able to cope</i>	Believing that is all part of depression, but it does not mean that it is true. If I write down what to do, it won't seem so overwhelming. I don't have to do it all at once, I can take things one at a time.
<i>It's too difficult</i>	It only seems difficult because I'm depressed. I've done more difficult things than this in the past.
<i>I won't know how to go about it</i>	The idea is to have a go, not to produce a perfect performance. It's better to try and find out how I do than not to do anything at all.
<i>I don't want to</i>	That's true. But what is in my best interest? Which will make me feel better and more in control of things? Doing it? Or not doing it?
<i>I'm not up to it just now, I'll wait until I'm feeling better</i>	I won't know if I'm up to it until I try. If I wait until I'm feeling better, I will never do it. Doing it will make me feel better.
<i>It's too late, I should have done it before</i>	Maybe it would have been better if I'd done it before. But the fact is I didn't, and feeling guilty is not going to help me. Better late than never – do it now instead of wasting time in regrets.
<i>I can't decide what to do first</i>	It really doesn't matter. The important thing at this stage is to do <i>something</i> . Once you get going it will probably be clearer what to do next. If not, you can just do the thing that comes first in the alphabet.
<i>There's no point in trying. I'll only make a mess of it and feel worse</i>	I don't know that until I try. Nobody's asking for a 5-star performance. Even if I do make a mess of it, it's not the end of the world – I can learn from my mistakes if I don't take them too seriously.
<i>I won't enjoy it</i>	How do I know? I'm not a fortune-teller. I might enjoy it more than I think, once I get involved in it. That has happened before.
<i>I won't be able to do everything I've planned</i>	No-one does everything they've planned all the time, so there's no need to feel badly about it. Before I got depressed, if I didn't get everything done, I just put it forward to the next day. Do what you can, and forget what you can't.
<i>I'm not doing anything</i>	Am I sure of that? Or is it that I'm not giving myself credit for what I do? Why not keep a record for a few days, and see. Maybe I just <i>think</i> I'm not doing anything.

<i>I don't do anything worthwhile</i>	I didn't see it that way before I got depressed. I could see that what I was doing was worthwhile, even though none of it was very dramatic or exciting. If I discount everything I do, I will only get discouraged.
<i>I don't deserve to enjoy myself. I should get on with all the things I've got to do</i>	Doing things I enjoy will help me to feel better. That's what I want. And if I'm more relaxed and feeling better, I'm more likely to do what I've got to do more efficiently. I know that from experience; I get more done when I give myself breaks than when I don't.
<i>So I cleaned the car. So what?</i>	Normally, cleaning the car would be nothing very special. But given the way I feel, it was in fact very difficult. So doing it is an achievement, and I deserve to give myself credit for that.

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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**The 5 Minute Rule**

People often report that *starting* a task is the most difficult part. The idea of having to carry out long or tedious tasks can impact your motivation, and lead to procrastination. To help with this, you can use the '5 Minute Rule'. It encourages you to set a goal of doing whatever you have planned, but only for 5 minutes. That's it - that is your task.



If after 5 minutes you find that the task is so horrible you have to stop, you are free to do so, as your goal was to do it for 5 minutes only. However, most people find that after 5 minutes, it becomes easier to continue until the task is done. And even if that is not the case, you have completed the activity for 5 minutes, which is already a step forward!

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**Break it down**

Sometimes we may set tasks for ourselves that end up being too overwhelming, which can cause us to lose motivation and procrastinate. One way to avoid this is to break down large tasks into small, more manageable activities. For example, 'Cleaning the bedroom' can be quite a large task and require a lot of time/energy! It can be helpful to break this down into: 'changing the bedsheets', 'hoovering the bedroom', 'cleaning the mirror', 'folding laundry' etc. You can spread these tasks over the course of a few days, so that getting the larger task done (i.e. cleaning the bedroom) will ultimately take less energy!

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
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### ***Make it flexible***

Your plan is a guide and is there to help you, not to rule your life! Let's say something unexpectedly happens to throw you off schedule - a friend drops by unexpectedly, or it starts to rain. You may feel that your efforts to plan your day have been wasted: unless you can stick to your plan, you might as well not bother. Instead, try to cope with the unexpected by accepting the disruption and thinking of alternative activities you could do. And if you miss an activity don't feel obliged to 'catch up' – simply move onto the next one!

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Follow the plan not the mood***

It is common for people to wait for motivation to come before they engage in activities. However, energy and motivation can come from activity! Throughout the week, you may not feel like completing a task that you have set for yourself. However, in order to see positive changes it is important to *'follow the plan not the mood'*.

