

DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENTS

A collection of understandings and ideas
for parents and concerned adults.

Understanding, adapting & overcoming.

The information collected will help you identify, comprehend & manage depression in teenagers by understanding:

- Why are adolescents susceptible to depression?
- What affects mood in adolescence? What is 'normal' low mood and how does this differ from depression?
- What does depression in young people look like? What are some of the key signs and symptoms and when should I be concerned about my child?
- How do I talk to a young person about what they are going through? What kinds of conversations are useful when trying to get the most appropriate help?

- What are important practical steps to reducing the risk of depression and minimizing the impact?
- How can depression be treated in young people and what treatment is most effective?
- What kinds of environmental factors can impact on depression in young people and how can I help my child or a young person in my care to develop healthier habits?
- How can I best support my child/a young person in my care who is experiencing depression whilst also looking after myself too?

Children grow up quickly

- We tend to easily notice how children develop physically on the outside – every year they need new clothes and shoes, our photographs provide clear evidence of their many changes.
- We also see children become smarter, and how their schoolwork gets more difficult and more demanding. However, it's much less easy to see how things change on the inside, in their brains.
- Parents ability to adapt their perceptions and expectations of their children as they grow and develop is essential for healthy growth and development in their children.

Thinking and understanding

- As we develop from childhood into adults our thinking abilities develop and improve.
- Changes in thinking and understanding during adolescence are linked to major changes in brain structure, in particular in the front of the brain – the prefrontal cortex.
- This is the part of the brain that develops slowly and continues to mature throughout the teenager's years.
- As they grow older and their brain becomes more mature, teenagers become much better at planning, thinking about the future, organising themselves, making judgments, and maintaining their attention and focus on tasks.

The social world

- Teenagers are highly tuned to pay attention to other people. This is a key feature of the change they go through.
- The social world of teenagers – their friendships and relationships – become much more important than in childhood.
- Teenagers become more sensitive to cues from other young people about being accepted, rejected, liked or disliked.
- Teenagers are especially sensitive to being excluded or ridiculed by friends, being bullied or being singled out for negative attention of any kind.
- They are also still learning how to work out what other people are thinking and feeling, so might make more mistakes than adults.

What is adolescence

- Adolescence is best defined as a maturational period that begins at the onset of puberty and ends with a transition to an adult-like role in society.
- Thus, adolescence is thought to have a biological onset and a socio-cultural offset.
- Testosterone increases dramatically after the onset of puberty, in both girls and boys, Testosterone is often stereotyped as an aggression or sex hormone.
- Research indicates testosterone is more closely tied to increases in the motivation to search for, learn about and maintain status in ones social environment.

Adolescence – Dependency to independence

- The most widely accepted understanding of puberty is that adolescent is timed around the transition from childhood to adulthood and the acceptance that adolescents have to fulfill an active role in the support and maintenance of the group they belong to.
- It moves children from dependence on the group to active contributors and ultimately supporters of their “group” through the process of independence.
- Some of the developmental tasks that adolescents need to undertake for a healthy transition are the search for autonomy, identity, and independence.

Adolescence and the search for autonomy

- Adolescence entails increased autonomy, which pushes for a decrease in behavioral control and changes in support from parents.
- One of the hallmarks of adolescence is changes in cognitive functioning and capabilities which have important implications for adolescents' perceptions and reasoning regarding their relationships with peers and parents.
- Adolescents become more concerned with how they are perceived by peers and non familial adults during social interactions as this is how they gauge the development of their “new self”.

Adolescence and the awareness of social positions

- Adolescence is also characterized by heightened attention to social anxiety symptoms such as feelings of nervousness, insecurity, and avoidance with regard to peers and non familial adults in social interactions and settings
 - This is to develop an awareness of where and how to fit into adult society.
- Adolescents are more sensitive to whether they are being treated with respect and accorded high status, as compared to children. Again a preparation for movement into the adult world.

What being a teenager means

- Although adolescence is indeed a period of high levels of risk-taking, this also enables increased exploratory behaviors, with usually positive consequences for learning and social interaction.
- When parents hold generalized negative beliefs about adolescents these beliefs become a stronger determination of the behaviour they expect from their adolescents than the actual behaviour they get.
- When both adolescents and parents have negative expectations of adolescent behaviour this tends to be predictive of the incident and frequency of these behaviours

What being a family with a teenager means

- For families, this is a period characterized by the readjustment of family roles and norms, along with an increase in family conflicts.
- Families face the challenge of adjusting to these new demands and needs while trying to conserve family unity.
- The inability to adjust to these new demands, together with inflexibility within the family over the negotiation of new norms and different solutions can lead to conflict and the potential for greater negative behaviour.

What being a teenager in a family means

- Adolescence is the period when family relationships change, and the hierarchical nature of the parent–child relationship gradually transforms to a more egalitarian and horizontal parent–adolescent relationship.
- Regarding differences between parents and adolescents in parental control, studies have shown that parents and adolescents differ the most during early adolescence, and become more similar as they approach late adolescence

Teenager vs. Parent view

Teenager	Parent
I want to stay out late	You need a good nights sleep
I don't have the same beliefs as my parents	Going to church is an important family activity
Spending time with Cindy makes me feel good	Cindy isn't a good influence on you
I want to get a part time job and earn my own money	You need to focus on school work and getting good grades
My phone helps me connect with my friends and what happening	You spend way too much time on your phone.

Teenager vs. Parent view

Teenager	Parent
I need to make my own decisions about life.	There is a bigger picture at stake that you are not yet fully aware of
I need to interpret the world for myself.	Family is (and will always be) one of the most important parts of life.
I need to learn how to judge people for myself	We don't want to see you get hurt
I need to develop a sense of independence	We want you to have all the best options available to you when you choose to study
I need to interact with the world in a manner that is mine and related to my peers.	We want you to appreciate all aspects of daily life and the value they offer

What is really being said

- The example above is a real challenge area for teenagers, parents and families and is often the source of a lot of conflict & unhappiness.
- The teenager is doing what their life stage requires them to do, differentiate themselves from their parents and family by expressing
 - Independence.
 - Different views and understandings of the world.
 - Redefining themselves as separate from the family.
 - A connection to the world that is as different to their parents as possible.

What is not being said

- The parent is doing the exact opposite, they are trying to keep their teenager “safe” by ensuring the bonds to what is stable and known stay intact.
- The solution is somewhere in the middle. It requires compromise and trust from both parties.
- Parents need to trust that they have instilled in their teenagers the confidence and ability to make informed choices.
- Teenagers need to accept that they don't know everything about the world and that their parents have their best interests at heart

Myths about depression

- It's really important to address some of the common myths and stereotypes that you may/not be aware of.
- People may experience depression differently, but it's imperative to remember that how we talk and think about depression can really affect those experiencing these difficulties.
- Take a look at the following statements and consider the information relating to each one.

Depression isn't a 'proper' illness.

- Individuals with depression may often hear this from friends or family who don't properly understand their difficulties and who therefore lack empathy with them.
- Depression, like any physical illness takes a real toll on our health and well-being, and like any illness requires empathy and warrants effective treatment.
- We would not expect someone with a physical condition such as diabetes to just 'get on with it' without proper care, so why does this happen with depression?

People who experience depression are just lazy and mentally weak.

- Having depression does not make you weak or lazy. Many strong and very motivated people develop depression.
- Depression is a very real problem for many people, and it's not a reflection on the individual who is experiencing low mood.
- This negative belief increases stigma and can interfere with offers of help and support to people who have depression.

Depression and sadness are the same thing

- Many people might refer to themselves as ‘feeling depressed’.
- Depression and sadness are definitely not one and the same thing. Fluctuations in mood, and feeling sad or blue are perfectly normal.
- However, depression is very different in terms of the duration and severity of mood disturbance and the impact it has on people’s day to day life.

Depression is just the result of a having a tough time

- Significant life events, such as divorce, bereavement, retirement and job loss, do increase the risk of becoming depressed.
- However, these things don't inevitably result in depression, and equally, depression can occur in the absence of such life events.
- Depression is most likely to be caused by a number of different factors; it's a complicated picture involving biological factors like our genetics, social factors such as poverty, or very stressful events and psychological factors.

If you're depressed, you need to take anti-depressant medication.

- In the SA for adults, use of anti-depressants is only recommended in the treatment of moderate to severe depression.
- Talking therapies such as CBT are recommended for mild to moderate depression.
- Anti-depressants should only be given to children or teenagers if supervised by a specialist child and adolescent psychiatrist.
- As we will see later treating depression in teenagers is not easy and requires careful consideration.

People with depression just need to snap out of it.

- People with depression do not choose to feel this way (just in the same way that someone with diabetes or a broken foot wouldn't choose to have those either).
- Friends and family members of those with depression may try to offer advice in the belief that they are being helpful. However, sometimes, advice may be misguided and may even make things worse.

