

Let's Talk



Gaining control of your life with a baby

*A self help workbook for managing anxiety and depression
when pregnant or after having a baby*

2nd Edition, 2016

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Disclaimer

The authors have made every effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information in this workbook. However, it is not intended to be a substitute for medical advice or treatment. Any person with a condition requiring medical attention should consult a qualified medical practitioner or suitable therapist. Evidence suggests that self-help material is most effective when you are supported by an appropriately qualified clinician. We strongly advise that when using this workbook you stay in touch with your named clinician. If for any reason you are unable to reach them and you are feeling concerned about your mental health we recommend that you go to see your doctor. Other agencies that can help you are listed at the back of the workbook.

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2gether

Making life better

Gaining control of your life with a baby

A self help workbook for managing anxiety and depression when pregnant or after having a baby.

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About this book

This workbook is a practical guide about how to manage your moods before and after having a baby. The techniques in this workbook come from 'cognitive behavioural therapy'. The 'cognitive' part deals with how you think, and how this can affect your moods. The 'behaviour' part deals with how you can manage your moods by changing what you do.

“ I was very low after my first baby. I think this book is great – it clearly explains depression and what you can do to help yourself and your baby.

Linda, Mum,
32 years

”

Who is it for?

This book is for women who are struggling with low mood, depression or anxiety before or after having their baby. It could also be useful to those who are supporting someone who is struggling at this time in their lives.

Getting the most out of the workbook

You can choose whether you do the programme in full, or dip in and out of the book. We want you to find the ideas and techniques that work best for you. If particular techniques are working for you, stick to them. Writing down thoughts and feelings and practising the techniques over time will help.

Meet Diane, Ros, Kayleigh and Jasmine

Throughout the programme you will hear from four women; Diane, Ros, Kayleigh and Jasmine who will help to bring the techniques to life. Do not worry if you do not exactly recognise yourself or your problems in their stories. These stories are fictional but are based on true life stories from clinical practice.



I am Diane, and was depressed and anxious after the birth of my baby. I'm a perfectionist and have had to learn to accept "good enough" is the key to making me calmer and happier.



My name is Kayleigh. I am a single mum and have had a tough life and a difficult birth. I have little confidence in myself as a Mum. The programme has helped me become happier about myself and my life. I've a long way to go but this has been a good start.



I am Ros. I became depressed when pregnant with my first child. After my second child, Jenna, was born, I felt like a bad mother and lost all energy and enthusiasm. I found this programme helpful in getting me active again.



I'm Jasmine and I was struggling before the birth of my daughter Naomi. I needed to feel more confident about being a Mum. The book teaches you how to take small steps towards your goals which makes it more manageable.





10 Top Tips

1

Talk about it – Find someone you can talk to – it could be your partner, a family member, a friend, another mother, your health visitor - someone who will listen and support you. Be honest about your feelings and don't bottle it up. Don't be afraid to cry.

2

Bonding with baby – Bonding is essential for baby and you but is often not instant. Body contact, eye contact and copying baby's sounds and movements can all help in the early days. Like all relationships, it takes time and effort.

3

Stop avoiding people – When we are low, making contact with people can feel like hard work. However, we need other people and it helps us to feel better. Going to a mother and baby group or just going to a friend for coffee will help. Talk about how you feel and accept help when it's offered.

4 Learn to manage your thinking – When we are low, depressed or anxious our thoughts become negative. You can learn to Catch, Check and Change the way you think. This can help you to start regaining control of your thoughts and then your moods and your life.

5 Get active – Increasing your activity levels day by day will start to make you feel better. Getting active with a small baby can seem impossible, but even short trips out with the baby in the pushchair can help to boost your mood.

6 Do something you enjoy every day – This is a demanding time but you need to have pleasure to feel good about yourself, your baby and your life. Think of something small that used to make you feel good and plan to include it in your day.

7 Learn to relax – When you have a small baby to care for you need to find time to relax. Purposefully relaxing is very useful for when we are getting wound up by situations and our own thoughts. Relaxation exercises are described in this book.

8 Exercise regularly – We know that regular exercise improves mood and lowers anxiety. Plan the type of exercise that would fit with your baby's stage and routine. Walking is a good way of exercising and baby can come too!

9 Focus and accept the present – Your mind may be racing with thoughts and worries about the future. Try and be in the present even if you are very tired and low. Accepting the present moment can help to quieten the mind when it feels as if its spiralling out of your control.

10 Be assertive – Learning to look after your needs and be assertive is a useful skill for you now and for the rest of your life. There are techniques described in this book that may prove useful. It is especially important when you are adjusting to all the demands that are placed on you in caring for a baby.



“

Use these Top Tips to remind you how you can help yourself

This Workbook will describe the techniques in more detail

Alison (Psychologist)

”



During the past month, have you often been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless?

If so, this workbook could help you

Understanding difficult emotions

We understand that feeling bad at a time when you are having or have had a baby is tough. However, we know that there are techniques that you can use to feel in control more quickly. The first step is understanding what you are feeling. Have a look at these questions:

During the past month, have you often been bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless?

During the past month, have you often been bothered by having little interest or pleasure in doing things?

Is this something you feel you need or want help with?

If yes to the above- this workbook could help you.

Find out whether you are anxious and depressed.

Visit our website to find out more about your scores www.talk2gether.nhs.uk

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

| Please tick | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Little interest or pleasure in doing things | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Trouble falling/staying asleep, sleeping too much | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Feeling tired or having little energy | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Poor appetite or overeating | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Moving or speaking so slowly that other people have noticed, or moving around a lot more than usual | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| PHQ9 Depression Total Score | | | | |

Depression Score **None** 0 - 4 **Mild** 5 - 9 **Moderate** 10 - 14 **Severe** 15 and above

| Please tick | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Not being able to stop or control worrying | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Worrying too much about different things | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Trouble relaxing | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Being so restless that it is hard to sit still | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Becoming easily annoyed or irritable | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| GAD7 Anxiety Total score | | | | |

Anxiety Scores **None** 0 - 5 **Mild** 6 - 10 **Moderate** 11 - 14 **Severe** 15 and above

Baby blues occur in up to 80% of women at around three to five days after delivery and lasts up to about 48 hours. It is a brief episode of emotional instability, and is not postnatal depression. Depression isn't just about feeling sad, but lots of other symptoms too. These symptoms can include changes in your emotions, your thinking, your body, the way you behave, and the way you feel about your baby and about being a mother. You are not alone. Between 10% - 15% of women develop depression before or after childbirth. Many more women will feel low and anxious at this time of their lives.



Meet Kayleigh

I am Kayleigh and I am 18 years old. Joshua is now six months old and the two of us live in a flat in the city centre. Joshua's dad left us

two months ago. He said he couldn't put up with how I had changed and the broken nights. My mum lives nearby but we don't get on. I was abused as a child and have tried to harm myself in the past. I feel I am a rubbish mother.

I had a complicated labour and an emergency caesarean section. Joshua had to be in the Special Care Baby Unit for a week so I didn't see him much. I can't get into a routine and now I can't be bothered to sort things out. Joshua sleeps through the night now but I don't. I just lie awake and worry or cry.

INFORMATION POINT

For lots more helpful information please visit www.talk2gether.nhs.uk for managing depression and anxiety

Why me, Why now?

There are a number of things that cause and keep depression going and these will be described in this part of the workbook.

Sometimes there is nothing we can do about the cause of depression but we can certainly do something to stop getting worse. Starting to do something differently can help to make you feel a bit more in control and slow down the vicious cycle.



INFORMATION POINT

You need professional help if you have thoughts of suicide and/or thoughts of harming your baby. Telling someone is the first step to feeling better

Situation

Certain situations make it more likely for a woman to feel more vulnerable around the time of childbirth. For example:

- Major life events, particularly around loss
- Being socially isolated
- Being unhappy in a relationship
- Job stress and money worries
- Stress related to physical health.

Thoughts

Each of us is affected differently by situations, depending on how we think about them. Imagine a phone call that is expected from a close friend that does not happen. What would you think?

One person, for example, Kayleigh, may regard this as evidence that the friend does not want to speak to her and thinks the friend is avoiding her. Kayleigh would then feel low but would not call the friend herself, concluding that the friend was annoyed with her. Another person may be curious about the missed call but think that the friend is busy or has forgotten. They would call the friend to have the conversation that was planned and their mood would be unaffected. Notice that the way we think can lead to the way we feel, and this can then lead us to behave differently.

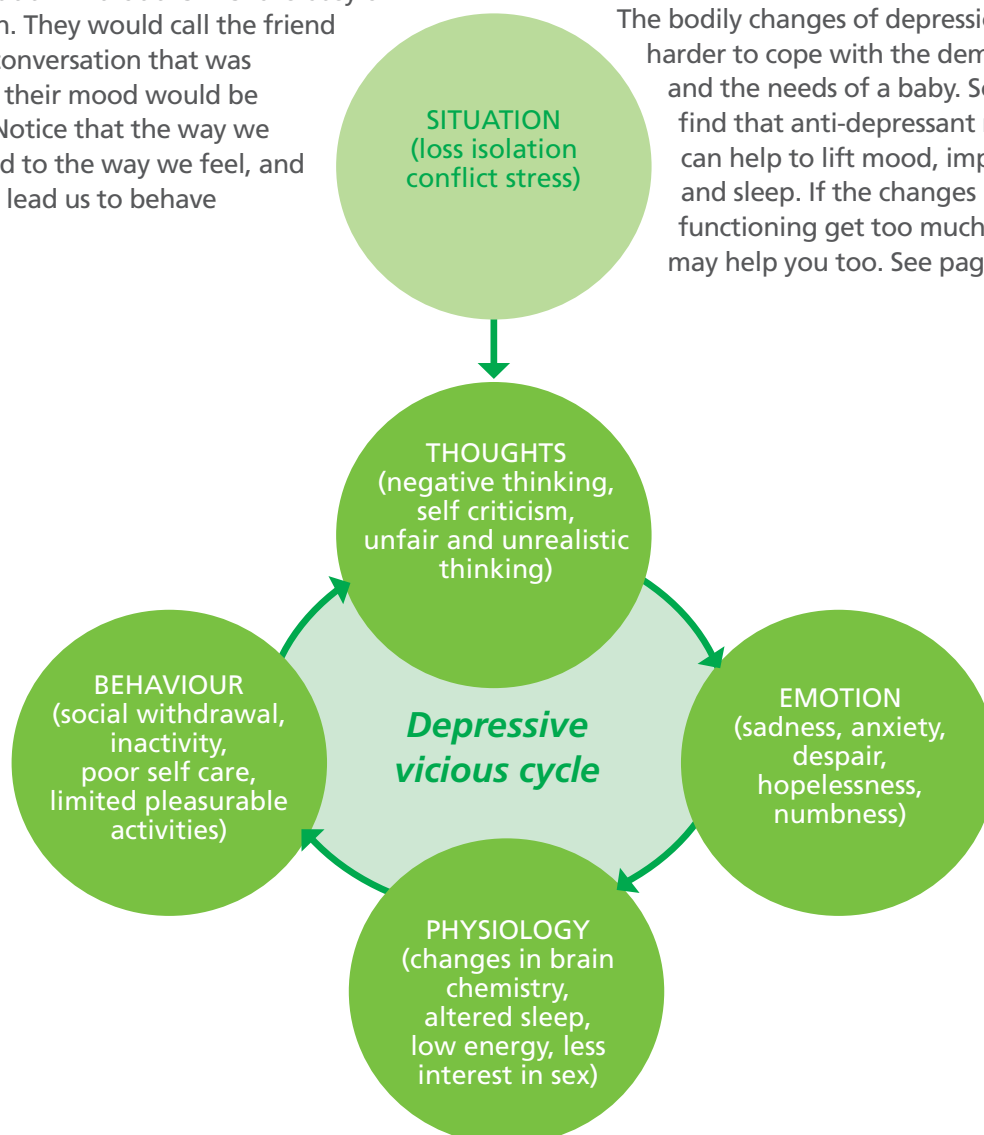
Emotion

When depressed, we can feel not just sad, but overwhelmed by feelings of despair. A profound feeling of anxiety and often a sense of impending doom can accompany these depressed feelings. Others feel numb and detached. Some psychologists talk about this ability to switch off as a way of protecting ourselves against intense psychological pain. In the same way that your thoughts can become unbalanced and negative, your emotions can become extreme and unbalanced too.