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Not experiencing positive emotions***

Sometimes people attempt to engage in activities they previously enjoyed, and find that these do not give them as much enjoyment as before. This is extremely common and is due to the nature of depression, and the effect it can have on our brain. It is important to acknowledge this difficulty as a common experience, and to keep engaging in activities, making sure to choose ones that we believe can –or used to– bring us enjoyment and a sense of achievement.

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **The 'jump-starting a car' metaphor**

Becoming more active when we are feeling low is a bit like trying to jump-start a car that has broken down. The car is stationary, the engine won't start, and we are stuck. The first step is to try to get the car rolling on its wheels by pushing. This is extremely difficult at first as the car is heavy. With an almighty push, we only have a little movement. However, once we have momentum, the car becomes much easier to push. We can then expend less energy pushing the car faster and faster until we try to fire up the engine. Then the car is back up and running.



#### **Homework task**

Plan new activities for the upcoming week using the table on the next page. Use the new techniques to tackle any barriers that you may have previously encountered.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Morning							
Midday							
Afternoon							
Afternoon							
Evening							
Evening							

## Session 4

### Thoughts in depression

It has been estimated that we have anywhere from 25,000 to 50,000 thoughts a day.

One of the features of depression is pessimistic thinking. The negative thinking is actually the depression speaking. It's what depression sounds like. Depression in fact manifests in negative thinking before it creates negative affect.

Thoughts are often taken as fact and truths as opposed to opinions. People generate negative thoughts so automatically they are unaware that it is happening.

One of the most powerful actions you can take in combating depression is to understand how critical the quality of your thinking is to maintaining and even intensifying your depression—and that the quickest way to change how you feel is to change how you think. Often enough you can't control how you feel, but you can always control how you think. There's an active choice you can take—if you are aware that changing your thinking is important.

It is possible to take action and to change patterns of thinking on your own. The first step is to understand the types of thinking and patterns that we fall in to.

### The ice cream exercise

What comes to mind when looking at this picture?

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### The Thought Train

People get in to a habit of thinking negatively much like they get in to the morning routine when heading to work. We wake up in the morning at a certain time, we get dressed, have breakfast and a coffee, leave the house at 7:17 every morning and walk down to the station to get the 7:25 train every morning. There are lots of different trains that run through the station but we always get on the 7:25 train. We don't pay attention to the other trains coming in and out as we know that the 7:25 is coming along and we are used to that train.




We have thoughts come in and out of our mind all day every day, we have thousands of them, some helpful, some bad, some negative some positive some completely neutral, some important and others not.


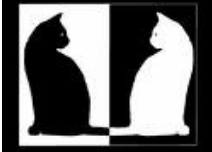
However much like our morning routine we have got in to a pattern of listening to those negative thoughts, we don't pay any attention to those other thoughts coming in much like the train, because we always end up on the same train the same pattern of thought. But an important question to ask is what happens if we jump on a different train, a different thought?

## Unhelpful thinking styles

In order to challenge our thoughts we first need to understand the way we think, being able to do this allows us to recognize patterns and gives us the ability to take a step back and really consider what we are doing.

People's thinking has been categorized in to the following styles. Starting to identify what styles you fall in to can start to help you take control of your thinking.

<p><b><u>Mental Filter</u></b> Noticing only what the filter allows us to notice, and dismissing anything else. Like looking through 'gloomy specs', only catching the negative stuff, while anything more positive or realistic is ignored or dismissed.</p>  <p><i>Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic? What am I ignoring?</i></p>	<p><b><u>Mind-Reading</u></b> Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us).</p> <p><i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i></p>
<p><b><u>Prediction</u></b> Believing we know what's going to happen in the future</p> <p><i>Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?</i></p>	<p><b><u>Compare and despair</u></b> Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and comparing ourselves negatively against them.</p> <p><i>Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i></p>
<p><b><u>Critical self</u></b> Putting ourselves down, self-criticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not totally our responsibility.</p>  <p><i>There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?</i></p>	<p><b><u>Shoulds and musts</u></b> Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations.</p>  <p><i>Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?</i></p>
<p><b><u>Catastrophising</u></b> Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen.</p> <p><i>Thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?</i></p>	<p><b><u>Emotional Reasoning</u></b> I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious so I must be in danger</p> <p><i>Just because it feels bad, it doesn't necessary mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts.</i></p>

<p><b><u>Mountains and Molehills</u></b>  Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives.</p>  <p><i>Am I exaggerating the risk of danger, and minimising the evidence that it's most likely to be okay? How would someone else see it?</i></p>	<p><b><u>Evaluations / Judgements</u></b>  Making judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for.</p> <p><i>I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?</i></p>
<p><b><u>Black and white/ all or nothing thinking</u></b>  Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'</p>  <p><i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i></p>	<p><b><u>Memories</u></b>  Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now</p> <p><i>This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me <u>feel</u> upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.</i></p>

**What styles of unhelpful thinking do you experience?**

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**Exercise**

Have a go at identifying these type of thinking styles.