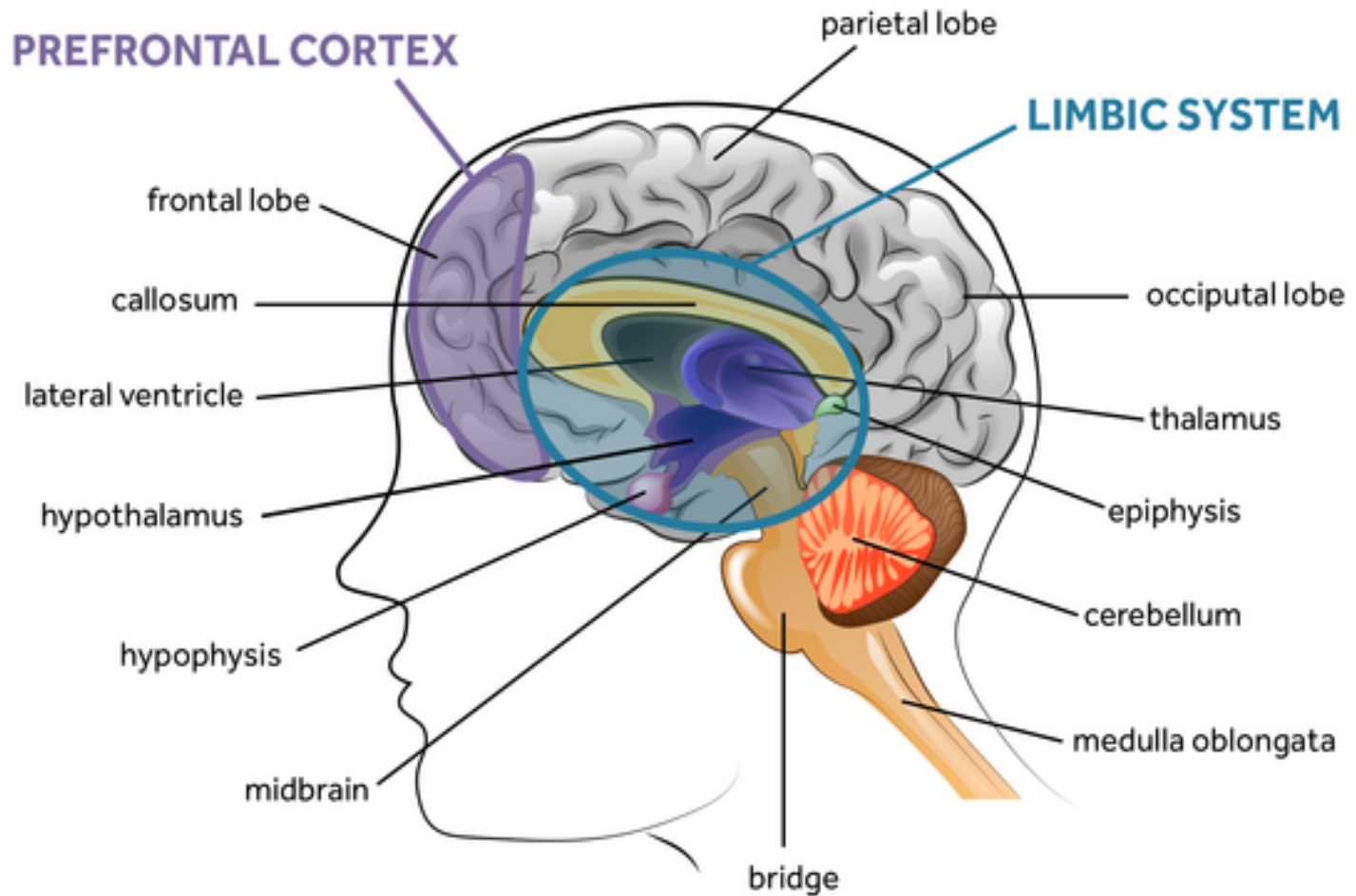
The Teenage Brain

One of the reasons treating teenage depression is so difficult is because the age appropriate physiological, biological and emotional process taking place in their bodies and minds predispose them to many of the symptoms of depression and low mood.

Please watch this video

[The teenage brain](#)

The teenage brain



The prefrontal cortex

- An area at the front of the brain which plays a vital role in activities such as decision making and planning, social interactions, understanding others and self, making judgements and impulse control (collectively known as executive function).
- During adolescence, this part of the brain is still being finely-tuned (connections are still being developed) and therefore teenagers simply find it harder to take into account someone else's perspective to guide their behaviour.
- Additionally they are juggling the challenges of redefining themselves in relation to adults and society and as such are going to make mistakes.

The Limbic System

- An area located deep within the brain and controls emotion and reward-seeking behaviour.
- Research indicates that this area is highly sensitive to reward-seeking behaviour during adolescence, at a time when impulse control is poor because of a still-developing pre-frontal cortex.
- Together, this means that teenagers are much more likely than either children or adults to engage in risky reward-seeking behaviour.
- Adolescence requires them to take risks that signify the transition from childhood to adulthood.
- In earlier times this would have required significant risk taking behaviour as proof they are ready to adopt adult roles.

Parenting a depressed teenager

This section contains a collection of observations, thoughts, reflections and feelings from parents who have been through a similar experience.

Exposure to their experiences and emotions might help you prepare for, understand and contextualize what you see, feel and think.

Initial confusion

- Increases in my child's levels of anger, irritability, and moodiness left me confused.
- Loss of interest in doing anything or going anywhere, isolation and social withdrawal.
- Increased levels of anxiety, increased sleep or a marked lack of sleep, and extreme tearfulness and sadness.
- You may start thinking in terms of 'my child now' and 'my child before'.
- Voicing perceptions that your child did not seem to be their usual self or did not seem to be behaving like a normal adolescent. "It's just not like her. It's just like having a stranger in the house"

Out of the blue

- “She went to (see) someone in school and that person (at the school) contacted me and said she’d been to her and that she was unhappy and that she’d been harming herself ... I didn’t think there was anything wrong”
- “As a parent I was so convinced that my 15 year old daughter was simply being a “typical teenager” that I disagreed with the member of staff at her school who felt that she needed to be referred to a professional.”

Upset and distressed

- Parents refer to how upsetting it was for them to see their child feeling like this, as well as how “depressing” it was trying to deal with their child’s difficulties could be for them, particularly when their child had been self-harming or expressing suicidal thoughts.
- “The thought of my beautiful child marking her body in that way just distresses me to beyond anything really. I can’t even put into words how distressed I was over it”

Guilt and self-blame

- Parents appeared to at least partly blame themselves for their child’s difficulties because of the negative effects that their own depression or emotional issues could have had on their child.

Dealing with the unknown

- Parents allude to how difficult it was for them to understand what their child was feeling and experiencing. ‘I’ve never had depression myself so I can’t really understand kind of what she’s feeling’
- For other parents, this difficulty seemed to stem from their confusion about what might be their child’s depressive behavior and what might actually be normal adolescent behaviour, “... I don’t know if that’s a teenage thing or it’s a depression thing”

Appalled and frustrated

- Parents who were caring for young people whose depression seemed to have manifested itself primarily in the form of extreme anger.
- Several of these parents voiced their disgust and shock about the extent of their child's anger and sometimes abusive behaviour.

Walking on eggshells

- Parents alluded to a shift in their parenting behavior by implying that they had started deliberately avoiding confrontation with their child, out of a fear of upsetting their child even more.

Communication breakdown

- Parents felt that communication seemed to have broken down between them and their child, “She used to share quite a lot about how she was feeling but she doesn’t do that anymore”.
- For some parents, this communication breakdown appeared to be the result of the young person refusing to or being unable to describe their feelings, “He doesn’t talk to us. I’ll sit there and I’ll talk to him and he’ll say, ‘You don’t understand, I’m depressed’”.
- For others, it seemed to stem from the parents themselves finding it hard to speak to their children about their difficulties.

Worried and anxious

- Parents describe the worry and anxiety that they felt about their child in relation to their negative feelings, difficult behaviors and future, “He just wants to stay in his bedroom. It just worries me. I’m just really worried’

Lack of support

- Parents expressed feelings of lack of support through their references to their disagreements with their partners about how to handle what their child was going through.

Competing demands

- A further reason why many parents felt helpless appeared to stem from the fact that they also had their own issues to cope with, which in turn made it more difficult for them to deal with their child's problems.
- For the majority of these parents, these issues related to their finances and to their attempts to balance their work and home lives

Helplessness

- Parents, often despairingly, explained how they had tried everything that they could think of to try and help their child to feel better but nothing that they did seemed to make any difference.
- “I can't deal with the fact that she feels so alone and there's nothing I can do to help her”

Parenting in overdrive

- Parents alluded to a feeling that they had to parent their child more now than they should need to at their child's age; an age at which their child should be growing more independent rather than becoming more dependent on them as parents.

Impact on the family

- Some parents perceived a need to give extra parenting to their depressed teenager which had a knock-on effect on their parenting of their other children, as it meant that they did not have as much parenting energy or time to spend with them.

Why adolescent depression is so hard identify and get a handle on ?

1. Current treatment approaches do not appear to be effective in treating depression in teenagers.
2. We need to understand the physiological, psychological and age appropriate factors that cause this.
3. We need to recognize why and look at more proactive approaches to reduce and treat depression in adolescents.

Traditional methods do not work effectively

- Conventional treatments for depression such as anti-depressive medication and psychological cognitive strategies such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) have not been sufficiently effective to slow the increasing prevalence of this disorder in teenagers.
- Follow-up studies of both pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy show that 25 - 50% of the depressed adolescents relapse within 6 months to 2 years post-treatment.
- Relapses are often much worse and not reported.

Adolescence is a high risk period

- During adolescence, rapid cognitive and emotional development is ongoing; adolescents do not have the same cognitive 'architecture' as adults, they feel complex emotions but cannot process these and consequently understand them.
- Studies show that young people struggle to make sense of why they feel different from other people their own age, and where their depression has come from.
- Most young people express a wish to understand why they had become depressed, suggesting that giving meaning to their experiences may be an important part of creating a sense of order and re-establishing a feeling of identity for depressed adolescents.