Physical feelings

Having a baby as well as feeling low and anxious can make us feel very different physically. One of the most important changes is in the quality of our sleep. Having broken nights over a period of time is exhausting. Worrying about this can make it worse. It is normal to have a disrupted sleep pattern when you have a baby because of night feeds. But with depression and anxiety you may be unable to get back to sleep when the baby sleeps. For more information about sleep, please look in the back of this workbook.

The bodily changes of depression make it harder to cope with the demands of life and the needs of a baby. Some people find that anti-depressant medication can help to lift mood, improve appetite and sleep. If the changes in body functioning get too much for you, it may help you too. See page 57.



Behaviour

Low mood, depression and anxiety can have a big impact on how you behave. It can make you withdraw from other people including your baby, family and friends. It can make you stop taking care of yourself, stop you doing things you used to enjoy and stop you getting on with day to day jobs. It can affect the way you care for and bond with your baby.

Below are some common examples and their likely results:

- **Withdrawing from others, for example:**

Refusing social invitations, avoiding telephone calls, avoiding intimacy and sex with partner, not playing with your baby

- **Not doing the things you used to enjoy, for example:**

Not doing your hobbies or taking time to look after yourself

- **Neglecting everyday tasks, for example:**

Not doing the washing up, put washing out or putting off or not finishing tasks

- **Not caring about yourself, for example:**

Not washing your hair, not exercising or caring about your appearance, not eating well or regularly

The likely result of behaving in these ways is that it:


- prevents you having the good feelings associated with being with others
- confirms negative beliefs that no one wants to be with you or likes you
- limits your opportunities for feeling pleasure or a sense of achievement
- means that inactivity becomes a habit and adds to feelings of fatigue
- stops you receiving personal satisfaction
- adds to your sense of inadequacy
- may frustrate others
- adds to the feeling that your life is out of your control
- limits emotional and physical benefits of exercise.



Summary

Feeling low and anxious during this time in your life is very common. Depression comes in many forms and has many causes. It affects not just mood, but also the way we think, feel and behave. If your symptoms are mild to moderate, your Health Visitor and GP will be able to help you. If the symptoms are more severe, or are getting worse - you need professional mental health assistance.

There are a number of factors that cause and maintain depression, including our behaviour, difficult life situations, our emotions, physiology and the way we think. The vicious cycle can be interrupted by you using just one of the techniques described in this workbook.

A close-up photograph of a woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white top and a gold necklace, holding a newborn baby. The woman's eyes are closed, and she has a gentle expression. The baby is wearing a blue onesie and is also sleeping. The background is softly blurred, showing a hint of a blue wall and a white object.

If you have a history of BiPolar Disorder you are at significantly increased risk of becoming unwell shortly after birth so please inform your midwife and GP so they can help you maintain your mental wellbeing

“ Don't be scared that if you tell someone how you are feeling, your baby will be taken away. Health professionals are there to help and knowing how bad you are feeling will help them give you the correct treatment and help

”

Mark, GP



Setting goals

The first and most important part of any self-help programme is to set goals for what you want to achieve. Unless you have a clear plan, set goals and stick to it, change will be more difficult. Choosing what you want to change is a key part of successfully moving forward.

INFORMATION POINT

For lots more
helpful information
please visit
www.talk2gether.nhs.uk
for managing
depression and
anxiety

Check whether your goals are SMART:

Setting goals

The first and most important part of any self-help program is to set SMART goals.

SMART stands for :

- S** Specific-make your goal specific enough so you know exactly what you are working towards
- M** Measurable-how much, by when, with whom? This way, you know when you have achieved it
- A** Achievable-make it realistic. Start small and build up
- R** Rewarding-make your goal enjoyable, rewarding and meaningful to you
- T** Time-limited-state when are you going to achieve it?

Achieving your goals involves work but the rewards are worth it! REMEMBER: It has taken you months or years to get to where you are, so it will take time for things to change. With perseverance and practice you can get there!

Your goals for this programme:

Write down some goals to work on during this programme. These may change over time but it is important that you think about what you are trying to achieve.



Goal 1

Goal 2

Goal 3

Goal 4

Goal 5



Meet Diane

My name is Diane and I am 34 years old. Rory is now 4 months old and has had really bad colic. I had a normal delivery but it was a long labour and I felt very out of control.

I am breast feeding and regret that I will have to give up at least some feeds so that I can return to work. I am a primary school teacher and am due to return to work in 3 months time.

I have taken Rory to see the GP quite often and I have also had to go myself quite a bit as I haven't been sleeping well and have felt low for a few weeks now. I have been crying a lot lately and am not sure why. I am also really worried about going back to work and the GP thinks my headaches and dizziness are because I am anxious. I used to be so organised and pride myself in having a very organised and spotlessly clean house. Now I can't keep on top of the house and I don't feel like doing anything properly at all. I keep having thoughts about being a useless mother and that just makes me feel worse. Rory cries a lot and I am just not coping.

Diane's initial goals were as follows:

- Keep up with the housework
- Be a better mum for Rory
- Attend choir practice
- Sleep better.

After talking to her doctor and sister, Diane modified her goals and made them SMART:

- Set a realistic list of housework tasks for the week and spend no more than half an hour each day doing the tasks listed
- Start a night time sleep routine for Rory as advised by Health Visitor
- Attend weekly choir practice and arrange child-care in advance
- Begin practising morning routine in preparation for going back to work as from Monday
- Read this workbook to understand and change bad thoughts about myself
- Read sleep advice (found in the back of this workbook) and try the suggestions.

Summary

- Make a decision to change and set your goals
- Give yourself the time you need to change
- It's not about making enormous changes in your life, the small steps add up
- Practice is the key to any successful self-help programme. The more you do the techniques the more they will happen automatically.

Homework

Decide on some mini goals for the coming week and write them down. If you only want to set one goal that is fine.

Do you have someone you could ask to support you with this programme? It may be useful to have someone to encourage you to stick to it.

INFORMATION POINT
For lots more helpful information please visit

www.talk2gether.nhs.uk
for managing depression and anxiety



Getting to know yourself

We understand that you cannot change things until you know more about the problem. This is why we encourage you to keep detailed diaries of your activities, thoughts and feelings. By recognising patterns in your thoughts, feelings and behaviour you can be clearer about what needs to change.

There are 2 types of diaries:

The first type is an ACTIVITY diary (recording what you do) and the second is a THOUGHT diary (recording what you were thinking). Completing diaries may not be easy at first. However learning more about how you think and behave can help you to understand what triggers your difficult feelings and also helps you to pinpoint what you can do to make it better.

Activity Diary

Low mood, anxiety and depression can have a big impact on how you behave. Increasing the amount of achievement and pleasure you experience in your daily life is the key to your feeling better. The aim of the diary is to help you see:

- how you are planning and using your time effectively
- whether what you are doing is rewarding and pleasurable
- whether your activity is social and is helping you connect with others
- which activities give you most pleasure, reward and sense of achievement
- what can be changed to get you feeling better.

Using activity diary sheets

For each hour of the coming day (or week if you can manage it), write down what you actually did and rate your sense of pleasure and achievement.

This activity diary sheet can become a regular feature of your programme if you find it helpful. Use it to monitor and plan your levels of Pleasure and of Achievement. You can also use it to plan how to become more active generally in your life. (See Part 5) If you choose not to complete this diary sheet that's OK but still try to increase pleasure and achievement. The diary sheet is in the back of the book if you want to use it.

Diane rates her pleasure (P) and her sense of Achievement (A) on a scale of 0-10

| Hours | Monday | |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|
| 6am | Awake since last breastfeed at 3 am. Breastfeeding again. | P=0 A=4 |
| 7am | Asleep. | P=8 A=0 |
| 8am | Woken up by Rory wanting another feed. Changed and dressed him and myself. | P=5 A=6 |
| 9am | Breakfast. Didn't finish it as Rory crying. Put the sterilizer unit on one-handed! | P=4 A=5 |
| 10am | Put the washing on, made shopping list, attempted to clear up. Had to pick Rory up a lot, so gave up on tidying. | P=2 A=2 |
| 11am | Breastfeed and nappy change. | P=8 A=8 |
| Noon | Rory asleep. Rang Vicky about tonight, then had lunch. | P=8 A=9 |
| 1pm | Bottlefed Rory. | P=3 A=7 |
| 2pm | Flying round house tidying up. Tearful now. | P=2 A=0 |
| 3pm | Breastfed and changed nappies. | P=8 A=8 |
| 4pm | Prepared tea and hanging washing out. | P=5 A=8 |
| 5pm | Steve home on time! Had tea together straight away. | P=9 A=9 |
| 6pm | Breastfed. Rory crying a lot, but David is looking after him. Worried about going out and leaving Rory. | P=6 A=5 |
| 7pm | Choir practice with Vicky. | P=8 A=8 |
| 8pm | Rory asleep on David's tummy. Watched telly for half an hour. | P=9 A=9 |
| 9pm | Breastfed Rory. | P=8 A=8 |
| 10pm | Rory asleep. Set up sterilizing unit for tomorrow. Exhausted. | P=2 A=3 |
| 11pm | Asleep. | |
| 12pm | Asleep. What a day! Was really worried about the first bottle feed and going back to choir practice, but I did it! | |
| 1-6am | Breastfed Rory at 3.00 am. | P=2 A=5 |

Rate your Pleasure (P) 0–10 (0 = no pleasure, 10 = intense pleasure) and
Achievement (A) 0–10 (0 = no sense of achievement, 10 = strong sense of achievement)

| Hours | Day _____ |
|-------|-----------|
| 6am | |
| 7am | |
| 8am | |
| 9am | |
| 10am | |
| 11am | |
| Noon | |
| 1pm | |
| 2pm | |
| 3pm | |
| 4pm | |
| 5pm | |
| 6pm | |
| 7pm | |
| 8pm | |
| 9pm | |
| 10pm | |
| 11pm | |
| 12pm | |
| 1-6am | |



INFORMATION POINT

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helpful information
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depression and
anxiety

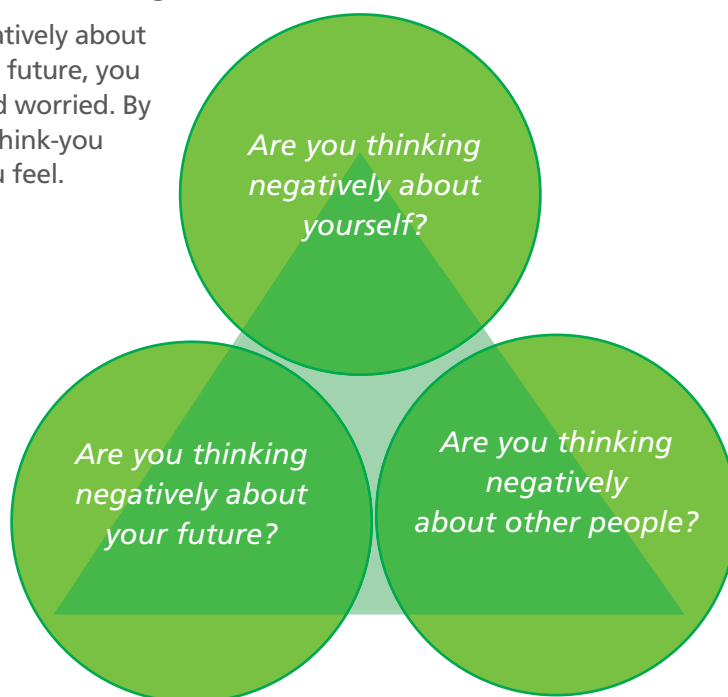
Thought monitoring

When we are low, depressed or anxious, our thinking tends to be negative and not balanced. We think everything is going wrong, no-one cares and that we will never feel happy again. The way we think determines how we feel.

The negative thinking triangle:

Keeping diary recordings of our thoughts can be very revealing and helpful. If you cannot get to grips with recording your thoughts in this way, try to just listen to what you are thinking a bit more.

If you are thinking negatively about yourself, others and the future, you will start to feel low and worried. By changing the way you think-you can change the way you feel.



HELPFUL HINT

You need professional assistance if you have thoughts of suicide. Telling someone is the first step to feeling better. You can think and feel differently with help.

Contact your GP or the Samaritans on 116 123 or email Jo@samaritans.org if you feel you are at risk



Throughout this programme you will be encouraged to complete thought diaries. This is an important skill which, once mastered, will help you feel more in control of your mood. You will learn what situations and, in particular, what thoughts are making you feel so bad.

