

What is Depression?

Everybody experiences low mood sometimes, but depression is a mental health condition where a **consistent and long-lasting** low mood impacts the person's ability to lead a normal life.

Depression can be mild, moderate or severe. Some people with depression have thoughts about death and suicide. Experiencing low mood can make every-day life very difficult. People with depression may struggle with their normal every-day tasks, withdraw and isolate themselves.

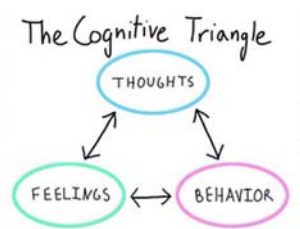
Common symptoms

- **Consistently feeling sad, hopeless, guilty, numb**
- **Losing interest in things you used to like**
- **Low energy, low motivation, feeling tired, tearful**
- **Changes in sleeping, eating and weight**
- **Negative thoughts about yourself, the world and the future**

What causes and keeps depression going?

Depression can be caused by stressful life events, past experiences, low self-esteem, bereavement and genetics.

Negative thoughts play a big part in depression and low mood. Often, our thoughts, feelings and behaviours influence each other and interact to keep depression going.



What can help?

Get to know your depression

It can be extremely difficult to see past the darkness and hopelessness that comes with depression. Understanding your depression can help you **separate yourself from it**, helping you to see things more clearly.

- ⇒ Recognise depression for what it is – **a mental condition that is temporary**
- ⇒ Give your depression a **name**
- ⇒ Use a **mood tracker** to study your mood patterns. Rate your mood on a scale of 1-10.

Notice your thought patterns

Depression often includes **negative and self-critical thought patterns**. This is called the “**gloomy glasses**” effect, because when you have these negative thought patterns, everything you see looks dark.

To practice **noticing and challenging** your thought patterns you can:

- ⇒ Use thought records
- ⇒ Keep a thought/feeling journal
- ⇒ Identify which **thought patterns** you notice in yourself
- ⇒ When you notice a negative thought, **ask yourself** “is this thought based on fact? Or could it be the gloomy glasses effect?”

Coping Strategies

These strategies can help you find some **comfort and support** when your mood is low.

Coping strategies include:

- ⇒ Make a **plan or timetable** of your day to help you manage essential tasks. Make it manageable, not overwhelming
- ⇒ Make your own “**What I will say to myself**” cards
- ⇒ **Use relaxation techniques** to comfort your body and mind
- ⇒ Distraction activities and self-care