Cognitive Influences

- Cognitive models of depression suggest that it impairs the information processing system specifically attention, memory and interpretation.
- Depressed individual tend to attend to and recall negative information more often and accurately whilst ignoring or filtering out positive information.
- Interpretation biases are part of the information-processing system and are well established as a common feature of anxiety disorders, whereby individuals interpret ambiguous stimuli or events as negative or threatening.
- Adolescents who are clinically depressed make more negatively biased interpretations than other young people

Treatment has a belief base

- It is widely recognised that an individual's beliefs about their (mental) health problems has important implications for how they manage their condition and whether or how they engage with treatment.
- People who take on a biological understanding of their depression, seeing it as something 'inherited from my dad' or as 'a problem with my synapses' may find pharmacological treatment preferable to psychological therapies.
- People who view their depression as chronic are more compliant with medication, whereas medication adherence is poorer in patients who consider their depression to be caused by relationship or circumstantial problems.

Understanding is age relevant

- Adolescents face a significant disadvantage when trying to make sense of depression, they experience complex adult emotions with little or no life skills to understand them
- Individuals may understand depression differently across the lifespan, which may have important implications for treatment and interventions.
- Young adults more commonly explained their depression as a result of childhood experiences,
- Middle aged adults emphasized the role of life & financial stresses separation or divorce.
- Older adults considered loss of a loved one and loneliness to be more common explanations.

Diagnosing Depression

This is a key step in helping your teenager, separating typical teenage behaviour from the onset of depression.

1. There are comprehensive diagnostic criteria for determining whether an individual is depressed.
2. With teenagers some of these criteria maybe related to the changes they are going through as a result of their age.
3. An understanding and awareness of both diagnostic criteria, age appropriate behavioural changes and your gut is the best approach.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – 5 (DSM-5; APA, 2013) identifies possible 9 symptoms of depression),

- Anhedonia (Inability to experience pleasure from normal pleasurable activities)
- Suicidal ideation
- Sleep disturbances
- Fatigue
- Appetite disturbances
- Impaired concentration
- Impaired ability to make decisions
- Psychomotor changes
- Negative self-perceptions.

Five symptoms must be present and must include irritability or anhedonia. These symptoms must have been present for at least two weeks and must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in occupational, social or other important domains of life.

Depression Warning Signs

- Experiencing sadness, unhappiness and crying spells.
- Feeling restless and agitated.
- Having difficulty sleeping or sleeping excessively.
- Feeling fatigued.
- Showing irritability.
- Possessing feelings of shame, guilt or worthlessness.
- Feeling bored most or all the time.
- Having a loss of interest in once-pleasurable activities (Anhedonia).
- Having problems with concentration, memory and decision making.
- Moving and talking slowly.
- Experiencing sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Having thoughts of death or suicide.

Symptoms indicative of depression

- The signs and symptoms of depression may be less visible than a physical illness such as a broken leg.
- It may be difficult to disentangle symptoms which are seen as 'normal' teenage behaviours, from those which may be indicative of a more serious problem.
- A young person may go to great lengths to hide their difficulties and be very reluctant to talk to other people about how they are feeling.
- Adolescents will often confuse emotions (intentionally or by accident) blaming family, school or friends for the way they are feeling to avoid facing the realities of their situation.

What depression looks like

- **Feeling low or unhappy for a prolonged period of time.** This is different from the more 'normal' ups and downs experienced by teenagers in response to everyday life events, for example, falling out with peers, difficulties at school, family arguments.
- **Loss of interest in and enjoyment of usual activities.** It's normal for the appeal of existing hobbies to sometimes change as young people develop new interests. However, losing enthusiasm for a range of things that a young person previously enjoyed over a period of time may indicate low mood.
- **Irritable mood is a less commonly known sign of depression.** This may just be a part of growing up, but if a young person appears irritable about lots of different things over a period of time, it may also be an indication of depression

Self harm as an expression of depression

- A common, inconspicuous and misunderstood aspect of depression.
- Expressed by some as the only escape from the pain of depression.
- Seen by others as the only way to give a face to their desperation.
- Self harm takes many forms, some easily identified and others masked in self contempt or an attempted call for help.

Why, Who, When

- What seems to set off the self-harm or make it more likely (what are the triggers)?
- Does everyone self harm or am I different
- What function does the self-harm have (how does it help with things – eg does it stop the overwhelming thoughts, or block out painful emotions)?
- What seems to help (are there any situations or people which help your child not to self-harm)

In the words of a 14 year old

‘Cutting for me releases all the built-up anger and frustration and pain I feel inside. There are many things that happen to me in my life which cause the pain I feel and how I release it. Mostly the feelings of isolation like being outcast pretty much from relationships altogether. I don’t feel like I am a very stable person and I hate myself a lot of the time. I think body image also has a lot to do with my cutting. School is stressful, home life I can’t handle sometimes’.

When hurting eases pain

- When young people are depressed, and feel abandoned or over overwhelmed they may engage in self-harm behaviour.
- Self harm is usually is aimed towards themselves:
 - Directly - Cutting or burning the skin or banging one's head against a hard surface
 - Indirectly - Risky behaviour such as drug taking or unprotected sex.
- As with many such strategies prolonged behaviour of this manner often requires ever increasing intensity to achieve the desired results.

Why hurting eases pain

- Self-harm can be very transient or last for a longer period of time.
- Normally takes place when a young person feels anger, distress, fear or worry (when they feel overwhelmed or hopeless).
- In other words, it's an attempt to cope with something that feels very difficult.
- It's an outward and tangible expression of inner pain.
- Often it becomes such a successful coping mechanism it moves from being a “solution” to as much of a problem as it was originally supposed to provide relief from.

Causes of self harm

Self-harm might be triggered by

- Relationship difficulties.
- Trauma.
- Bereavement.
- Abuse and/or bullying.
- Negative life events and general pressure (eg around exam time).
- Feeling anything else apart from the distressing emotion.
- Escaping from fear, depression, fear or guilt.
- Relieving feelings or anger or frustration.
- Regaining a sense of control (when everything else feels out of control).
- Following the behaviours of others to gain a sense of belonging.

Benchmarking

EXERCISE

- MAKE A LIST OF YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOURAL BENCHMARKS. THIS WOULD ALLOW YOU TO BEST UNDERSTAND THEIR STRENGTHS AND VULNERABILITIES TO STRESSES IN LIFE.

Behavioural Benchmarks

Behaviour	When contented	When stressed	Stressor
Playing with friends	○ Plays allowing toys to be shared. ○ Interacts and plays with others	▪ Keeps toys to himself. • Plays separately	• Too many children • Children he doesn't know
Meeting adults			

Factors that may cause depression

1. Being aware of behavioral changes is important to diagnosing depression in your teenager.
2. Being attentive to everyday factors that may cause depression may help you prevent or minimize the onset or impact.

Three areas of overlap

Like many physical and mental health difficulties, depression may have a number of different causes, these fall into one of three categories:

- Social
- Biological
- Psychological

Most people who develop depression will have a combination of risk factors from all three categories.

Social and environmental factors.

- Teenage triggers tend to either relate to: - relationships with other people (family, friends, and girlfriends/boyfriends) - failure or fear of failing (schoolwork or hobbies).
- Some children who experience negative life events (bereavement, deprivation or severe trauma) may be at increased risk of depression.
- The relationship between life events and distress doesn't neatly align, and any negative impact can be reduced if children feel supported through their difficulties and are able to learn to cope when things go wrong.

Biological factors

- Depression tends to run in families, but this does not necessarily mean that it is genetically determined.
- Research has not identified a single gene or group of genes which put people at risk of developing depression.
- The adolescent brain can lead to a vulnerability to depression:
 - The prefrontal region (which helps us to manage emotion and our understanding of the world) is still maturing during adolescence.
 - Adolescents are highly sensitive to social cues and reactive to minor disagreements with friends, and being excluded or ridiculed.
 - Adolescents are also more responsive to rewards, often those which involve risks, such as smoking, drinking or taking drugs.

Psychological factors.

These refer to an individual's resilience or ability to cope; resilience tends to protect against developing depression and stems from:

- Not having good social support (having family or friends that can be drawn on in times of difficulty).
- Lack of balance in life (being involved in a variety of activities and relationships).
- having a more pessimistic outlook (assuming that life will get tougher rather than better seems to be a key cause of depression).
- Many of these and other factors may be located within the broader family setting.

Multiple Factors

Many factors (can) contribute to the development of depression, including genetics, life events and psychological factors, and these will vary from person to person.

As one parent succinctly put it:

‘It’s not your fault that your child is ill...ditch the guilt. It wastes valuable energy’.

The importance of being observant

- It's important to be observant about your young person and notice what's going on.
- 'Normal' teenage behaviour can be similar to the behaviour of depressed teenagers so symptoms can be hard to spot.
- It's useful to 'keep an eye' on things to see whether any changes are just a short-term phase or part of more lasting difficulties.
- It's also important to be open about your concerns with your young person, which you may feel very apprehensive about.
- For many people, mental health still carries with it a stigma, you may feel unsure of what to say or even worry about making things worse

Showing your concern and/or interest

- I've noticed that you've been finding school (or something else) difficult lately. How are you feeling about it?
- I've just noticed that you seem sad a lot of the time. How have you been feeling recently?
- You seem to be spending a lot of time on your own lately and I just wondered if there was anything bothering you and how I could help?
- Are you still enjoying __ (name a usual hobby or activity)? What is still enjoyable about it and what are you finding more challenging?