Using thought diary sheets (Stage 1)

1. Situation

Think about how you have been feeling over the last week. Do any situations stand out for having made you feel particularly bad? Think in detail about the situation in which you felt the emotion. Where were you? What were you doing? What had just happened? Write down the situation in Column 1 of the thought diary.

2. Emotion

Write down the emotion in Column 2 of the thought diary. Usually emotions can be expressed in one word – Sad, Nervous, Furious, Cheerful, Disappointed, Humiliated, Embarrassed, Scared, Proud, Panicky, Irritated, Depressed, Afraid etc.

3. Emotion Rating

Rate out of 100 the strength or intensity of the emotion in Column 3. 100% would mean that you are feeling the emotion as intensely as is possible. 5% would mean feeling the emotion hardly at all.

4. Thoughts

Can you recall any of the thoughts that were going through your mind just before or as the emotion surfaced? Write down the thoughts in Column 4 however distressing, irrelevant or true the thought seems now. The more you can catch your thoughts the quicker you will be able to catch and control the mood before it takes over. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is or was going through my mind?
- What am I afraid might happen?
- Is this reminding me of something else?

| 1. Situation | 2. Emotion | 3. Emotion rating | 4. Thoughts |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| At home alone with Joshua waiting for my aunt to arrive after she finishes work. She was due half an hour ago. Not responding to mobile. | Afraid | 80% | Where is my aunt. Maybe she has decided to do some overtime. She could have rung me |
| | Worried | 60% | I'm falling apart if I cannot handle this, I should be able to handle this |
| | Depressed | 92% | I feel pains in my chest and feel so unwell. I am sure there is something going on with my health. My weight does not help |
| | Angry | 38% | This bloody programme isn't helping! I need more help I am not bonding with my baby Maybe there has been an accident I can't cope |

Thinking errors

There are a number of ways of thinking that can be unhelpful and can make us feel worse. Here are the most common thinking errors that occur: *Tick the ways of thinking that you recognise in yourself. More than one (sometimes all) will apply:*

☐ Jumping to negative conclusions

- Drawing a negative conclusion when there is little or no evidence to support it. e.g. *"My partner is late home – he has had a car accident"*. Or you may convince yourself that things will turn out badly, e.g. *"There is something seriously wrong with my baby."*

☐ Fortune telling

- Predicting the future in a negative way based on your feelings, not necessarily on fact; e.g. *"I feel the odd one out at ToddlerDucks, no-one likes me and no-one will talk to me."*

☐ Catastrophising

- Exaggerating the impact of events and convincing yourself that if something goes wrong it will be totally unbearable and intolerable, e.g. *"If I don't get the feeding sorted out, Jack will become seriously ill and I will not be able to cope."*

☐ All-or-nothing thinking

- Seeing things in black and white, e.g. Thinking *"I fail at everything"*, *"nothing works out for me"*. A common form of black-and-white thinking is expecting perfection from ourselves, e.g. *"If I can't breast feed, I'm a complete failure."*

☐ Mind reading

- You think you know what others are thinking about you and it's always negative. You react accordingly and rarely check out the truth. For example *"I bet they think I'm a terrible mother – I won't come to the Mother and Baby group again."*

☐ Personalising

- Blaming yourself for anything unpleasant, and taking too much responsibility for things that aren't under your control, e.g. *"the meeting with friends felt a bit flat- I'm boring, its my fault."*

☐ Filtering

- Only looking at the bad never the good. People who think in this way tend to reject their achievements, compliments and other positive experiences by insisting that they *"don't count"* for some reason, e.g. *"He only gave me that compliment because he knows I feel bad at the moment."*

☐ Overgeneralisation

- Expecting that because something has gone wrong once or twice, that it will always do so. An example is thinking after an unpleasant experience, *"I'm never doing that again, it's far too difficult"*, or *"I tried this before, I always get it wrong."*

☐ Labelling

- Undervaluing yourself and putting yourself down. For example, *"I'm so stupid/weak/useless"* and *"I don't deserve any better."*



Meet Ros

My name is Ros, I am 24 years old and have been with Simon, for four years. We have two children. Jamie is nearly two years old and Jenna is 5 months old. Simon and I were both at university when we met. He now works as a personal fitness trainer in a leisure centre and meets up with his old student friends every week. We used to do a lot of outdoor activities but we can't afford it at the moment and anyway I don't have the time, the energy or the enthusiasm. We live in a small rented town house and still have outstanding student loan repayments.

I suffered with depression when I was a student and then had postnatal depression after Jamie was born. Since Jenna was born I haven't felt very affectionate towards her. I feel irritable most of the time and guilty that I am not being a very good mother. Jenna cries a lot and is difficult to settle. I'm not enjoying being a mother and sometimes I think everyone would be better off if I wasn't around. Simon doesn't understand and doesn't help very much. We are not as close as we used to be.

A neighbour has offered to help me out but when she came round and knocked on the door last week I didn't answer. Sometimes I don't answer the phone either. I don't think I am very good company at the moment so I think people won't want to spend time with me.

See below how Ros completed her first thought diary:

| 1. Situation | 2. Emotion | 3. Emotion rating | 4. Thoughts |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.00pm Thursday evening - Watching TV, breastfeeding Jenna. About to put children to bed | Frustrated | 95% | Why do I always have to put them to bed? |
| | Guilty | 70% | I'm not enjoying being a mum. |
| 11.00am Friday call from girlfriend inviting me around for a coffee | Panic | 70% | I feel too low to go for a coffee. I wouldn't be very good company. Nice of her to offer but she is just feeling sorry for me |
| 7.00pm Friday evening Simon about to go out to meet friends at pub | Angry | 65% | He is going out and I am left at home Again! |
| 10.30pm Friday evening | Lonely | 95% | I am not happy in my relationship. |

“

Writing the diaries has really helped me see what I am doing to myself. It gets easier the more you do it and you don't need to do it forever

Clare, Mum, 28yrs

”



Summary

- Monitoring your activity will help you see how much or how little pleasure and achievement you are experiencing and help you plan to make this more balanced.
- Monitoring your thinking will help you to understand the link between your unhelpful thoughts and your feelings.
- Learning about the thinking errors you might be making will help you to start changing the way you think.

Homework

We would encourage you to start monitoring yourself. Use the diary sheets provided at the back of the book if you find this helpful. It's best to write down your activity and your thoughts as you go, rather than waiting for the end of the day. Our memories are never as reliable as we imagine and this is particularly true when we are feeling bad.

There are 3 things that would be useful for you to do in the coming week:

- Complete the activity monitoring diary for the next week.
- Complete the thought diary (Stage 1) over the next week. Write down the ups and downs in your emotions in the way suggested. Notice any patterns in your emotions, thoughts, or the situations where they arose. Make a note of your observations.
- Decide on at least one mini goal for the coming week and write it down below so you can commit to achieving it:

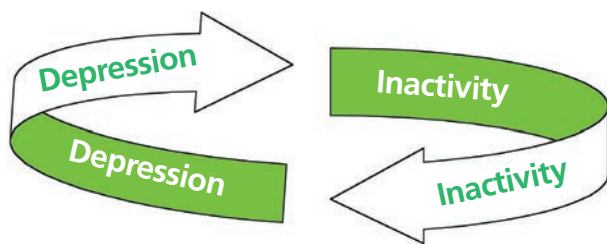
Diary sheets for your use are in the back of this book.



Changing the way you behave

If you are following the programme in full you will have started monitoring your activity levels and may have noticed that you have become more inactive as a result of your low mood or anxiety. When you're not feeling good, you often stop doing the things that make you feel good about yourself and your life. You avoid phone calls that could be invitations, you stop doing anything you don't have to, because you are so tired. You stop exercising and feel more tired. You feel so low- you comfort yourself by being less active.

Opting out of life gives us short term relief but actually makes us more depressed. The more inactive you become, the more depressed you feel.



Often you think that you will wait until you feel better and then you will get active. DON'T WAIT. The longer you wait the harder it gets and the more stuck your depression will become. The solution is to gradually get more active. This workbook will help you decide on ways in which you can start now to recover. You may think that the goals you write are so little that they will not make a difference. However, we know that small steps can build up to some significant change and eventually to recovery.

Note down in the spaces below all your ideas on how you could be getting more active, starting NOW. At the end of this part of the workbook you can make these ideas into goals.

Withdrawing from others

Examples

Picking up phone calls, keeping in contact with others, going to a class or social group, attending social occasions.

Write your thoughts on how you could be more active:

Self Care

Examples

Getting dressed each day, eating healthily, exercising, personal grooming.

Write your thoughts on how you could be more active:

Personally rewarding activities

Examples

Taking up a new hobby, revisiting an old interest, walking in open air, renting a favourite DVD.

Write your thoughts on how you could be more active:

Everyday tasks

Examples

Opening the post, paying bills, cleaning the house, iron the clothes, run the errands. Do what you've been putting off.

Write your thoughts on how you could be more active:



Meet Jasmine

My name is Jasmine and I am 28 years old. I live with my husband, Nick, and my daughter Naomi who is 9 months old. We moved house not long after Naomi was born because of my husband's job so I don't know many people where I live. My mother-in-law comes to stay and she helps a lot. She does so much with Naomi and is so much better at looking after her and getting her to sleep than I am, that I feel really useless. I dread her going because when she is not there and Nick is at work I really feel I can't cope on my own. Most of the time I can't seem to concentrate on anything and I feel totally exhausted. Sometimes I feel terribly panicky. I have even phoned my husband at work when I have been really desperate. He is a great father and husband and has come home once or twice in the day, but his boss doesn't like it.

When I last took Naomi to the Baby Clinic the health visitor asked me how I was feeling and I told her that I feel I am not doing a good job at being a mother. I said that as much as I love Naomi I can't see how things will ever get any better.

These were some of the ideas I wrote down to change the way I behave:

- To feed Naomi and change her nappies whilst mother-in-law is staying
- Text Nick instead of ringing him
- Attend a Mother and Baby group
- Find out about local Yoga classes
- Practise my breathing techniques daily.

“
Achieving
something small may
be just the start you need
to get some
self confidence and
start to feel better
”
Suzanne, therapist



Completing activity diaries

If you are completing activity diary sheets you will be starting to notice changes in your mood throughout the day and week. You may also be noticing which activities make you feel better and which make you feel worse. Consider the following questions:

- Are there times of the day or days in the week when your mood is brighter or lower?
- Are there situations that seem to depress or lift your mood?
- Which activities seem to make you feel better about yourself and about life?
- Which activities make you feel worse about yourself and about life?
- What is the balance between chores, pleasure, achievement, and socialising? Does this feel OK for you?
- Can you use this information to improve your mood?

Summary

Low mood, anxiety and depression can make us opt out of life which gives us short-term relief but in the long term makes us feel worse.

Getting more involved with family and friends, improving how you care for yourself, doing more rewarding activities and picking up your everyday tasks can lead to an improvement in your mood.

Homework

- Choose two activities that you have not been doing recently. Choose from different areas, for example, self care and everyday tasks. Write these activities below. Remember to make your goals realistic and specific.

Activity 1:

Activity 2:

- Complete your activity diary over the coming weeks and check whether you are including the above activities
- Continue to complete diary sheets to help you notice moods and thoughts
- Write down your goals for the coming week as it may help you to achieve them.

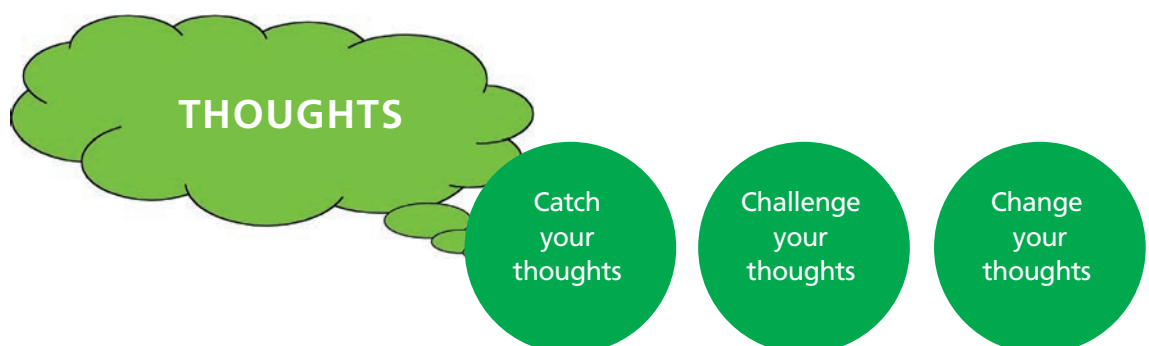




Changing the way you think

Once you have started to notice your ways of thinking you have an opportunity to look at your thoughts and change them in a way that could make you feel better, both now and in the future.