- *'If I don't get an outstanding on my work appraisal there is no point in trying, anything less than this is a failure.'*

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- *'I should always put 100% in to everything and I must not put in anything less'*

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- *'It's all my fault that we have had an argument, I'm responsible for all the bad things in our relationship'*

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- *'The world and the people in it can't be trusted'*

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- *'I just know that they didn't like me'*

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- *'Everyone seems to be always doing better than me and can do things that I can't manage to do'*

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- *'If I don't pay this bill in time I'll lose my house, if I lose my house my marriage will break down and I won't see the children'*

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- *'I won't enjoy tonight, there isn't any point in going and I'll just feel worse if I do go'*

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Case study

*Sam has heard that the company where they work is having financial problems and that there may need to be redundancies.*

*Sam hears about this and immediately thinks that 'it's going to be me, why would they want to keep me?'. Sam starts to hear more rumours about the redundancies and starts to think 'I'm useless and I'm going to lose my job which means I will lose my house and my family', 'other people here are better at their jobs and they are more liked by the management'. Sam then starts to withdraw at work and becomes isolated. After getting home after work Sam avoids doing any housework and becomes irritable and snappy with family members. Sam does not see the point in looking for another job as 'Who'd want to hire me when everyone else is better?' Sam feels unmotivated and plays video games instead of working on updating a CV.*

What kind of thinking styles is Sam showing?

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What Kind of impact has his thinking had on Sam's behaviours, mood and physical sensations?

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What could Sam ask themselves to challenge these negative thoughts?

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## STOPP TECHNIQUE

### **S**TOP!

Just pause for a moment

### **T**AKE A BREATH

Take a deep breathe. Notice your breathing as you breathe in and out. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

### **O**BSERVE

- What thoughts are going through your mind right now?
- What are you reacting to?
- What sensations do you notice in your body?

### **P**ULL BACK - PUT IN SOME PERSPECTIVE

- DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK!
- What's the bigger picture?
- What is another way of looking at this situation?
- What advice would I give a friend?
- What would a good friend say to me right now?
- Is this thought a fact or opinion?
- What is a more reasonable explanation?
- How important is this? How important will it be in 6 months' time?
- It will pass.

### **P**ROCEED

- What is the best thing to do right now?
- What is important to me?
- What is the most helpful thing for me, for others, for the situation?
- Do what will be effective and appropriate.



#### **Homework task**

Complete a thought diary and categorise your thinking style.



Date	Situation	Thought	Unhelpful thinking style

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Morning							
Midday							
Afternoon							
Afternoon							
Evening							
Evening							

**Session 5**

**Thought challenging**

Today we are going to focus on the next step which is challenging the thought itself!

Case study

Sam is a 36 year old parent of two children working full time, who is finding it difficult to balance work and family commitments. Sam aims to spend much of the weekend with the family especially as the children want to be taken to classes and to see friends. Sam has fallen behind at work due to a lack of energy and motivation, due to the threat of redundancies, and has recently missed a couple of deadlines. For this reason Sam has had to work some extra hours over the last weekend, meaning that spending quality time with the rest of the family was not possible.

Sam is concerned that working weekends may become a regular occurrence, and starts having thoughts such as “I’m no good at my job” and “I’m a terrible parent.” Sam then starts to feel down and begins to become isolated as spending time with others seems to take up a lot of energy. Sam is thinking about all the things they have done wrong in the past and is spending more time in bed in the morning and in front of the TV in the evening, due to feeling tired after work.

Sam sees that other people at work who are parents seem to be doing really well at work and have fun every weekend with their families. Sam starts to think that “other people are more capable than me” and “my children must think I’m useless”.

What are the unhelpful thoughts that Sam is experiencing?

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What are Sam’s behaviours, emotions and physical sensations?

Behaviours:

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Emotions:

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Physical sensations:

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When we challenge thoughts it is important to remember that we can't challenge the following:

- Statements of fact
- Questions
- Thoughts that are not specific, thoughts that are general and global.

How to challenge thoughts: Taking your Thought to Court

- Step 1: identify the thoughts and write them down, be specific on what the thought is.
- Step 2: identify the emotion and rate the intensity of the emotions from 0-10, 0 being not at all and 10 being the most intense.
- This will help to identify the 'hot thought' which is the thought that is causing us the most distress.
- Step 3: pick which thought you want to challenge. This may be the one with the highest emotional rating, it might not worked on the thought you feel you are ready to and which is most important
- Step 4: identify evidence to support the thought (we are looking for facts that would stand up in the court of law)
- Step 5: identify evidence against the thought (we are looking for facts that would stand up in the court of law)
- Step 6: weigh up the evidence and if possible write down what an alternative thought might be
- Step 7: re-rate your emotion, has the intensity of emotion changed or the emotion itself?