Be aware of adolescent sensitivity

- Do not make them feel criticised or judged.
- Make sure that they know you're there for them, even if they're not ready to talk about their difficulties.
- Let them know that you're available to listen when they are ready to talk.
- Take them seriously even if what they tell you doesn't make immediate sense.
- Consider when might be the best time to talk to them. Sometimes this can be when you're both involved in another activity (eg cooking the dinner) or when you're driving somewhere together (it can help to have a conversation when you're sitting side by side rather than facing each other).

Cognitive Behavioural Theory (CBT)

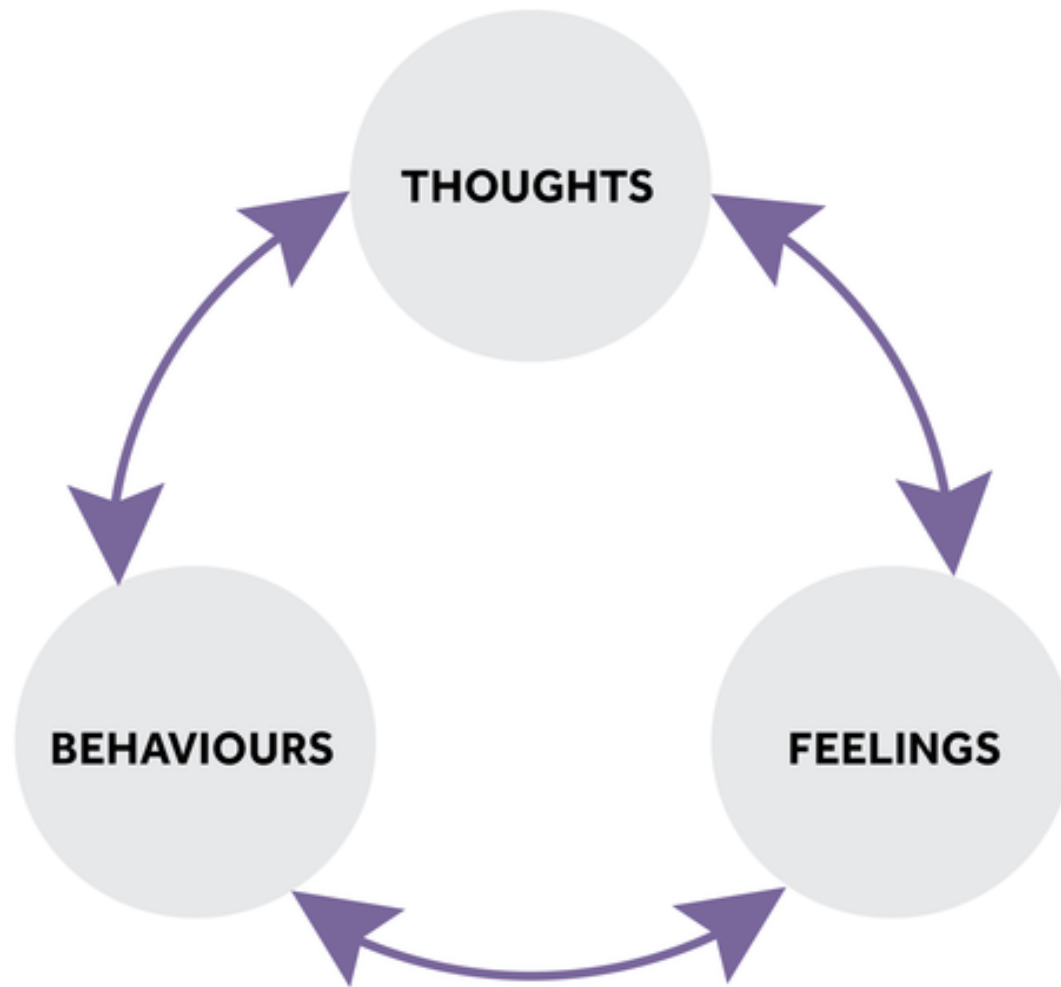
- The CBT approach is based on the idea that how we think (our cognitions, and the C in CBT) and how we behave (the B in CBT) are closely related to how we feel (and vice versa), so bringing about a change in one of these areas can cause a shift in the other elements too
- If we can put into context and manage the impact of these and related thoughts and emotions we are better able to avoid the negative thoughts that often result in the onset of depression.

The link between emotions and behaviour

- Our behaviour can change for many reasons and reduction of activity or withdrawal from certain types of activities is common in depression.
- When you're depressed everything feels much more of an effort, and the symptoms of depression (eg fatigue, concentration problems) often make it harder to engage in activities.
- However, while avoidance of activities can provide short term relief (eg the young person avoids having to make the extra effort involved in seeing their friends), in the long term this causes more problems as every time you avoid something, it gets even harder to do.
- This avoidance also means that the young person is missing out on opportunities that might boost their mood and encourage them to keep doing those activities ('positive reinforcement').

- The downside of avoiding (social) situations is that a teenager's friends might feel they aren't interested and stop making an effort to keep in touch.
- This can then make it even harder to stay connected with others. In this way, a person's behaviour can maintain depression symptoms and may make them worse.
- A positive feed back loop sets in, where a depressed teenager starts to look at situations and see in them the things they need to see in order to validate their feelings of sadness.
- We start to see what we need/want to see to justify our behaviour/beliefs.

CBT Dynamic



CBT in everyday life

- The interactions between thoughts, emotions and feelings happen all the time, without us paying any real attention to the process.
- Many of these have evolved over time and through our well developed survival instinct become automated to make living easier and more efficient.
- This leads on to another important principle of CBT; people can find themselves in the same situation as each other and yet feel differently about it.

CBT differs in all of us

- We each think about things differently; it isn't the situations that we find ourselves in that determine how we feel about things, it's our interpretation of the situation that leads to how we feel about it and what we do in response to it.
- We can think about this with some simple examples. Take the following scenario.

CBT in action

You text a friend asking if they're free to meet up for a coffee later in the week, but don't hear back that day.

- How would you interpret this situation (what thoughts would you have about it?)
- What impact might that have on how you felt?
- What impact might that have on what you did?
- How else might you interpret the situation?
- What impact would that have on how you felt and what you did?

The situation could be interpreted in several ways.

1. If you felt that your friend hadn't replied because s/he didn't want to meet up, you might feel sad or lonely, and you might try to avoid texting your friend in the future.
2. However, if you felt that your friend had probably been tied up at work, you wouldn't feel sad (you might not have an emotional response) and you might try to give him/her a call that night instead.
3. You might consider a bit of both scenarios as you attempt to approach the situation "rationally"

CBT Triggers and Tools

- CBT is about understanding (in the first instance) and then changing the way in which a person thinks about and responds to events in the world, in order to impact how they feel about things.
- As anyone who has experienced themselves or supported someone with depression, trying to change the emotions is impossible – asking someone to ‘cheer up’ or ‘feel less sad’ is never going to work;
- CBT uses a number of tools which target thoughts and behaviours directly (thereby indirectly targeting the difficult emotions).

- It's useful to think about some of the factors which may have contributed to a teen's depression, but it can be even more helpful to understand the factors which are keeping the difficulties going.
- CBT is based on changing the origin and outcome of the negative thoughts feelings and emotions and getting them to relate to the reality of what is actually happening
- In order to do this, there are some key questions you might want to think about with your young person:

CBT Questions for guidance

- Are there any current triggers to your teenagers low mood that seem to make their depression worse?
 - These might include things like being on their own for too long, specific events at school, bullying and other stressful situations, sleep difficulties and so on.
- Does your child respond or cope in ways that seem to keep the depression going?
 - For example, by avoiding people, putting things off, stopping exercising (these things are covered in more detail later on in the course).
- Does your young person experience particular thinking styles which make the depression worse?.
 - Things like always predicting the worst, being overly critical about oneself and expecting things to be perfect.

- Are there things that seem to be preventing your young person's depression from getting worse
 - Things like seeing friends, support from family, still going to school.
- By understanding your young person's depression more fully, you'll be in a better position to talk to them about their difficulties and be more supportive if they're struggling.
- By collecting and understanding the details of the thoughts, emotions and feelings a teenager has about the depression inducing aspects of their life you are able to try and get them to change the perception they have about these.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is an effective form of therapy for depression in adults.

It is an approach to dealing with stress inducing situations and thoughts that can be developed and practiced outside of therapy to reduce the negative impact these have on us and our mental and emotional well being.

We are going to explore it here as a stepping stone to understanding how depression works and as the foundation for practical ways to break the cycle of depressive thoughts in teenagers.

- Everyone who experiences depression and low mood are likely to have a different set of experiences. However, there are often similar features, and you might recognise some ideas that are relatable. Some experiences are very common for teenagers and can be triggers for vicious cycles.
- Many young people may be bullied or have negative experiences with friends. They are also often under pressure from school to perform well in exams and coursework, and may be involved in other hobbies and sports that have pressure from competitions or other exams.