There are 3 things you need to do to control depressed thoughts. It may help to remember the 3 Cs:



Catching your thoughts

When we are feeling low it is difficult to recognise unhelpful thoughts. They come and go very quickly, so you might not even be aware you are thinking them. The diary sheets can help you to practise catching the thoughts that lead to changes in your mood.

Challenge your thoughts

When you are familiar with the kinds of things you say to yourself when under stress, you can begin to challenge these thoughts and find better ways of thinking.

Questions to ask yourself to help challenge your thoughts

- Is there a possibility that this thought may not be completely 100% true?
- Is there an alternative explanation?
- How else could you see the situation? Try to think of as many alternative explanations as possible.
- Might I be making thinking errors, for example: jumping to negative conclusions, fortune telling, catastrophising, all-or-nothing thinking, mind reading, personalising, filtering, overgeneralising or labelling?
- If a friend was in this situation and had this thought, what would I tell him/her? Imagine a friend was thinking your thought, would you still agree with it?
- Have I been here before, thought this before and found later that my thoughts were not entirely correct?
- What's the worst that could happen? How likely is it to happen? Even if it did happen, could I live through it?
- One year on from now, will I look back on this situation and think differently?

Completing diary sheets/Stage 2

You have been learning to catch your thoughts. Now you need to practise challenging your thoughts and coming up with a changed thought.

What we ask you to do is to continue to complete the diary sheets as you have been doing but to also complete columns 5, 6, 7 and 8.

The 8 steps are as follows:

Stage 1

1. Situation
2. Emotion
3. Emotion strength rating
4. Immediate thoughts

Stage 2

5. Evidence to support the thought

Pick the most troubling thought for you. Check this thought against the evidence for and against it. What evidence do you have to support the idea that your thought is 100% TRUE? Are you using additional information to support the thought? If so write it down in column 5.

6. Evidence against the thought

Look at the questions on the previous page and ask yourself these questions. Is there a possibility that the thought you are having is not 100% true? Is there another way of looking at the situation? What would you tell a friend?

7. Changed thought?

Now that you have considered the evidence for and against your thought and challenged it, can you come up with a fairer, more realistic, balanced thought? Has your thought changed at all? If not, go back to your evidence columns and the questions on the previous page to check you have not missed anything.

8. Emotion rating now?

Do you feel different or has your mood stayed the same? Make a note of it in column 8.

Have a look at one of Jasmine's diary sheets shown overleaf. Her thoughts that she is a 'bad mother' and is 'going to panic' indicates her depressed and anxious thinking.

Jasmines Diary Sheet

| Situation | Emotion | Emotion rating | Thoughts | Evidence to support the thought | Evidence against the thought | Changed thought | Emotion rating now |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 4.30am awake in bed thinking about day ahead | Sad, Depressed Afraid, (I feel sick with worry) | 90% 85% 99% | <p>I'm going to be shattered if I don't get some sleep</p> <p>I am not a good MOTHER</p> <p>Maybe we should ask Brenda to come and live with us permanently</p> <p>Baby is only well looked after when she is staying</p> <p>There is only a meal on the table for Nick in the evening when she is staying</p> | Everything gets done and runs smoothly when Brenda is here. | <p>Naomi is fed and changed when Brenda is not around.</p> <p>I am coping even though I am not happy at the moment</p> | <p>I am capable of coping on my own.</p> <p>Life will be disorganised for a while and then ok</p> | 60% 40% 50% |
| 10.00am Going to mother and baby group. A group of women are looking at me | Fear Panic | 80% 80% | <p>I feel incompetent</p> <p>They will see that I can't look after my baby</p> <p>I AM GOING TO PANIC</p> | <p>I can feel my heart beating faster and got sweaty hands</p> <p>They are looking at me</p> | <p>I am in control of my breathing</p> <p>They are smiling at me</p> <p>These are only sensations - they cannot hurt me</p> <p>They know how this feels</p> | <p>Everyone finds it difficult being a mother at times. I need to recognise that it is not just me who feels this way</p> | 50% 30% 50% |



Indicates Jasmine's depressed and anxious thoughts

Troubleshooting for thought challenging

"I can't 'catch' my thoughts."

Write down your thoughts, as soon as you have them if you can. As soon as you notice yourself getting low, ask yourself "What's going through my mind?" If your thoughts are in the form of questions: "Are they thinking I'm stupid?" write them down in statement form: "They think I'm stupid" – it is easier to argue with statements than questions.

"I can't remember my challenging questions/self-statements when I need them."

Write down your challenging questions/self-statements in full. They will have more impact, be easier to recall later and you will find you are challenging your thoughts more effectively. You may want to write them on a card and carry them around with you so you can quickly read them when you're feeling your emotions are getting out of control.

"It's not working."

Practise. Again, this is a skill; do not expect fantastic results immediately. Eventually, rational responses to worrying thoughts will be as automatic as you find the depressive response is now.

Don't be put off if you have both *"good"* and *"bad"* days – this is perfectly normal. Sometimes we find we are just too tired, anxious or upset to challenge our thoughts. Try and go back to them later when you feel brighter and work out why it was harder for you at that occasion. But don't let it add to your worries.



Changing your thoughts

Once you have identified and challenged your worrying thoughts you may be able to see how pessimistic, irrational and extreme your thoughts had become. When our thinking becomes more balanced we begin to feel better about ourselves and our mood can begin to lift.

These are examples that other people have used in response to unhelpful thoughts:

"I'm hopeless."

I'm not perfect, but then nobody is. Everyone's good at some things and not so good at others. I am very good at some things. I am putting myself down.

"I can't stand it."

I can probably bear this – I've felt like this before and survived in the past.

"I'm going to get anxious and upset in front of everyone and look stupid."

I probably feel more anxious than I look. Anyway, even if it does show, people are a lot more understanding than I think. What's wrong with showing emotion anyway? Being anxious is not the same as being stupid!

"Nobody likes me – they're just talking to me to be polite."

There are people who like me. I've had friends in the past and will do again in the future. They wouldn't be talking to me at all if they really disliked me. I don't need to be liked by everyone all the time.

"What's the point in trying?"

If I don't try, I won't know. I have to try things to get better at them. Nobody is expecting me to do it perfectly. I can't predict the future.

"My health visitor is going to know I can't look after my baby and she will be taken away from me."

The health visitor can see that my baby is well fed, clothed and cared for. She knows I am trying to get myself out of this depression and has been supporting me. I am catastrophising.



Helpful 'self-statements'

Some people find it useful to make a list of statements they can say to themselves when they are having depressed thoughts. These will be very similar to the kinds of 'changed thoughts' mentioned on the previous page. Here are a few examples:

Some helpful 'self-statements'

- *"One step at a time."*
- *"Is this really worth getting upset about?"*
- *"I can bear anything for a while."*
- *"My thinking is not realistic whilst I am depressed."*
- *"I am not alone."*
- *"I am a worthwhile person. I am not perfect but I am valued."*
- *"I've got through worse things than this – I'll be fine."*
- *"I'm doing really well. I might be depressed, but I'm here, facing it. That's something to be proud of."*

Watch out for your rule book

Your rule book consists of the thoughts you carry around about the way you SHOULD, OUGHT, MUST live your life. You believe and obey them as if they were the TRUTH. These are the common unhelpful rules by which people who get depressed or anxious tend to live. Notice that the consequences of not following the rules are believed to be catastrophic.

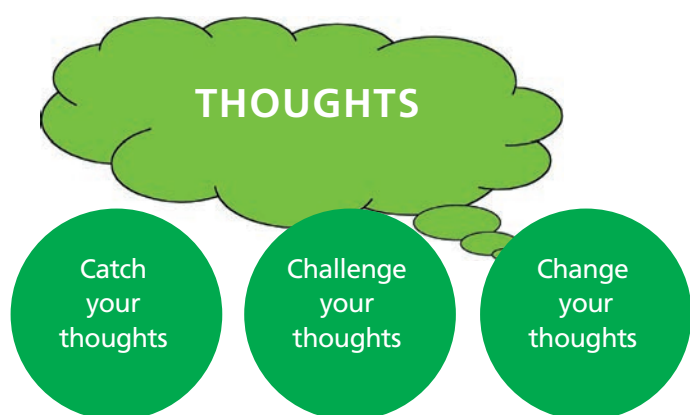
- I must be a perfect Mum or else I have failed.
- I must love my child unconditionally and at all times or I am a bad mother.
- I should not be depressed or show emotions as it is a sign of weakness.
- I must be liked by everyone or else I am unlovable.
- I must always have my life under control or else there will be chaos (and I won't cope).
- I must always get things right or else others will think I am stupid.

[illegible]

Summary

Changing the way we think is another key skill. There are 3 things you need to do to control depressed or anxious thoughts.

- Catching thoughts is not easy but the diary sheets do help with this skill.
- Before the mood has overwhelmed you, try challenging the thought using the questions provided.
- There are a number of questions that you can ask yourself that might help you to examine your thoughts. You can check whether or not you are making any thinking errors, such as jumping to conclusions or mind reading. Once you have done this, you can consider alternative explanations.
- Once your thoughts have been challenged, they can become more balanced, fair and realistic.
- Look out for your rule book. Although you have believed these rules for a long time, it may be time to re-examine them.



“ Recognising that there were less negative ways of viewing a situation was really a key thing for me. Now I am well, I still challenge my thoughts as it has been one of the best ways to spot and prevent a relapse ”

Linda, Mum

Homework

Over the coming 2–3 weeks

- Choose a further two activities that you have not been doing recently. Choose from different areas, for example, personally rewarding activities and everyday tasks. Write these activities below:

Remember to make your goals realistic and specific

Activity 1:

Activity 2:

- Continue to complete your activity diary (if helpful) and check whether you are including the above activities as well as the goals set in the last part. Notice how you are feeling when you increase your level of activity in particular areas.
- Complete a thought diary (Stage 2) to help you notice moods and begin to challenge your thoughts. Notice any rules emerging.
- If you have additional mini goals for the coming week write them down below as it may help you to achieve them. Remember small changes build up.



“ It’s taken me many months to bond with Suki. It’s great now but I worried when it wasn’t instant ”

Clare, Mum, 28yrs

Bonding with your baby

Baby bonding is the unique intense attachment between a parent and their baby that makes the baby feel safe and calm. When strong bonds are made early on in life the baby is more secure and it is key to how the child develops and forms relationships later in life. The baby is usually ready to bond instantly but some parents can take longer.

Bonding may be delayed if your baby spends time in intensive care, is unwell or if you are feeling low or in pain after birth. If you have adopted your baby or child, bonding can also take longer.

At first, all the sounds, cries and movements of your baby seem the same, but you will quickly learn what your baby is trying to communicate if you can keep calm and pay close attention. Circumstances may make it harder to 'listen' to what your baby is saying to you.

These are tips that may help:

- **Keep close**

If possible keep baby physically close to your body by cradling him or her. With almost every touch, the baby is learning about the world. Make your touch tender and soothing. Skin to skin contact is very comforting for baby. Using a baby carrier when you are doing your routine activities can really help.

- **Eye contact**

Make lots of eye contact with your baby. Watch their face for clues about their needs. Let your baby explore your face. Smile, talk and sing to your baby.

- **Talk and listen**

Mimic your baby's noises, expressions and movements. In this way, you will learn about their unique needs and they learn that you are listening to them.

- **Don't try to be perfect**

Remember that we only need to understand our babies for a third of the time not ALL of the time. No-one is fully present and attentive to their baby 24 hours a day.

- **Build a support system**

It is much easier to bond with your baby if you are feeling supported by others. Make sure you accept offers of help and keep connecting with other people so that you do not feel alone.

Mindfulness and Bonding

Often when we are low, our minds are racing with unhelpful and unbalanced thoughts. Being in the present moment (being mindful) can be very helpful for your mood and can help you and baby to bond.

