Depression

Experiencing and living with depression can be very difficult, but there are tools and strategies that may help.

**Managing Negative Thoughts - Catch, Check and Change negative thoughts**

* When we are feeling low in mood or experiencing depression, we are more likely to assume the worst, see things in a negative light and struggle to find the positives.
* It can be helpful during these times to be mindful of our negative thoughts, and to try and challenge and change these.
* “Catch” the thoughts by keeping track of them, what they are, and how they impact your mood and how you feel.
* “Check” them by asking yourself is there any evidence against or for this thought? *Have I made an assumption? Is there another way of looking at this?*
* Finally, change the thought by trying to consider what alternative options and counter thoughts may be*. What would you say to a friend thinking this? Am I being overly critical of myself, if I try to consider the opposite, more positive option, what would that be?*

**Managing Depression and Low Mood**

Experiencing and living with depression or low mood can feel very difficult, but it can get better. Start with small steps each day…

* **Look after your physical health**

make sure you are getting enough sleep and eating a balanced diet. Exercise also makes a big difference to our mood, improves sleep and we often feel better afterwards.

* **Have a positive word with yourself**!

Start to keep a record of positive things each week. Maybe it’s something you did well and can be proud of, or maybe it’s a positive thing that happened… You had a nice chat with a friend, had a nice walk outside or ate a nice meal.

* **Take some time for self compassion, self care and mindfulness**

Depression and low mood can feel worse during more stressful times or when we may be in a particularly negative thinking pattern. By practising self care and mindfulness, you are actively trying to manage stress and distract from negative thoughts. Try some yoga or stretching, a breathing technique, a mindfulness exercise through an app or online.

* **Talking to someone you trust about how you are feeling may help**

If you can’t speak to someone close to you, Wellbeing Support Services are here to support. [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/) and [Shout](https://www.giveusashout.org/) also have someone available to speak to by text or phone 24/7.

Depression is experienced differently by different people but there are common features:

* Feeling low, sad, tearful and numb
* Avoiding people and situations (social isolation)
* Low motivation and poor concentration
* Feeling worthless, useless, self-blaming and perhaps suicidal
* Thinking negatively and seeing the worst in things
* Change in sleeping patterns and eating habits
* Loss of enthusiasm, interest and enjoyment

Sometimes depression is the reaction to a life event or sometimes it feels like it comes from nowhere. It is estimated that one in six people have a severe depressive episode at some time in life. In its milder form depression makes living life to the full seem difficult and less worthwhile. At its most severe it can be life-threatening.

Moving Out of Depression

Most people do recover from depression. Physical movement is said to be important to counteract the 'in the head' negative thoughts and 'heaviness' that accompanies depression so activities such as walking, dancing, swimming, etc are beneficial. It can be tempting to try to find release from depression by abusing drugs or alcohol but this can bring its own problems - it is important to look after yourself physically. It can be useful to challenge negative thinking that feeds depression - talking out thoughts and feelings can be useful. Sometimes medication can be helpful in managing depression; medical support and information on medication can be obtained from your GP