CBT in Practice

Teenager (T) Parent (P)

T: *“I don’t want to go to school because I have no friends and nobody likes me”*

P: *“What do you mean you have no friends and nobody likes you, what about Robert, he is your friend?”*

P: *“What has Robert done that makes you think he doesn't want to be your friend?”*

T: *“Lots of little things, he often hangs out with others and leaves me by myself”*

P: *“Are you sure he purposely leaves you on your own, you are in different classes so you come out for break time at different times and places”*

CBT in Practice

Teenager (T) Parent (P)

T: *“Yes but he still doesn’t come and look for me, or check where I am”*

P: *“Do you ever go and find him, or tell him you want to meet up ?”*

T: *“No because he doesn’t like me, if he liked me he would come and look for”*

P: *“Well maybe he thinks you don’t really like him, because you never go and find him or make an arrangement to meet him”*

P: *“Maybe he thinks you like to be left alone, or maybe because you never make an arrangement with him he thinks you don’t like him”*

CBT in Practice

Teenager (T) Parent (P)

P: *“Has there ever been an time when you have said to him lets meet up at beak and he has said no?”*

T: *“No”*

P: *“Has there ever been an time when you have made an arrangement to meet up and he has agreed and then not stuck to it?”*

T: *“No”*

P: *“Maybe he thinks you like to be left alone, or maybe because you never make an arrangement with him he thinks you don’t like him”*

CBT in Practice

Teenager (T) Parent (P)

P: *“If you asked him to meet up and he said no, or didn’t pitch then maybe you might want to ask him whether he wants to be your friend”*

T: *“I suppose”*

P: *“Why don’t you make an arrangement to meet him, and see what happens”*

T: *“Ok”*

P: *“Then you can decide on whether your thoughts and feelings are realistic based on what really happens”*

T: *“OK, I think that sounds good”*

CBT in Practice

Although this is a very simple example it illustrates a number of important concepts.

1. The parent is encouraging the teenager to talk, to get their thoughts and emotions out, without any judgment.
2. The parent is guiding the teenager to check their thoughts feelings and emotions against other interpretations and possibilities.
3. The parent is encouraging the teenager to address an issue, rather than brooding on it. By “getting it out” they are aware of the challenge rather than it keeping quite and letting it grow and fester, becoming more than it need be.

CBT in Practice

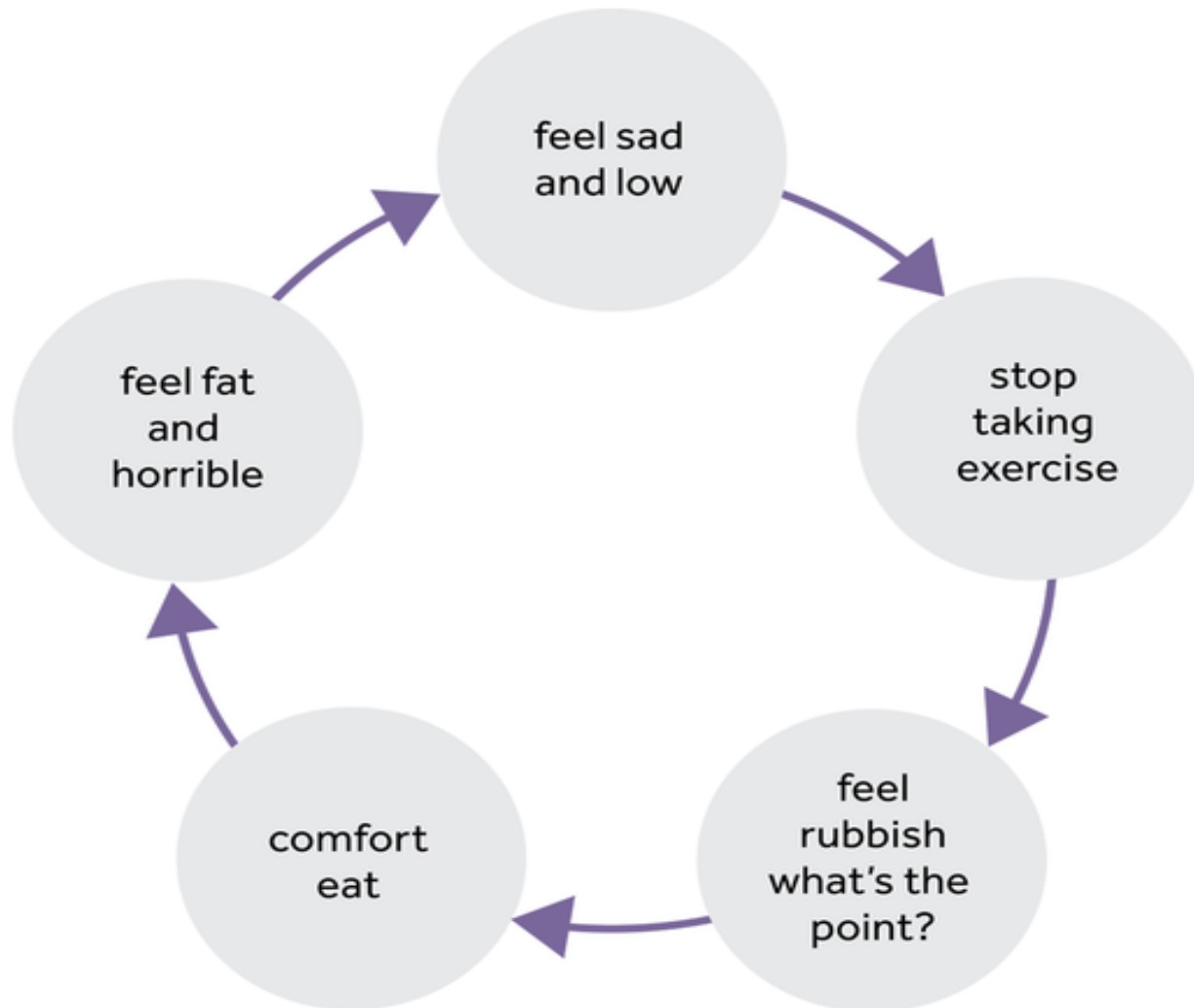
4. The parent is encouraging the teenager to be proactive and do something to address the issue at hand.
5. This approach builds open and safe communication, which may encourage similar conversations in the future.
6. The parent is guiding the teenager to frame their problem, separate it from emotion and approach it with a level of healthy objectivity to assess it realistically.
7. By framing the issue and addressing it objectively the parent is guiding the teenager to effective problem solving.

Eating and Sleeping

- Problems with sleeping, eating and engaging in physical activities are some of the symptoms of depression.
- Research indicates that 71% of young people with depression experienced a sleep disturbance.
- Poor sleep and poor diet contribute to other problems associated with depression such as issues with concentrating, thinking, planning and making judgements, and feeling exhausted and hopeless.
- These difficulties make it very hard to take part in normal activities at school, with friends and at home, and many young people find themselves doing less and less when they are depressed.

- These problems can create a vicious cycle, with each problem making each of the others more difficult to manage.
- The young person may be finding it hard to engage in their normal activities if they are feeling low. They may have stopped going out with friends or have fallen behind in school work.
- The next figure provides an examples of how these problems can be linked together to form a vicious cycle.

These cycles are often triggered by something bad happening, and these events may determine how the cycle progresses.



Eating

Research in nutrition and health has started to identify some types of foods that seem to have a psychological effect.

Eating is often negatively associated with low mood and can result in increased levels of depression.

A healthy diet and eating patterns are a corner stone of fighting depression.

- Global research across cultures, socio economic status, race, gender and age has shown that diet plays an important role in the treatment of depression.
- Young people with a healthy diet reported the fewest cases of depression.
- Young people with a poor diet reported the highest symptoms of depression lasting much longer than in the case of healthy eaters.
- Poor eating habits make adolescents twice as likely to exhibit symptoms of depression.

We have identified 2 major food groups that should be considered as a dietary essentials in combating depression

Flavonoids

- Flavonoids are a group of nutrients that are found in a wide range of fruits and vegetables.
- They influence the colour of the food and have protective effects on many aspects of health including heart disease and cancer.
- Flavonoids are believed to have a positive influence on mental health and mental functioning including mood, attention and memory.
- Flavonoids are high in many fruits and berries including blueberries, strawberries and raspberries as well as brightly coloured fruit and vegetables every day will ensure you and your teenager, benefit from a wide range of sources.

Complex carbohydrates

- Carbohydrates are one of the main types of nutrients, they make up a very large part of our daily diet and the right ones are an important source of energy.
- They're essential to health because as they pass through the digestive system they're broken down into glucose – providing our brain and body with their primary fuel.
- Two categories are used when referring to carbohydrates, simple and complex.
 - Simple carbohydrates such as enriched flour, found in refined breads, pastas, and sugary foods, provide calories but few nutrients. They fill us up and can be associated with comfort and satisfaction. They're often found in junk and heavily processed foods.
 - Complex carbohydrate sources such as wholegrain breads, starchy vegetables and beans deliver fibre, as well as vitamins and minerals. Complex carbohydrates are digested more slowly and help us keep our blood sugar levels steady between meals.

Healthy eating patterns

- Try to eat together regularly, mealtimes are important social events.
- Encourage your teenager to eat breakfast. Experimental studies show that having breakfast can improve mood throughout the day.
- Be a good role model – what you eat and how you eat can teach young people about nutrition
- Try to offer a range of different foods. Be brave and experiment with new foods.
- If a new food isn't popular at first, be patient; it can take a few attempts before people start to enjoy new flavours.

- Offer water with every meal, and encourage drinking water between meals, instead of soft drinks
- If your child has no appetite, offer them very small portions, this is less overwhelming and easier to manage. They can always have more.
- Don't keep junk food in the house, if it's not there it can't be eaten.
- Have biscuits, cakes and sweets on special occasions only.
- Encourage young people to participate in planning meals for themselves and the family
- Teach your child to cook. This can encourage them to get more involved in preparing meals and give them more control and knowledge.