Mindful Bonding Exercise

1. When you are next with your baby, notice whether you are fully present in that moment or whether your thoughts are racing elsewhere....'What shall I do for tea? I feel awful. I hope I didn't upset Theresa, This house is a mess, how am I going to cope financiallyetc.'
2. Take a deep breath and pause.
3. Now, focus your attention on your baby. Allow other thoughts to come in but gently chose to let them pass whilst you focus all your attention on the present and your baby.
4. Let your breathing relax further and pay more attention to your baby. Study your child as if you had never seen them before.
5. Accept that your thoughts will continue to crowd in but keep gently letting them pass and choose to be fully present in this moment.

Mindfulness in everyday life

You may want to practise being more mindful in your everyday life. When we are low and or frightened, our thoughts are racing back and forwards but rarely are settled on NOW. Try and let your thoughts settle on the present moments, whether you are washing up or walking or looking at your baby.





More helpful techniques

In this section we will give you some ideas on how you can boost your mood by learning to be more assertive, solve your problems, manage your time, improve your confidence and make changes to your lifestyle.

Techniques on the following will be presented:

- Assertiveness
- Time management
- Problem solving
- Improving self confidence
- Managing lifestyle

We suggest you read all the sections, but work on the areas that seem most relevant to you over the coming weeks, months and years.

Assertiveness

In our relationships our behaviour can be Passive, Aggressive or Assertive. Do you recognise yourself in any of the example below?

Passive

By being passive we communicate to others that we are not as important as they are. We allow the other person's needs, wants and rights to take priority over our own and don't express our own needs and wants. Passive behaviour can lead us to feel like a 'doormat'.

Example

Kayleigh is asked to babysit her neighbour's children for the second Saturday evening in as many weeks. She says 'Yes' but wants to say 'No' and feels resentful as this neighbour has never offered to do the same for her.

Aggressive

Aggressive behaviour involves forcing your needs and wants on another person. It is saying that your needs, wants and rights are more important than the other person's. The aggressive person attempts to overpower the other person by not allowing him/her a choice. Aggressive behaviour can lead to retaliation and resentment.

Example

Samantha is making arrangements for her friend to babysit. Samantha says 'You must come before 6pm' Kayleigh tries to explain that 6pm is too early but Samantha says: 'It's just not good enough, you said you were there for me. Why do you have to make such a fuss? Kayleigh agrees and comes at 6pm but feels angry at her friend. She also promises to herself that she will never do it again.

Assertive

Assertiveness is active, honest and direct. It communicates an impression of respect for oneself as well as for the other person. It says that my wants, needs and rights are just as important as yours. Assertive behaviour requires influencing, listening, and negotiating skills so that the other person feels that their point of view is being respected, even if you don't agree with it. The hope is that both you and they will co-operate willingly with whatever course of action is decided upon. This should lead to open, honest relationships and success without retaliation and resentment: a "WIN-WIN" situation.

Example

Kayleigh says to Samantha 'I want to be a supportive friend but I don't want to babysit again on Saturday. I understand that this is difficult for you and I hope you can find someone else to do it.

How to be Assertive

There are three steps to assertiveness.

- 1 Actively listen to what is being said and then show the other person that you both hear and understand them. In this way, you can demonstrate understanding and empathy for their point of view, even if you don't agree with it. By listening you are respecting their right to express themselves and sending a message to them that they matter.
- 2 Say what you THINK and what you FEEL. This enables you to directly state your thoughts or feelings without insistence or apology. Make sure you own your feelings by starting sentences with 'I'. Eg; 'I would like, I feel, I need etc'.
- 3 Say what you want to happen. This is essential so that you can indicate in a clear and straightforward way what action or outcome you want without hesitancy or insistence.

What are the consequences of being assertive?

- We maintain our integrity and increase self respect and the respect of others
- Our personal relationships are more authentic and satisfying when others are confident of our honesty
- Others know where they stand with us when we let them know our opinions, feelings and needs
- We increase control over our own life by making our own choices
- We strengthen our own judgement when we act on it, allowing us to be independent of the judgement of others
- Increased feelings of confidence and self-esteem
- Be firm but polite
- Give a reason for your "no" response if you feel it's appropriate, but not as an excuse.



Top Tips

- If you need time to think, say "I'll get back to you," and make sure that you do
- Ask for more information. How long will it take? Is there anyone else who can help you?
- Use body language to show that by saying no you are not being hostile. Demonstrate that you mean what you say and are not going to be manipulated
- Stay calm and relaxed – drop your shoulders and breathe deeply, keep your voice slow and calm
- Think it through – by listening to the other person you might actually realise that you want to say yes after all
- Don't be manipulated but it is alright to change your mind if you want to
- Remember that every yes you say, is a no to something else.

Homework

- Write down below your personal assertiveness goals. You may wish to be more assertive in particular situations or with certain people in your life. Remember to make your goals SMART.
- Over the next few weeks practise being assertive in the situations or with the people that you have listed above. Start off with something easy, like saying no to a stranger and build the confidence to use it in more difficult situations.
- Continue to manage your moods by gradually increasing your activity levels. Use the activity monitoring diary.
- Continue to challenge your negative thoughts using the Stage 2 diary sheets.

Problem solving

Problems, big and small occur throughout our daily lives. Most of them can be easily solved and we usually resolve them automatically without being really aware that there was a problem. At other times, problems can feel overwhelming, affecting our mood, relationships and other aspects of life. This is where using a solving problems plan can be helpful.

It is easy to avoid dealing with problems, but often putting it off only makes it harder to deal with. It is much better to deal with problems as and when they occur. Before they become too big to tackle.

There are 4 stages of problem solving:

1. Define the problem

- What is the problem?
- When is it a problem?
- Where is it a problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- With whom is it a problem?
- How often is it a problem?
- What is the result of the problem?

2. Look for solutions

- Consider all possible solutions and list
- Decide on 3 solutions and order in preference, 1, 2 or 3
- Ask yourself what would someone else do if they were you?
- What would you advise a friend to do if it was happening to them?
- List the pros and cons of the solutions
- Choose a solution.

3. Act now

- Put the solution into practice
- If you do not try, you will never know if you could be successful.

4. Review: did it work?

- How successful were you? Don't look for 100% perfection as that may not be achievable
- If it did not work, go to next solution

In effective problem solving or decision making it is also important to consider the following factors:

Behaviour. How do you normally behave? Don't assume that because you have always done things in a certain way that you cannot try something different.

Thoughts and attitudes. Do you have any negative or destructive attitudes, either towards the people concerned or towards yourself or the problem itself?

Feelings. Even though you may be feeling physically or emotionally uncomfortable it does not mean life has to go on hold or that you cannot solve the problem. Use your deep breathing exercises and relaxation techniques and don't forget to congratulate yourself once you have achieved a solution.

Remember to give yourself a portion of pleasure, time for yourself or treat for trying a solution.

Exercise: Solving problems plan

Think about a problem that has been on your mind for a while but you have delayed tackling. It can be anything which is worrying you. Now with this problem in mind have a look at the following problem solving exercise and fill it in. Refer to the four stages of problem solving for help.

1. Define the problem

2. Think of solutions – *think of 3–5 alternatives*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

3. Evaluate the solutions – *think of the consequences of each solution*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

4. Select the best solution – *select the best one and the one you can start working with*

5. Plan – *think carefully how you can put the solution into action. Jot down a few ideas*

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6. Implementation – *put your plan into action!*

7. Review – *check the plan is OK and continue the plan until completion*

8. Reward yourself – *remember to reward yourself even if it is only to recognise that you have achieved something worthwhile*

Homework

- Write down up to 3 problems that need tackling in your life and use the suggested method.

- Over the next few weeks put one of your Problem Solving plans into action. Start off with something small and achievable
- Continue to manage your moods by gradually increasing your activity levels. Use the activity monitoring diary
- Continue to challenge your negative thoughts using the Stage 2 diary sheets.

Improving self-confidence

There are different ways to help increase your confidence through being assertive and learning to say no, through managing your time better and through problem solving. Below are further tips for building confidence:

Guiding principles of self-confidence

- We gain confidence by achieving small goals
- Practise techniques
- Behave as if you are more confident than you feel
- Be flexible in your behaviour
- Learn from your mistakes
- Speak encouragingly to yourself
- Be kind to yourself
- Watch out for the double standards: unfairly strict on yourself and generous with others
- Do the best you can, don't put yourself down for not being perfect
- Spend time with people who make you feel good
- Check out your rule book. In your diary sheets you may have noticed the rules by which you live your life. It may be time to give up or modify these rules if they keep making you feel bad about yourself.

Managing lifestyle

When we are pregnant or have had a baby, we can easily forget to manage our lifestyle. When we feel low and or anxious, our lifestyle becomes even less of a priority.

Have a think about the following aspects of your lifestyle and decide whether you need to make some changes:

1. Food and Drink

Do you have a regular and balanced diet? Make sure you eat three meals a day. Skipping breakfast or other meals makes the blood sugar level unstable and can make the symptoms of anxiety and depression worse. Try to eat foods that are high in fibre and eat fewer foods that are high in fat or sugar. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. You should also include high protein foods such as meat, fish, eggs, beans or pulses.

Remember that if you are breast feeding you will need extra calories but make sure that you get these calories from the right food groups. If you need more information on diet, speak to your health visitor.

Tea, coffee and other caffeinated drinks are stimulants that mimic symptoms of anxiety. A general guideline is that you should drink no more than 5 cups of tea and/or coffee a day.

Nicotine can act as a stimulant and may increase anxiety symptoms. Smoking may seem to relax you but might have the opposite effect and increase tension and it is also harmful for your children.

2. Take regular exercise

Are you taking exercise?

Exercise is a very useful way of reducing feelings of stress and improving mood post birth. Try to get into the habit of taking some gentle regular exercise. This could be anything that gets the circulation going and increases your heart rate, (e.g. walking, jogging, cycling, swimming, and dancing). It doesn't have to be strenuous, just something that gets you moving about. Choose something that you enjoy and that you can fit around your baby or where there are crèche facilities, as you will be more likely to stick to it.

3. Try to rest and sleep well

It is unlikely that you will get as much sleep as you have been used to when you have a small baby. However, use relaxation techniques as much as you can before you go to bed to help you sleep as well as possible. Read the sleep section at the back of the book.

4. Time for you

Is there time every day just for you? Use this time for relaxation or to do something you enjoy. Even if you have a very busy life, finding half an hour each day to do something pleasurable or relaxing is an important part of managing your moods.

5. Do not try and be PERFECT

Are you trying too hard? Understand that nobody is or should expect themselves to be, perfect. Learning to accept that 'GOOD ENOUGH IS GOOD ENOUGH' is a key step for many women during this period of their lives.

6. Connect with others

Are you avoiding people? We need other people particularly at this time. Concentrate your time on those people who make you feel good. Talk to friends and seek advice from those around you. Accept offers of help.

7. Slow down

Why are you in such a hurry? Rushing around causes adrenaline to be released in the body, which increases feelings of anxiety. If it's not essential that you rush, slow down. You will feel more relaxed and will achieve more.

8. Face your fears

Are you avoiding things or places? You will never know that you have the strength and strategies to cope unless you confront your fears. Start small and build up.

Homework

- Write down below your personal lifestyle goals. Remember to make your goals achievable, realistic and specific:

- Over the next few weeks and months put your goals into action. Start off with a goal that is achievable quickly
- Continue to manage your moods by gradually increasing your activity levels. Use the activity monitoring diary
- Continue to challenge your negative thoughts using the Stage 2 diary sheets.



“ Remembering what has helped you to feel better before, can help you get through this difficult patch ”

Alison (Psychologist)

Difficult days

The techniques you have learnt in this workbook will help to keep you well if you keep using them. However, life is challenging and you may have set backs. In this section, you will learn to recognise your early warning signs and manage these set-backs.



Notice your early warning signs

It is good to know your own emotional wellbeing early warning signs so that you know when to take action to get a healthy balance back in your life.

Exercise: Early warning signs

Which of the following do you recognise as your own early warning signs?

Tick all those that apply

- ☐ Sleeping much more, staying in bed most of the day and not wanting to get up and face people – or not being able to sleep or waking very early
- ☐ Not taking care of your appearance in the way you usually do
- ☐ Withdrawing from friends and family
- ☐ Feeling tearful
- ☐ Snappy or angry with others
- ☐ Over eating or/under eating
- ☐ Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol
- ☐ Self harming behaviours which could take many forms
- ☐ Having thoughts and feeling of worthlessness and questioning things normally taken for granted
- ☐ Easily upset over minor issues
- ☐ Avoiding exercise or exercising too much
- ☐ Making more mistakes than usual
- ☐ Add yours here!
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

“Noticing your early warning signs can prompt you to take action early and prevent you feeling any worse”
Jayne, (Health Visitor)

My difficult day plan

Most people have experienced situations or periods of life where things feel difficult and stressful. This is a relatively normal part of life, as we often cannot control what happens around us. This can sometimes leave us feeling worried, panicky and low.