Now have a go at challenging Sam's thoughts. You can use the thought challenging worksheet attached at the end of this week's session.

Have you come up with an alternative thought? Write it down

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How might this change Sam's behaviours, physical sensations and emotions?

Behaviours:

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Emotions:

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Physical sensations:

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**Homework task**

Have a go at thought challenging over the next week.

Thought	Emotion and its intensity (0-10)	Evidence for the thought	Evidence against the thought	New alternative thought	Re-rated emotions and its intensity (0-10)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Morning							
Midday							
Afternoon							
Afternoon							
Evening							
Evening							

## **Session 6**

### **Relapse Prevention**

The next step is to keep the progress going, and to think about how you will continue to stay well. Difficulties will come up in the future, and it is important to have your own toolkits in order to deal with these obstacles.

It's completely normal to feel anxious about the end of this course and worry about what will happen, but remember that you have learnt the skills and techniques to help manage your mood from day to day. Just keep in mind that you have to practice and keep doing these.

### **Relapse Vs Lapse**

Lapses happen, and will happen to most people. These are days when we experience the unhelpful thoughts, maybe engage in the unhelpful behaviours and start to feel down, depressed and we might feel like we have taken a step back. This is normal.

What is important is that when this happens we use the skills and techniques that you have learnt and that you find helpful.

Doing this can stop a relapse where it goes from feeling like this 1 or 2 days maybe a week to a month, 2 months half a year and year even. When this happens we have fallen in to a relapse.

#### **Lapse**

Experiencing low mood and the symptoms associated with this including thoughts and behaviours for a day, 2 maybe up to a week and then engaging in the skills and techniques to overcome this.

#### **Relapse**

A relapse is when we do not respond to the lapse, we continue to engage in the unhelpful behaviours, accept the unhelpful thoughts and focus on the emotions which leads to 2 weeks, a month, 2 months half a year even longer of feeling low and depressed.



Think back at the past few weeks. What do you remember from the previous sessions?  
What did you learn? What tools or idea stood out to you, or felt the most relevant?

You can use this list to

Week 1 – Introduction to CBT

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Week 2 – Unhelpful behaviours and Behavioural Activation

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Week 3 – Review of Behavioural Activation and how to overcome barriers

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Week 4 – Unhelpful thinking styles

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Week 5 – Thought challenging

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Now complete the staying well plan.

## Staying Well Plan

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| 1. | <p><i>What difficulties did I ask for help with?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What things did I want to work on?</i></li></ul>   |
| 2. | <p><i>What was keeping my problem(s) going?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Behaviour e.g. avoiding situations or people</i></li><li>• <i>Thinking e.g. always imagining the worst</i></li><li>• <i>Difficult situations or life events e.g. relationships, work problems</i></li></ul> |
| 3. | <p><i>What progress have I made towards my original goals</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Reflect back to your SMART goals, what progress have you made towards these.</i></li></ul> <p><i>Goal Number 1:</i></p><br><p><i>Goal Number 2:</i></p><br><p><i>Goal Number 3:</i></p>       |

## Staying Well Plan

4. *What ideas and tools have I learned which have helped me?*

5. *What are the positive consequences of these improvements in the different areas of your life?*

*Work life:*

*Things around the home:*

*Family life:*

*Friendships:*

*Social Life:*

*Hobbies and Interests:*

## Staying Well Plan

6.	<p><i>What obstacles might lead to a setback or make it harder to stay well? E.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Stressful life events/ situations</i></li><li>• <i>Motivation and thinking negatively</i></li></ul>
7.	<p><i>My early Warning Signs</i></p> <p><i>What would I notice first if I started to have difficulties again? E.g.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Changes in the way I think e.g. always imagining that things will go wrong</i></li><li>• <i>Changes in my behaviour e.g. avoiding things, drinking</i></li><li>• <i>Changes in how I feel physically e.g. more tired or run down</i></li><li>• <i>Changes in how I feel e.g. tearful or irritable</i></li></ul>
8.	<p><i>What can I do to start to use the strategies I have learned to help me feel better again? Who can I talk to? E.g. friends and family, making time to exercise regularly</i></p>
9.	<p><i>How can I build on what I have achieved?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What further goals could I set up to keep me well?</i></li></ul> <p><i>Short term goal:</i></p>  <p><i>Long term goal:</i></p>

**Notes**