Sleep

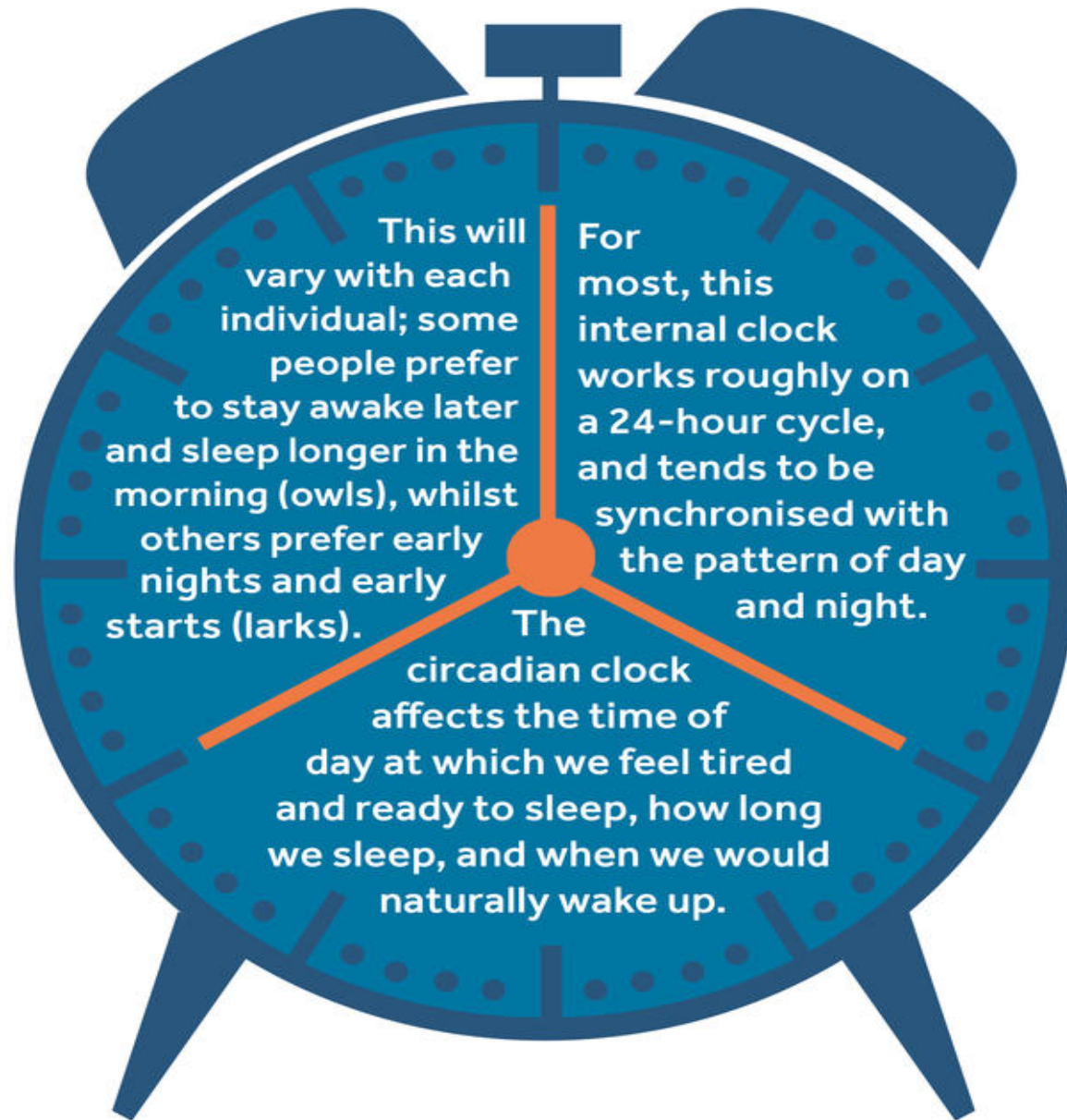
The amount of sleep we want and need is influenced by an internal biological 'clock' known as a 'circadian rhythm'.

- How much sleep do teenagers need ?
- How do sleeping patterns work?
- Is sleep affected by depression?
- When should they go to sleep and when should they wake?
- Can they sleep too much?

Sleep and the brain

- Sleep is another essential component of day to day living, and it's a behaviour that changes throughout childhood.
- Sleep is an essential function for brain health, it ensures the brain is able to function effectively.
- Sleep is when the brain recharges and renews itself
- Sleep helps with memory, decision making, weight loss and many other essential functions

- During adolescence the circadian rhythm changes quite dramatically.
- Most teenagers have a shift in the time at which they feel sleepy. Their natural rhythm is to go to sleep late and wake up late. Most teenagers are owls rather than larks.
- However, this does not match well with the usual school timetable.
- As a result, during school and working weeks most teenagers do not get enough sleep.



This will vary with each individual; some people prefer to stay awake later and sleep longer in the morning (owls), whilst others prefer early nights and early starts (larks).

For most, this internal clock works roughly on a 24-hour cycle, and tends to be synchronised with the pattern of day and night.

The circadian clock affects the time of day at which we feel tired and ready to sleep, how long we sleep, and when we would naturally wake up.

Sleep as a symptom of depression

- People who are depressed may find it hard to get to sleep, perhaps because they have worries and thoughts going through their minds that keep them awake.
- Once they're asleep they may wake up during the night, worry, and find it hard to get back to sleep and therefore not feel rested in the morning.
- In addition, depression is associated with waking too early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep.
- Alternatively, some people with depression may feel that they need more sleep than usual. They may feel tired a lot of the time, go to bed early and sleep in very late.
- Once sleep is a problem, it's quite easy to see how it might become something that keeps depression going or make it worse. Thoughts about the lack of sleep become another thing to worry about.

Creating a sleep routine

- Reduce the amount of substances they consume with caffeine and sugar, chocolate, tea, coffee and soft drinks. Especially in the afternoons and evenings.
- Encourage the use of beds for sleeping and sleeping only. Watching TV, doing homework, connecting on social media should not be done in bed.
- Try and limited exposure to electronics and other screen based activities prior to bed time as these often stimulate the brain and make it more difficult to fall asleep. Additionally negative or disturbing messages often sneak into their mind just before bed time.

Sleep routine

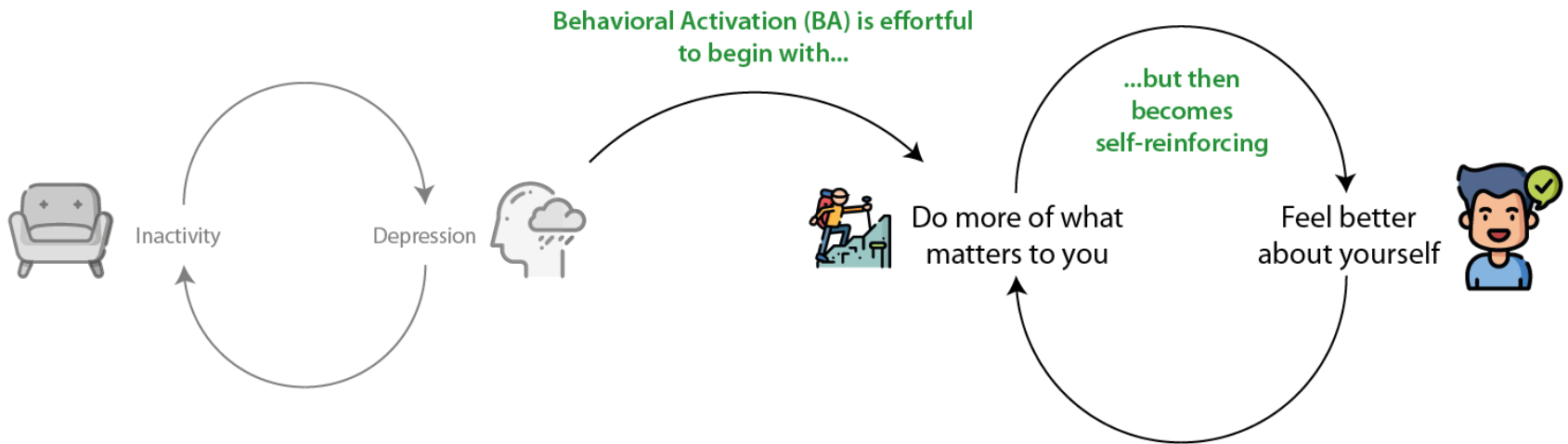
- Try and establish a bed time routine that encourages the body (and mind) to start winding down for the day. Relaxing and soothing activities are ideal.
- If your teenager fails to fall asleep encourage them to get up and go and read in another room, not to lie in bed and toss and turn. They can return to bed after a short period (15 minutes) and try and fall asleep again. This can be repeated a few times if necessary.
- Don't let them worry about their their sleeping patterns as this often makes sleeping more difficult.

Setting your sleep routine

- Set an alarm clock and stick to the wake and get up time. This will take time and you will need to be patient and encouraging.
- Encourage your teenager to try and wake at the same time everyday, as this helps with regulating their internal clock
- Encourage exposure to morning and natural light as this stimulates the production of serotonin, a hormone that controls your sleep and waking cycles.
- Regular exercise is also very important for the regulation of sleeping cycles.

BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION

Behavioural activation (BA) is based on the behavioural theory of depression and aims to improve mood by increasing positive reinforcement for healthy behaviours.



Behavioural Activation is well suited to teenagers for a number of reasons

- BA is equivalent to CBT for adults with depression and can be more effective than medication
- BA appeals to young people because it is short-term, focused and simple to understand.
- A key aim in BA is to increase **positive reinforcement** in a person's life.
- Positive reinforcement is a consequence of a behaviour that is rewarding, and makes it more likely you'll repeat the behaviour again.
- BA builds on a strong theoretical base (learning theory) that can explain symptoms of depression in simple (as well as more complex) terms.