We can, however, plan ahead for these 'difficult days' and think about what we can do to enable us to cope well when these things happen. We may not be able to control difficult situations which arise without warning, however we can control at least to some degree, how we respond to them.

HELPFUL HINT

You need professional assistance if you have thoughts of suicide. Telling someone is the first step to feeling better. You can think and feel differently with help. Contact your GP or the Samaritans on 116 123 or email Jo@samaritans.org if you feel you are at risk

TOP TIPS when difficulties arise

- Remember that most difficulties and challenging situations are temporary.
- Remember that through this manual of emotional wellbeing you have learnt ways of coping, and have resources that can help you to figure out what is going to help.
- Don't assume the difficulty will automatically spread to similar situations, very often situations which challenge us are 'one offs', although at times it feels overwhelming.
- Practise coping strategies in a non-stressful situation in advance. Relaxation and distraction are skills and need to be developed like learning to drive or learning to ride a bicycle.
- Consider whether you need to set goals to overcome your difficulties. Below are some helpful hints about how to develop goals:
 - Your goal must be important to you.
 - Make your goal small enough to be achievable but still a challenge.
 - Your goal needs to be concrete and specific. Break your goal down and be as specific as possible. For example, "I aim to go out with my friends at least once a week and to telephone a friend twice a week."
 - State what you will do instead of what you won't do. For example "I will set 15 mins aside everyday to do relaxation exercises," rather than, "I will not think negatively anymore." A beginning rather than an end.
 - Try to include goals of varying difficulties, and start with just a couple of the easiest to build up confidence. Then as your confidence increases, gradually increasing the difficulty level of your goals.



Exercise: My difficult day plan

Put together your own 'difficult day' plan, so that you are more able to cope when things get tough. Use information from the activities and exercises in the manual to help you write your plan.

1. What are my triggers? What is likely to make me struggle emotionally?

2. What are my early warning signs?

3. What can I do to make myself feel more in control of the situation?

(you may want to refer to problem solving section, and goal setting, earlier in this section)

4. What have I done before that has helped me?

5. How will I know that things have improved?

(you may want to refer to early warning signs, problem solving section, and goal setting)

6. How can I meaningfully recognise and reward myself when I have managed a difficult situation or period of my life?

7. Where can I turn for support?

8. Knowing when to ask for help:

Sometimes difficult days can turn into difficult weeks and months, and can start to have a bigger impact on your life. One in four people suffer from a mental health problem, and often this is brought on by high levels of stress in their lives.

You may be experiencing mental health difficulties if:

- Your worry, low mood or stress interferes with your home, family or work life
- You are feeling increasingly overwhelmed and you don't know how to cope anymore
- You are behaving in ways that you wouldn't normally
- You are thinking of hurting yourself in some way
- Your mood brings you to the point of thinking life isn't worth living.

***If you feel
that someone is at
risk of seriously
hurting themselves
or another person,
call 999***

If any of these apply to you, or someone you know, it is important to talk to your GP as soon as possible.

Find out whether you are anxious and depressed.

Visit our website to find out more about your scores. www.talk2gether.nhs.uk

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

| Please tick | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Little interest or pleasure in doing things | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Trouble falling/staying asleep, sleeping too much | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Feeling tired or having little energy | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Poor appetite or overeating | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Moving or speaking so slowly that other people have noticed, or moving around a lot more than usual | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| PHQ9 Depression Total Score | | | | |

Depression Score **None** 0 - 4 **Mild** 5 - 9 **Moderate** 10 - 14 **Severe** 15 and above

| Please tick | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Not being able to stop or control worrying | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Worrying too much about different things | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Trouble relaxing | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Being so restless that it is hard to sit still | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Becoming easily annoyed or irritable | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen | <input type="radio"/> 0 | <input type="radio"/> 1 | <input type="radio"/> 2 | <input type="radio"/> 3 |
| GAD7 Anxiety Total score | | | | |

Anxiety Scores **None** 0 - 5 **Mild** 6 - 10
Moderate 11 - 14 **Severe** 15 and above

INFORMATION POINT
For lots more helpful information please visit www.talk2gether.nhs.uk for managing depression and anxiety



More useful information

- Anxiety
- Relaxation
- Sleeping better
- Medication
- Supporting someone with depression

Anxiety

Anxiety is a natural human emotion. Anxiety that is not managed often contributes to the onset of depression. Anxiety and Depression often come (and go) together which is why this information is included. Although the reasons why people feel anxiety can be varied, there are common symptoms which most people feel when anxious. Some of them are listed below.

Tick the ones which apply to you:

Physical symptoms

- ☐ Tense muscles
- ☐ Erratic breathing
- ☐ Dry mouth
- ☐ Dizzy spells
- ☐ Racing heart
- ☐ Knots/butterflies in stomach
- ☐ Frequent need to go to the toilet
- ☐ Diarrhoea
- ☐ Tight throat
- ☐ Hard to swallow
- ☐ Restlessness
- ☐ Shaky hands
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Feeling sick in stomach

Emotional symptoms

- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Angry outbursts
- ☐ Feeling anxious
- ☐ Panic attacks
- ☐ Feeling of hopelessness
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Not feeling good enough
- ☐ Feeling bad about yourself
- ☐ Tearful
- ☐ Fear of criticism
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Feeling under pressure
- ☐ Feeling confused
- ☐ Difficulty making decisions

Behavioural symptoms

- ☐ Avoiding situations
- ☐ Increased smoking
- ☐ Increased alcohol drinking
- ☐ Increased or decreased eating
- ☐ Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- ☐ Nail biting
- ☐ Not wanting to go out socially
- ☐ Blushing
- ☐ Non-stop talking
- ☐ Obsessive actions e.g. checking locks all the time
- ☐ Not taking care with your appearance



Anxiety is a normal reaction

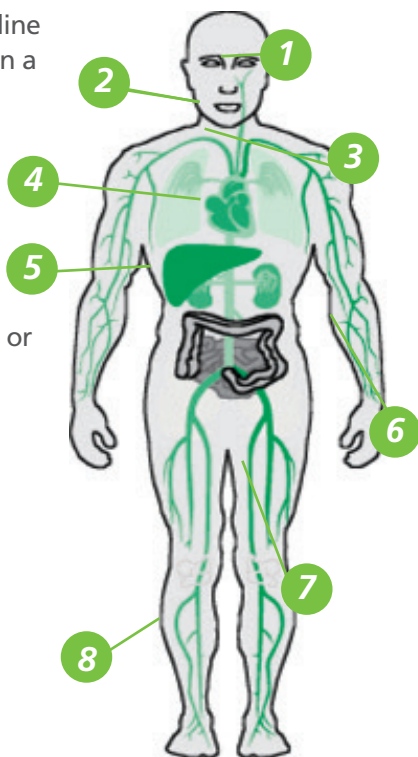
Anxiety is normal. It is the natural response to danger or stress, and helps us survive by preparing our bodies to deal with the threat. Anxiety acts as the trigger for our bodies to release adrenaline, which makes the body work faster and harder so that it can cope with danger by either fighting or running away. This is known as the 'fight or flight' response.

How your body changes when you are anxious

Adrenaline affects many different parts of the body, getting the body into a state of readiness to deal with the threat. It is adrenaline that produces many of the uncomfortable physical feelings that are associated with anxiety, such as 'butterflies' in the stomach, tense muscles, rapid heartbeat and sweating. When adrenaline is released our senses also become more acute, and our thinking may change – for example we may become preoccupied with whatever it is that is making us anxious.

What happens to my body?

Increased adrenaline affects the body in a number of ways which causes physical symptoms of anxiety. When you become anxious you may experience some, or all of these symptoms.



- 1 Increased adrenaline makes vision sharper**
After effects = visual disturbance e.g. blurring
- 2 Body stops producing saliva**
Dry mouth, difficulty swallowing
- 3 Airways widen to let in more oxygen**
Breathlessness, dizziness
- 4 Heart pumps harder to send oxygen to muscles**
Heart beats faster, palpitations
- 5 Liver releases stored energy. Blood and energy is diverted away from skin to muscles**
Stomach feels funny e.g. "knotted" tummy, "butterflies". Nausea and sickness, diarrhoea
- 6 Skin sweats to cool hot working muscles**
Sweating
- 7 Blood in skin is diverted to muscles**
Pale skin
- 8 Muscles in use, tense, ready to act faster**
Tension, aches and pains in muscles, "shaky" feeling

Helpful and unhelpful anxiety

The 'fight or flight' response is automatic and has helped humans survive as a species. As soon as we sense a threat, adrenaline is released into our bloodstream and prepares us to run away or fight immediately.

A moderate amount of anxiety may still be helpful in some situations as it can make us more alert and focused and so improve our performance. For example, a job interview or sitting an exam. However, if the anxiety is out of proportion to the situation or if it goes on for too long then it can become a problem.

When this happens we can feel physically uncomfortable because the body's reaction makes us ready to fight, or run away. Unfortunately, this means that when we are faced with the same situation again we will try to avoid it, as experience has shown that this will make us feel better.

To manage anxiety, we need to learn to face our fears and accept that the symptoms are just adrenaline which will pass quickly. The more we can do this, the more confident and less anxious we feel.

Why me?

Everyone experiences anxiety and has anxious thoughts, but it is more of a problem for some people than for others. This may be due to a variety of reasons including; personality, family history, life stresses, coping skills, and lack of support.

Anxiety affects people differently. The following are the most common forms of anxiety

- Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
- Phobias
- Social anxiety
- Health anxiety
- Panic disorder (panic attacks)
- Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)

What keeps anxiety going?

Our responses to anxiety (i.e. what we think and what we do when we feel anxious) can actually maintain it as a problem. Vicious cycles are often created that mean the anxiety either persists or gets worse.

Fear of fear

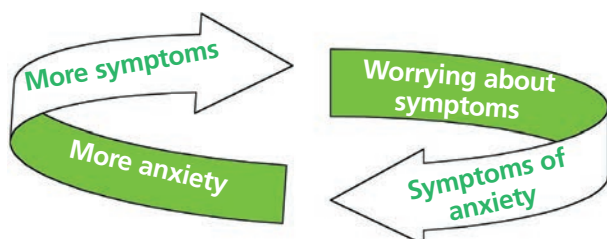
Although the bodily feelings associated with anxiety are harmless, they can be unpleasant and quite frightening. When we experience anxiety symptoms we may worry that we are ill or that something bad is going to happen. This worry makes us even more anxious, which increases the physical symptoms of anxiety. This causes a vicious cycle which makes anxiety worse and stops it going away.

We may also worry about becoming anxious and getting anxiety symptoms. We may say unhelpful things to ourselves such as “What if my mind goes blank”, “I’ll blush and everyone will look at me”, or “this always makes me feel dreadful”. Worrying about becoming anxious can actually bring on anxiety. This is known as the ‘fear of fear’ vicious cycle.

Avoiding situations that provoke anxiety

It is perfectly natural, when we find a situation distressing, that we will try to avoid that situation in the future. But when anxiety is a problem in our life we may find ourselves avoiding places, activities and thoughts which are not real dangers. For example, supermarkets, going to work, making eye contact, being alone, remembering certain images, using public transport. These are all important and necessary parts of everyday life, and avoiding them can be very restrictive to us and to others.

- Avoiding something may seem to bring relief, but it does not help in the long term
- The relief is only temporary. Our anxiety may increase as we worry about how to avoid the situation again in the future
- It makes the situation harder to face in the future because we believe that it will always cause anxiety
- Gradually we grow to avoid more things
- It starts a vicious cycle:



Loss of confidence

Over time, anxiety can reduce confidence. It makes it harder to do things that were once easy, and so we may try to avoid doing these things altogether because we are afraid of failing. Loss of confidence also makes us feel bad. If our confidence is low, we may think that others are judging us negatively (e.g. thinking that we’re odd or stupid) and we are probably also judging ourselves negatively.

Ways of thinking

You may have noticed that how we think plays an important part in fear, avoidance, and loss of confidence. The thoughts we have play a major role in increasing or decreasing our anxiety, and thinking negatively when we are feeling anxious can make things seem worse than they really are, which makes the anxiety more difficult to control. See Part 7 for more information.