- Many young people do not engage with lengthy formal therapy based treatments and drop out before they receive the planned number of sessions.
- Existing psychological treatments (e.g. CBT, IPT, family therapy) are complex, delivered by specialist therapists. This means that access to Formal treatment is limited and most young people with depression (or other mental health problems) are not able to access treatment at all, or must endure lengthy waiting lists.
- There is little or no stigma attached to process of BA as there often is with formal therapy.
- Once mastered BA is proactive and can be practiced on an ongoing basis.
- It can be integrated in daily routine of the family and can be used to enhance family support and understand.

Six Steps

1. Activity and mood monitoring.
2. Notice and record of relationship between certain activities and your mood.
3. Schedule more of the better mood activities for the week ahead. Schedule these for times when you know things are going to be tough, mid morning or early evening.
4. Balance pleasant activities with achievement activities.
5. Activation before motivation.
6. Reward yourself.

Step 1: Activity and mood monitoring

- Depression usually makes it difficult to notice fluctuations in mood – everything seems black all the time. But moods do fluctuate, at least to some degree. The first step in BA is to become familiar with these fluctuations.
- Write down the activities you do and rate your depression at the time (0 = no depression, 10 = extreme depression) every day for a week or two before moving on to step 2, but continue to monitor your activity and moods for up to 16 weeks.

Step 2: Record relationship between mood and activity

- When you look back over your activities and mood ratings each week, what activities were associated with a better mood (even slightly) and what activities were associated with a lower mood?
- Make a list of these activities under two headings – “better mood activities” and “lower mood activities”.
- When you are depressed, you are likely to find more “lower mood” than “better mood” activities at the beginning. This is normal, but the idea is for this balance to shift over time.

Step 3: Schedule good mood activities

- It sounds simple, but the next step is to schedule more of the “better mood” activities and steer clear of the “lower mood” activities.
- You might also schedule activities you previously enjoyed in your life, even if you don’t find them as rewarding at the moment.
- Consider the days and times you are most likely to complete the activity over the coming week, schedule it in your diary, and problem-solve any obstacles that might get in the way.
- Plan some activities with loved ones for some additional support and encouragement.

Step 4: Balance pleasant activities with achievement ones

- It is important to maintain a healthy balance of both pleasurable and achievement-based activities.
- Too many pleasurable activities can be unhelpful if it means we neglect our responsibilities, which then pile up and become overwhelming.
- On the other hand, too many achievement-based activities can feel like all work and no play.
- Some activities give us a sense of both pleasure and achievement – win, win!

Step 5. Action before motivation

This step is critical.

- If an activity is scheduled in the diary, then it gets done, regardless of how we are feeling. No exceptions.
- A depressed mood will discourage us from making changes in our lives.
- The essence of BA is that if we behave as if we are depressed, then we will continue to feel depressed. Behaviour needs to change before emotions and motivation will improve, not the other way around.
- If the activity in the diary is too challenging on a particular day, then do something that is less challenging but still moves you in a helpful direction. Starting slow is better than not starting at all.
- To maintain motivation, keep in mind the long-term benefits of breaking the cycle of increasing withdrawal and worsening depression.

Step 6: Reward yourself

- When you complete a scheduled activity, reward yourself. Think about natural rewards that might help motivate you to achieve your goals and reinforce your changes.
- These rewards are likely to help lift your mood even further and may help you through the difficult times, because the road to recovery is likely to be rocky.

Advantages of BA

- BA is no panacea, but it can be very effective at treating depression for many people.
- BA is not rocket science, but simplicity is its major advantage over many other treatments. Simpler treatments can be taught more quickly and cheaply, and are more likely to be delivered with greater fidelity than more complex treatments.
- Poor concentration is a common symptom of depression, so simplifying treatment may also help sufferers to apply the techniques long enough to experience the benefits.
- BA has no side effects, which is a common concern with medications.

Integrating Behavioural Activation (BA) into Healthy Living

- BA is a very effective starting point and early strategy to overcoming depression.
- To counter of the risks of depression returning in a different format or emerging in a later phase of life BA needs to be developed and integrated into a proactive living strategy.
- This involves building a firm understanding of what grounds you and ensures you are content with yourself and life.

Changing behaviour in the long term

- The aim behind changing behaviour in depression is to increase a person's exposure to **diverse and stable sources of positive reinforcement** (in other words, a variety of different, reliable ways to make them feel good).
- Activities that are meaningful and likely to be reinforcing for an individual tend to be linked to their values, and what they view as important in their life.
- The same activity might be very rewarding for one person, but another person's idea of a punishment.

Creating an Activity Log

- An activity log aids in creating awareness and help us understand what is good for us.
- This may sound very obvious and simple but in the business of life and the challenges of depression these may be easily forgotten.
- Healthy and fulfilled living requires a combination of feeling a sense of (A) achievement, (E) experiencing enjoyment and fun and (C) closeness/familiarity.
- An activity log thus comprises 3 categories.
 - ACE-I (Achievement, Closeness, Enjoyment and their Importance).

Achievement examples

- Completing a difficult presentation at work
- Painting the bedroom
- Finding somewhere new for the first time
- Washing the car
- Tidying away the clutter on your desk
- Going to the dentist even though you were a reluctant to
- Developing a new skill
- Overcoming a fear
- Solving a problem

Closeness examples

- Talking to a neighbour.
- Stroking the cat.
- Cuddling a friend's baby.
- Looking at photos of a past family event.
- Relaxing and spending time with the kids.
- Going to a place of worship.
- Spending quality time with old trusted friends.
- Walking your dog.
- Sharing experiences with a friend.
- Making someone feel special.

Enjoyment examples

- Going to a comedy night.
- Playing some upbeat music and singing along.
- Having a lie in.
- Watching funny videos online.
- Making a favourite snack and having the time to enjoy it.
- Watching the sun rise.
- Cooking for your family.
- Playing with your siblings.
- Going out for dinner with friends.

The role of importance

- Once listed you need to give the activities in each of the 3 areas an importance value. (1-5).
- A healthy emotional, mental and physical life is achieved by ensuring that you engage in an even spread of all the activities in each of your categories.
- The more important an activity the more often you should engage in it and the more value it offers you in terms of your all round well being.
- In times of high stress or exposure to triggers that may cause low mood or depression is important to engage in high valued activities from all 3 categories..

Example of an activity log

	Achievement (A) I	Closeness (C) I	Enjoyment (E) I
John	• Improving my guitar skills (3) • Beating my PB at park run (2) • Improving my grades (4) • Making the first team squad (4) • Getting to gym five times a week (5)	• Spending time with my family (2) • Spending an evening with my girlfriend (4) • Chilling with my brother (3) • Going to church (4)	• Going to the beach with mates (3) • Playing X box (2) • Going out for pizza with friends (4) • Watching u tube in bed (4)

Why is an activity log important for teenagers?

- Young people don't always have a choice in how they spend their time (they usually have to go to school or college, most can't drive yet, or they aren't allowed by parents or by law to do certain things).
- They may also have different activities that they'd like to fill their time with compared to adults.
- It is important to figure out what a teenager is doing in terms of different activities, and what they get out of each activity.
- This is particularly crucial when considering they don't have full control over how they spend their time.
- Taking note of what they choose and enjoy doing when they have the choice, is important.
- See the attached Activity Log Worksheet.

Values. What are they and why are they important?

- Values are at the core of who we are, they are what we stand for, they are key to our emotional well being.
- Values are established through our social existence, our family, culture, religion and friends and our individual personalities.
- Values are usually what guide us as we navigate our way through life.
- If and when our values are compromised or ignored it usually results in considerable personal emotional discomfort and alienation.

- Values are what we feel are personally important – what matters to us (rather than what matters to friends, family, or others around you).
- Adolescence is a key time of identity development, so most teenagers are thinking about what's important to them, even if it's not often a topic of discussion.
- Many of these values are influenced by family shared values, society, and peers. It can also be the case that teenagers identify with certain values they don't share with others, and this is ok too.

See the attached Values Activity.

What should preventative measures against depression look like for teenagers?

- A key component of effectively preventing teen depression is to create, build, maintain and monitor multiple protective factors.
- In addressing and establishing these preventative measures parents, family and concerned adults have a crucial guiding, encouraging, monitoring and feedback role to play.
- Every person is different and varying circumstances will require a diverse approach to establishing and modifying these.

Feeling connected

- Feeling socially connected to others is one such protective factor that is directly associated with positive emotional health.
- Social connectedness among teens is primarily divided into three main components:
 1. Family connectedness.
 2. School connectedness.
 3. Community connectedness.
- In the prevention and intervention literature, most of the research attention is devoted toward building family and school connectedness.

- Family connectedness refers to warm, open, and caring relationships between parents and children.
- School connectedness is comprised of warm and caring relationships to adults at school including teachers, administrators, and other staff, as well as peers.
- Community connectedness refers to positive relationships with members of one's community and an overall feeling that one is an important and valued member of his/her community and groups within the community (e.g., faith-based groups, organized youth activities, scouts, sports, arts).

- Feeling cared about by family, at school and by peers and generally feeling socially accepted by others is associated with lower rates of depression among youth.
- Teens who are highly connected to others are less than half as likely to suffer from depression than teens who are not as connected.
- Specifically regarding suicide, family connectedness protects against both teen suicidal ideation and suicide attempts.
- Research indicates family connectedness helps to prevent suicide even if teens are socially isolated from peers.
- This is important to note as socially isolated youth are at increased risk for low self-esteem and depression.