Relaxation

One of the symptoms of stress or anxiety is that the muscles in the body become tense. This can cause headaches, a stiff neck, chest pains, and many unpleasant bodily sensations that can make us even more anxious and tense.

To control bodily tension it is important to learn to relax. Relaxation, like controlled breathing, is a skill. Once the body is relaxed, the mind tends to be relaxed too.

How to learn to relax

The following exercises are designed to help you learn to relax step by step. You may find it helpful to record the instructions onto a tape in a slow, gentle voice, so that you can listen and follow them when you want to relax. The exercises will help you to recognise the difference between how tense and relaxed muscles feel. By practising tensing and relaxing your muscles you will soon be able to notice when you are tense and will be able to relax at will.

Relaxation guidelines

- Regular practice is essential. If possible, set aside a regular time to practise every day – then you can develop a routine which you can stick to
- Make sure you choose somewhere quiet to practise, where you will not be disturbed
- Start the exercise by lying down in a comfortable position. It is easier to relax while lying down. Later, when you are more practised, you can try the exercises while sitting or standing. However, if you tend to fall asleep while doing the exercise lying down you may prefer to sit in a comfortable chair that has a good support for your head and shoulders instead
- Make sure you are wearing comfortable clothes, and that the room isn't too hot or cold
- Don't try to practise relaxation if you are hungry or have just eaten
- Don't tense your muscles too hard, or you may make them ache
- Don't tense any part of the body that is painful or injured
- Keep a record of how you are doing with your relaxation practice. Rate how tense you feel on a scale of 1 to 10 before (1 being totally relaxed, 10 being very tense), and again when you have completed your relaxation
- Do not expect too much of yourself at the start. Remember that this is a skill and skills have to be learnt and practised before they are mastered

Exercise 1: Progressive muscle relaxation

It will be difficult to read the instructions and relax at the same time, so you may find it useful to record it onto a CD, try to memorise it or get a friend to read it out to you.

Progressive muscle relaxation means that the muscles are relaxed one after the other, starting with the hands and arms and ending with the feet and leg muscles.

At each stage you should concentrate on noticing the feelings in the part of the body you are working on. Tense the muscles tightly (but not too hard) and really concentrate on the feeling of tension. Hold this for five seconds, then release for ten to fifteen seconds, letting the muscles go as relaxed as possible. Try to learn the difference between tight and relaxed muscles by concentrating on the feeling in the muscle as it goes from tight to loose.

The exercise involves doing this for all the parts of your body:

Hands and arms:

- Clench your fists, feel the tightness in your hands and arms, slowly relax them. See how far they can relax, but do not push or strain. Relax and let everything go. **Repeat**

Shoulders and neck:

- Drop your chin to your chest. Hunch your shoulders tightly, bringing them up and in. Circle your shoulders then let them drop. Relax. **Repeat**

Face:

- Concentrate on tensing your face bit by bit, first pull your eyebrows together, then screw your eyes up tight, and then bite your teeth together. Gradually ease off and relax. **Repeat**

Chest and abdomen:

- Tense your stomach muscles, by pulling your tummy in tightly, slowly breathe out letting go of your stomach muscles and relax. **Repeat**

Thighs and lower back:

- Keeping the rest of your upper body relaxed; squeeze your thighs and buttocks together. Relax. Push your heels down hard against the floor, feel the tightness in your thighs, gradually let go. **Repeat.**

Calves:

- Point your toes down towards the ground, feel the tension in your legs gradually let the tightness go. Then pull your toe up towards your face. Again, gradually relax. **Repeat.**

Whole body:

- Concentrate on your whole body, scanning for any tension. Relax any muscles that feel tense. Breathe slowly, calmly and evenly, letting every feeling of stress or tension go with each breath out. Allow your breathing to deepen your feeling of relaxation.

Mind:

- Finally relax your mind. Think of something really soothing and restful: for example, lying by a gentle river, under a warm sun and blue sky. Picture a scene that works best for you. Breathe slowly through your nose, filling your lungs completely. Feel yourself getting heavier and heavier.



Remember: Do not get up and rush about straight away

- Getting up too quickly might make you feel dizzy, or make you tense up again straight away. Continue resting for a minute or two, then when you are ready get up, move slowly and stretch gently. Try to keep the relaxed feeling for as long as possible. Do whatever activity you had planned in a slow, calm way.

As you get better at this exercise you can practise it while sitting or standing, or move from a quiet environment, such as your bedroom, to one that is not so peaceful. In this way you will learn to relax in a variety of situations and stand a better chance of coping in 'real life'.

Exercise 2: "Cued relaxation"

Once you learn the difference between tension and relaxation, you will be able to tell quickly when a part of your body feels tense. You can then move onto "Cued Relaxation" which will help you to relax when you choose.

When you start to feel your body getting tense, this should be your cue to do the following:

- Relax the area of your body that feels tense. Tense the muscles as much as you can, then let go, and think about that muscle relaxing
- Drop your shoulders down. This will change your posture to a more relaxed one
- Repeat a sound or word that you find is relaxing. You could use the word "calm", "relax", or 'heavy'
- Think of a calming image. Picture a relaxing place and imagine you are there
- Breathe through your nose and become aware of your breathing. Breathe out picturing your calm image or place. Breathe easily and naturally.

Cued relaxation can also be used to monitor and control tension levels throughout the day. It may be useful to develop the habit of stopping for a relaxation break regularly on a particular cue, for example, when you stop for a cup of tea or visit the loo.

Troubleshooting for relaxation techniques

It is likely that you will experience a few problems when you first try the exercises. It is helpful to recognise these and know what to do about them.

Muscle cramps

If you find any part of your body getting cramp when you are tensing up, you can overcome this by either not tensing up so much, or tensing for a shorter amount of time. Remember that although cramp is painful, it is not dangerous.

Wanting to laugh

You may well feel self-conscious or feel like laughing when you first try these exercises. This is because you are not used to them and they seem strange to you. After a while they will become more familiar and not so funny.

Unable to concentrate

If you have difficulty finishing the exercises without your mind wandering, don't worry. The best way to make unwanted thoughts go away is by not dwelling on them. Accept that they will come into your mind from time to time – you won't get rid of them by trying to concentrate on not thinking about them! Instead get your mind to slowly drift back to the exercise and the particular part of your body you are relaxing. With practice you will be able to concentrate on the exercises for longer.

It feels strange

As you are not used to the exercises, it is perfectly natural that they cause strange feelings. Accept that it will take practice to become comfortable with them. However do make sure that you are not hyperventilating (breathing too quickly), or standing up and moving about too soon. Also remember not to practise when you are full or hungry.

Falling asleep

The aim of these exercises isn't to get you to sleep, as you can't learn to relax if you're asleep. If you find yourself dozing off while doing the exercises it may be better to do them sitting down. If you do want something to help you sleep, go over the relaxation exercises in your mind while you are in bed or keep a relaxation CD just for that purpose.

Unable to relax

Don't try too hard. You may not feel much benefit when you first do the exercises, but this will come with practice. If you try too hard to relax you will only create more tension. Let the sensations happen when they happen. Make sure that your surroundings are as relaxing as possible – warm and comfortable with no distractions.

Summary

- Stress causes physical tension in the muscles, which produces a lot of the uncomfortable sensations associated with anxiety
- Everyone breathes faster when under stress. Hyperventilation occurs if you over-breathe. When this happens it produces physical sensations that are unpleasant and can be frightening
- Relaxation and breathing exercises can help control the unpleasant feelings caused by anxiety. But remember that breathing and relaxing properly are skills that need to be learnt and practised to give the full effect
- You can use cues to remind yourself to check to see if you are tense and to relax. These cues can be the feeling of tension itself or you can develop your own set of cues. Your cues can remind you to take a relaxation break
- Don't worry about not being able to relax when you start the exercises – this will only make you tenser
- Once the body is relaxed, the mind can relax too.

Homework

- Continue to monitor yourself using the diary sheets
- Practise controlled breathing techniques until you feel comfortable with them. Try to practise everyday and when you feel anxious
- Set aside some time each day to practise the relaxation techniques and use the relaxation diary at the end of this workbook to chart your progress through this program.

Sleeping better

We can become very distressed when we think we are not getting enough sleep. It can be particularly distressing when you have had a baby because there may not be an opportunity to catch up on lost sleep and you may feel you can't cope in the daytime because you are so tired.

How much sleep do we need?

The need for sleep varies from person to person and depends also on our age and levels of activity. As we get older, our sleep patterns change – as babies we can sleep for 17 hours each day whereas in adult life most of us need between 7 and 8 hours a night. Sleep patterns change during pregnancy and after childbirth. We know that breast milk contains relaxation endorphins which help women to get back to sleep and sleep more restfully after night feeds.

What if I don't sleep?

The occasional sleepless night has little effect on our physical and mental health but if this becomes quite frequent you will start to feel exhausted. You will find it difficult to concentrate and make decisions, it may feel harder trying to look after a baby and family and you may start to feel depressed.

Good sleep habits

- **Develop regular sleep times**
This will be easier if and when your baby sleeps through the night. Go to bed and get out of bed at about the same time, regardless of how tired you are. Try not to take naps during the day because naps may make you less sleepy at night. (However, in the first few weeks after the baby arrives if you are feeding frequently during the night it makes sense to nap during the day if you can. This is a temporary way of coping at this time).
- **Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol in the evenings.** Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants and can keep you from falling asleep. Alcohol can cause waking in the night and interferes with sleep quality.
- **Get regular exercise. Exercise during the day may aid a better nights sleep.**
However, avoid exercising close to bedtime because it may stimulate you and make it difficult to fall asleep.
- **Don't eat a heavy meal late in the day**
However, a light snack may aid sleep.

- **Surroundings**
Make your sleeping place comfortable by ensuring that it is dark, quiet and the right temperature. Try using a sleeping mask if there is too much light, or earplugs if noise is a problem (only do this if there is another adult around to listen out for the baby).
- **Pre-sleep routine**
Follow a routine to help you relax and unwind before going to sleep, such as reading a book, listening to music or taking a bath. Wind down during the evening. Avoid arguments or using your brain for more complex tasks later at night.
- **Challenge your worrying thoughts**
If you are lying awake for more than 15 minutes, get up and go into another room. Write down your unhelpful thoughts, such as "I will never get to sleep" and "I'll go mad if I don't get enough sleep" and challenge them. The most likely consequence of not getting enough sleep is that you will feel tired and irritable. Challenge these unhelpful thoughts.
- **Practise relaxation and breathing techniques**
Visualise a relaxing scene or try to make your mind go blank to enhance restfulness. Try to not make yourself fall asleep. This will happen naturally, if you let your mind and body relax.
- **Don't expect immediate results**
Give yourself time to unlearn your disturbed sleeping patterns.
- **Don't panic about not sleeping well. You will eventually.**

If your baby does not sleep well for a period of weeks, you should seek advice from your health visitor.



Medication

This section is to provide information about antidepressant medication. It discusses briefly how anti-depressants work, why they are prescribed and their effects and side-effects. These are the common questions asked about taking anti-depressants when pregnant or after having a baby-particularly if you are breast feeding. For more information visit: www.choiceandmedication.org

Will anti-depressants affect my baby?

It is sometimes necessary to take anti-depressants when pregnant or breast feeding if you are feeling so low that you cannot cope. Your doctor will talk to you about the relative risks and benefits.

What are anti-depressants used for?

When a person is depressed, the naturally occurring chemical messengers in the brain that regulate mood are not as effective or as active as normal. Anti-depressants are therefore used to increase the amount/activity of chemical messengers in the brain to help improve mood.

How do I take my anti-depressant?

Tablets/capsules should be swallowed with at least half a glass of water, whilst sitting up or standing, to ensure they do not stick in the throat.

If your anti-depressant is a liquid it should be measured out carefully. Your pharmacist can provide you with a medicine spoon or an oral syringe to do so.

When should I take my anti-depressant?

Take your anti-depressants as directed on the medicine label. They will not work if you don't. You can take Tricyclics and SSRIs with or after food. With SSRIs this may help with feelings of sickness (feelings of sickness may be present for the first few weeks of taking them, seek advice from your doctor if it continues). If

directed to take your SSRI tablets once a day, sometimes this is better at night as they can make you drowsy at first.

How long should I take the anti-depressant for?

This should be discussed with your doctor. To help inform you, research has shown that your chances of becoming depressed again, after a first episode of depression, are much lower if you keep taking the anti-depressant for 6 months after you are well again. For a second episode, your chances are lower if you keep taking the antidepressant for 1–2 years after you have become well again. For a depression that keeps coming back, continuing to take an anti-depressant has been shown to have a protective effect for at least 5 years.

How quickly will they work?

It will often take 2 weeks or more before the anti-depressants start to have any effect and maybe up to 6 weeks to give their full effect.

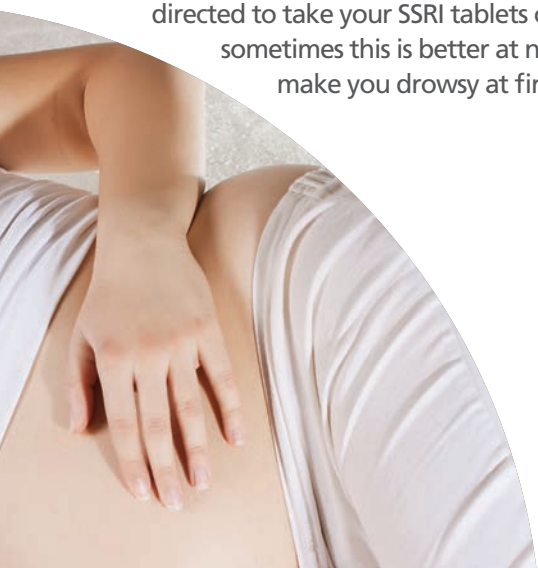
Are anti-depressants addictive?

Anti-depressants are not addictive, but if you have taken them for 8 weeks or more you may experience some mild 'discontinuation' effects while your body re-adjusts.

It is not advisable to stop taking anti-depressants suddenly. Depression can return if treatment is stopped too early and you may experience some discontinuation effects (e.g. headaches, restlessness, nausea, lethargy, sleep disturbance). You should discuss stopping your drugs or reducing them with your doctor.

What if I forget to take my anti-depressants?

If you forget to take your anti-depressant you should start again as soon as you remember. Do not try to catch up by taking two or more doses. Inform your doctor of any missed doses at your next appointment. If you have difficulty in remembering to take your doses ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse for some support with this.



Will they make me drowsy?

Anti-depressants may make you feel drowsy so do not drive or operate machinery until you know how they affect you. Anti-depressants are not sleeping tablets, although when taken at night they may help you to sleep.

Will my anti-depressant cause weight gain?

Some people may experience weight gain when on anti-depressants due to an increased appetite or a reduction in metabolic rate. If you do start to put on/lose weight and are concerned about this, please consult your doctor.

Will I experience side-effects?

Many people will experience mild side effects if any at all. As your body gets used to taking a new medication these side-effects may wear off.

Please talk to your doctor about any troublesome side-effects. Only stop your anti-depressant if your side-effects are really disagreeable, and if they are, book an urgent appointment with your doctor.



Should I avoid anything?

When taking Tricyclics, SSRIs or SNRIs alcohol is best avoided except in moderation (it can make you feel sleepier). Alcohol may also reduce the effect of your antidepressant. Some anti-depressants make you sleepy and slow down your reactions and you should therefore seek advice from your doctor if you intend to drive on them or operate heavy machinery.

What if I get pregnant again and am already taking anti-depressants?

If you are taking anti-depressants after having a baby and have any reason to believe that you may be pregnant again please consult your doctor.

INFORMATION POINT

For helpful
information about
medication please visit
www.choiceandmedication.org

Supporting someone with depression

It can be very challenging to support someone with depression during pregnancy or following childbirth. It can be hard to know what to say or do. They may need a lot of support and their behaviour can be out of character and worrying.

As well as using this workbook there are a number of things you can do to help someone with depression:

- **Listen**
Let her know you are concerned and are available to listen without being judgemental. This can provide her with an opportunity to discuss her feelings.
- **Talk openly**
Talking about depression may help her know you are open-minded about depression and make it easier for her to talk about her feelings.
- **Don't tell her to cheer up**
This may be our first reaction when someone is feeling depressed, as it can be hard to understand. However cheering up may seem impossible to her, and it may appear as if you are not taking her feelings seriously.
- **Accept things as they are**
Reassure her you care and remain patient and understanding. Recognise that there will be good days and bad days. Eventually you will realise that the number of good days are beginning to outweigh the number of bad days.
- **Encourage her to seek help**
When women are depressed around the time of childbirth it is important that they receive the correct help and advice. Their health visitor or GP is often the first step to receiving help and they may offer support themselves or refer them on to someone who is a specialist in dealing with mental health problems. Offering to go along with them when they have their appointment may be helpful to them.
- **Learn about depression**
Having some idea how women can feel during and after childbirth, can help you to understand their problems and the reasons for their behaviours and moods. For example, if your partner seems disinterested in sex, don't take this as rejection. It is common for women to lose interest in sex when they have postnatal depression, but the closeness of hugs and cuddles are really important.

- **Distraction**
Helping someone forget their problems for a while might be beneficial. This may include supporting them with activities that they have neglected.
- **Practical help**
Providing practical help with everyday tasks can really help take the pressure off her at this time. For example, helping with housework and shopping and making sure that she eats a healthy diet.
- **Time for yourself**
Having time for yourself is important and can help you relax, whether it is simply time spent alone or doing something you enjoy. Looking after yourself will benefit the person you are supporting.

Remember that with help and caring support she will recover.





Six months on

Six months on, your life with your baby will be very different. With the learning from this programme you can continue to feel more in control of your moods. The workbook is yours to keep and continue to use. At different times in our lives, new challenges present and you may benefit from revisiting the techniques.

Kayleigh

I'm a bit better now, particularly about valuing myself more. I get lots of pleasure from my son and make sure I spend quality time with him most days. I might get some counselling to sort myself out a bit more. The programme was helpful for getting me back in a routine. I do get out more now and the mother and baby group has been a good way of meeting other mums.

Diane

The programme has been incredibly helpful to me. I'm less anxious about Rory. I have returned to work. I'm still a perfectionist and don't really feel great about myself. But at least I can recognise unhelpful ways of thinking now.

Ros

Life goes on much the same for me but what has changed is my ability to cope and that I feel less resentful. I so needed a break and the real key was realising that I did not always have to be achieving something. Learning to relax and accept myself and just be still sometimes has helped both Simon and myself. Generally my mood is good but I have to keep an eye on it. If I am feeling wobbly I know to call a friend and arrange something social. I used to take to my bed. Knowing which techniques to use and when has been really helpful. I have recommended it to a number of my friends and colleagues because so many mums seem to be struggling with these difficulties.

Jasmine

I have now lived here for a year and I have a really good network of friends. I am not depressed anymore. I am much more independent now, although my mother-in-law still helps out sometimes. I got into such a negative cycle of thoughts about myself, and thought that others were judging me. Accepting what I am and what I do has been the key.

The key message is that there is always something you can do to help yourself. Remember though, if you feel you cannot manage and that you are losing control of your emotions, go and speak to your GP who will be able to talk through additional help that may be available.

INFORMATION POINT

For lots more helpful information please visit
www.talk2gether.nhs.uk
for managing depression and anxiety



Further reading and helpful contacts

Further Reading

Overcoming Depression, (2000) Paul Gilbert, Robinson, London

Overcoming Low Self Esteem, (1999) Melanie Fennell, Robinson, London

Overcoming Anxiety, (1997) Helen Kennerley, Robinson, London

The Mindful Way through Depression: freeing yourself from chronic unhappiness (with accompanying meditation CD), (2007) Mark Williams Guilford Press

The Feeling Good Handbook, (1990) David D. Burns, Penguin

10 Days to Self Esteem, (1993) David D. Burns

Manage Your Mind, The Mental Fitness Guide, (1995) G. Butler and T. Hope, Oxford University Press

Beating the Blues, (1994) Michael E. Thase and Susan S. Lang, Oxford University Press

Mind Over Mood, (1995) Dennis Greenberger and Christine Padesky, Guildford Press

Depression. The Way out of Your Prison, (2003) Dorothy Rowe

Banish Baby Blues, (1990) Anne-Marie Sapsted. Harper Collins

Down with Gloom! (1993) By Brice Pitt and Mel Calman, Gaskell Press

Coping with Postnatal Depression, (2005) Sandra Wheatley, Sheldon Press

Surviving Postnatal Depression: At Home, No One Hears You Scream, (2000) Cara Aiken, Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd

Feelings After Birth: The NCT Book of Postnatal Depression, (2002) Heather Welford, the National Childbirth Trust



Helpful agencies

Let's Talk Service, ²gether NHS Foundation Trust

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies provides talking therapies for Anxiety, Stress and Depression

Rikenel Montpellier

Gloucester GL1 1LY

Open: Mon to Fri: 8.30am - 5.00pm

Tel: 0800 073 2200

Email: 2gnft.Talk2gether@nhs.net

Website: www.talk2gether.nhs.uk

Let's Talk Herefordshire

²gether NHS Foundation Trust

Room 1-07, Vaughan Building

Ruckhall Lane

Belmont HR2 9RP

Tel: 01432 344344 (ext.3530)

Samaritans: (Emergency 24hr helpline)

Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

Tel: 116 123 or 01452 306333

National Association for Mental Health (MIND)

Website: www.mind.org.uk

Tel: 0208 5192122

Information Line: 0845 7660163 (local rate)

Saneline

Website: www.sane.org.uk

Tel: 0300 304 7000 (local rate)

No Panic

Website: www.nopanic.org.uk

Tel: 0844 967 4848 (daily 10am-10pm)

Youth Helpline: 01753 840393 (Mon-Fri 4-6pm)

Association for Postnatal Illness

Website: www.apni.org

Tel: 020 7386 0868 (helpline)

The Birth Trauma Association

Website: www.birthtraumaassociation.org.uk

Depression Alliance

Website: www.depressionallaince.org

Tel: 0207 407 7584

Fellowship of Depressives Anonymous

Website: www.depressionuk.org

Email: info@depressionuk.org

SAD Association

Website: www.sada.org.uk

Email: support@sada.org.uk

Disclaimer:

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Diary Sheets

Diary sheets help you to see more clearly what you are doing and what you are thinking that may be unhelpful. In this way, you can set goals and make the necessary changes to your thoughts and behaviour. Then you can start to feel better about yourself, your baby and your future.

Activity Diary *See Workbook part 5 (pages 17-24) for more information*

Instructions:

- For each hour of the week, write down what you actually did
- For each entry rate how much Pleasure you experienced (0-10 Scale)
- For each entry rate how much Achievement you felt (0-10 Scale). You can also use this diary to plan an increase in your levels of activity - remember - the small steps add up to a major change for the better.

| Hours | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday |
|-------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|
| 6am | | | | |
| 7am | | | | |
| 8am | | | | |
| 9am | | | | |
| 10am | | | | |
| 11am | | | | |
| Noon | | | | |
| 1pm | | | | |
| 2pm | | | | |
| 3pm | | | | |
| 4pm | | | | |
| 5pm | | | | |
| 6pm | | | | |
| 7pm | | | | |
| 8pm | | | | |
| 9pm | | | | |
| 10pm | | | | |
| 11pm | | | | |
| 12pm | | | | |
| 1-6am | | | | |

| Hours | Friday | Saturday | Sunday | |
|-------|--------|----------|--------|--|
| 6am | | | | |
| 7am | | | | |
| 8am | | | | |
| 9am | | | | |
| 10am | | | | |
| 11am | | | | |
| Noon | | | | |
| 1pm | | | | |
| 2pm | | | | |
| 3pm | | | | |
| 4pm | | | | |
| 5pm | | | | |
| 6pm | | | | |
| 7pm | | | | |
| 8pm | | | | |
| 9pm | | | | |
| 10pm | | | | |
| 11pm | | | | |
| 12pm | | | | |
| 1-6am | | | | |

Thought Diary - Stage one

See workbook part 5 (pages 17-24) for more information

| 1. Situation | 2. Emotion | 3. Emotion rating | 4. Thoughts |
|--------------|------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | | | |

Thought Diary - Stage two

See workbook part 7 (pages 29-34) for more information

| Situation | Emotion | Emotion rating | Thoughts | Evidence to support the thought | Evidence against the thought | Changed thought | Emotion rating now |
|-----------|---------|----------------|----------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | | | |

Let's Talk



*This workbook
is a guide about
how to manage anxiety
or depression
before or after
having a baby*

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