Multiple factors at play

- Close relationships with family members may help to buffer peer isolation and therefore reduce the risk of depression and suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
- It is significant to note however the opposite is also important.
 - Poor family relations, conflict or feelings of exclusion and alienation can cause the onset or increase the intensity of depression or suicidal thoughts.
 - No single factor will cause depression or suicidal thoughts, and likewise no single event or intervention will overcome them.
- Close family relationships are a bit of a double edged sword, the potential to ground and provide teenagers with support, however family bonds that are too strong can make it hard for teenagers to make the necessary and healthy break from their families.
- Healthy family connectedness ensures the confidence to explore the world with the knowledge and experience of knowing there is always a place to return to and support if needed.

Encouragement

- For depressed teenagers, even getting out of bed can feel like a marathon.
- Parents and professionals can help by encouraging every little non-depressed behaviour, to increase the amount of positive reinforcement the young person experiences.
- By adding this extra positive reinforcement, you're helping a depressed teenager towards a more rewarding life – step by step (no matter how small).
- Most parents do this very naturally with younger children (eg excited praise when encouraging a toddler to take their first steps), but it might feel less natural doing this with a teenager, so you probably need to use some different techniques.

- Dealing with depression isn't easy and giving your teenager appropriate positive reinforcement will provide additional encouragement on this journey.
- If your teenager is trying to do some exercise as part of increasing their activity levels, it might be a good idea to find ways to support this with rewards or acknowledgement and encouragement.
- Hopefully, your teenager will be rewarded for their efforts by an improvement in their mood, but it'll also be very rewarding for them to know that you're noticing their efforts.
- Supporting someone with depression is also very hard work, therefore we encourage you to notice and reward your own efforts on a regular basis.

- When supporting your teenager to overcome depression it can be helpful to consider the types of positive reinforcement strategies that'll help you in this task.
- You may want to encourage your teenager to communicate more with the family, or to engage in more activities, or to use CBT strategies for their depression, or to attend treatment appointments.
- None of these things are easy to do when a young person is feeling depressed. Finding ways to reward and reinforce these behaviours will help them to make the necessary positive steps towards recovery.

- If you decide to use rewards then keep in mind that this is not bribery. Using rewards to help someone make steps towards feeling better is a very useful and valid strategy
- Encouragement can come in many forms, and sometimes it takes a bit of trial and error to figure out what works best for someone.
- However, the important thing is to be positive about every behaviour you see that shows the young person is trying to fight against their depression symptoms.
- There are some examples below of how you might encourage in verbal and non-verbal ways.

Verbal encouragement	Non-verbal encouragement
Well done! I can see how hard you tried at that Nearly there, just keep going I'm really proud you kept going, I know that must have been difficult Can I help you in any way?	Paying attention Smiling Nodding Physical affection Joining in with the activity

How to help your teenager do more of what matters to them

- We all respond well to positive reinforcement, that's human (and animal) nature. Think of the last time your boss at work told you what a great job you did, your partner complimented you on something you'd done, a friend admired your skill in a hobby, your child thanked you for helping them with something... the list goes on
- Here are some examples of how to encourage a depressed teenager to engage in valued activities. You may also want to ask your teenager what would personally encourage them to do things that are hard at the moment.

- Small rewards (eg phone credit, a magazine, stationary, gift voucher, sweet treat)
- A reward system of your child receiving and saving money towards a bigger reward
- Modeling rewarding yourself and labeling this (e.g. “I’m going to treat myself to [reward] because I did [effortful activity]”)
- Mentioning positive things you have noticed about your child to other members of the family (whether you know your child can hear this or not)
- Having a regular review time with your child to review and identify progress
- Surprising your child with a day out or other treat and telling him/her how proud you are of them
- Spending time doing things together your child wants to do

- As a parent helping & guiding young people, it can sometimes be hard to know how far encouragement goes before it turns into bribery.
- Teenagers are negotiating a tricky period in their lives, trying to become more independent while still living with family and not being able to make all their own decisions. It's normal to have differences of opinion here.
- Not everyone has the same values, and this tends to be a good thing- this means different roles are fulfilled by different members of the family.
- Often parents try to "iron: out and differences in teenagers to make home life easier, with the aim of helping their adolescents "fit in" or reduce the stresses of what their children are facing.
- Its these individual differences in personality and view point that make for healthy people, families and societies.

- However, it can sometimes cause problems when those you're close to don't share the same values, especially when there is a difference between parents and teenagers.
- A lot of this is completely normal and part of growing up. The important thing is working out how young people can engage in activities they value, in line with what adults feel is safe and responsible.

The power of thoughts

- We're often not aware of the impact our feelings and behaviours have on each other, and because of this relationship, changing our behaviours can have a very big effect on our emotions.
- We can often tackle depression by changing key behaviours, and for many young people this is the most direct way to help them improve their mood.

Reversing the negative cycle



Where do thoughts fit in?

- When we talk about thoughts we're referring to a lot of different mental activities, including wishes, hopes, plans, predictions, judgments and memories.
- Thoughts often include words but sometimes they can include pictures, speech, or even smells.
- Most of the time we don't notice our thoughts – they go on in the background, helping us make decisions and carry out many tasks automatically.
- Sometimes, we become aware of our thoughts - for example when we try to work out a puzzle, or remember a specific event, or do a specific task, like write a letter to a friend or learn a new language.

Putting thoughts on trial

- One of the most difficult things about changing thoughts, or cognitions, is that our thoughts are often automatic.
- This means that we don't necessarily notice our thoughts, they're not in our conscious awareness, and negative thoughts have their effect on us without us even noticing.
- As an adult, a parent or teacher, you may be able to help a young person to check, catch, and challenge their own negative thoughts.
- You might also find it interesting or even useful to check, catch and challenge your own negative thoughts – we all have them.

- Even if you understand the process it can be really hard to tackle the negative thinking that keeps depression going.
- When you're depressed, it's even harder – depression is linked with low motivation, lack of energy, and problems concentrating – all of these make it really difficult to stand back and pay attention to automatic thoughts.
- For a depressed teenager, who's still developing their own thinking abilities, it can be even harder than it is for adults.

Checking thoughts

When thoughts are automatic we don't have the chance to check them out.

Often they result in an automatic and routine response which may not serve our best interests.

Once we capture our thoughts we can give them a bit more attention.

Our aim is to stand back from our thoughts and to weigh them up more carefully.

Thought catching

- Catching thoughts is the first and essential stage of checking and putting thoughts on trial.
- Because so many of our thoughts are automatic we can't know if we're making thinking mistakes.
- To work this out we first have to catch our thoughts and hold onto them long enough to have a closer look.
- It's easiest to catch a thought that occurs in a very specific situation. Something recent is probably best.
- We suggest writing things down to keep a record, which also helps feel 'ownership', and helps make an abstract thought more concrete and 'real'.
- Recording a thought also means that we can stand a little further back and consider it in a more neutral way.

- Sometimes the first example you choose is really difficult for the young person to remember or to describe, so don't be put off if they struggle.
- Use their activity diary to choose another example. This might give them clues about when they felt low, and might remind them of where they were and what they were doing.
- Thought catching can be really difficult. They can also try filling out the log when something really great happens or if their mood suddenly changes.
- Try and keep your own thought diary – that might help you to help them.

Use the attached Thought Log

1. Start with “What happened”

- First write down what you (or your teenager) was doing and where they were.
- If it's relevant add who they were with.
- Take note of any aspects of what happened that may relate similar incidents.
- Try and keep the incident in context, noting details of what transpired before.

2. Crystalize the thoughts

- Once you have details of the actual event, then record details of the thoughts that followed.
- Remember thoughts can include pictures, words, and memories
- What went through your mind?
- What could you see in your ‘mind’s eye’?
- What did you say to yourself?
- How much did you believe the thought (0 means don’t believe it at all, 100 means definitely true)?

3. Feelings

- The next step is to link the thoughts to how the young person felt at the time.
- You might be able to help them but be careful not to add your own feelings.
- Often young people have a limited number of words they understand to describe emotions – using emoticons can really help them to elaborate things.

Date and time	What happened	What you thought (How much you believe it)	Feelings. How strong
Monday 8.30am	Getting ready for school	Will anyone talk to me. Probably not. 80%	Sad, embarrassed, (90%)

Catch and challenge negative thoughts

- Catching and challenging thoughts doesn't make them disappear.
- However, recognising that automatic thoughts are having an impact on feelings and behaviours exposes them, and makes them less powerful.
- As an adult you won't have access to a young person's automatic thoughts.
- This is something that only they can examine. However, you may have some insight into the kinds of unhelpful and negative things they say.
- You may be in a good position to help them – when they are ready – to examine some of their automatic thoughts and to help them put them on trial.

- Having a thought doesn't mean that it's true or accurate.
- The point of catching our thoughts and checking them is to assess if they're true, false, helpful or unhelpful.
- Catching and challenging thoughts with the help of another person can also open up new areas of conversation, and help identify new ways to offer practical and emotional support.
- Many (young) people experience periods of unhappiness or depression long after a life event, or in the absence of any major ongoing problems.
- In these situations, catching and checking thoughts can help gain a bit of distance from overwhelming feelings, and give a sense of control back to the young person

- Catching and checking thoughts also makes it possible to challenge automatic thoughts that can be keeping depression and low mood going, and help break out of the cycle of depression.
- Breaking the thinking trap is a key step in reversing the powerful effects negative thoughts can have on our perception and outlook of the world around us.

Thought	Thinking trap
– I won't understand what anyone's talking about? – I'll feel stupid	– Predicting the worse – Do you actually 'know' what you will understand? – Just because you think it doesn't make it true
– They'll think I'm pathetic – The teacher will think I'm lazy	– Mindreading – Will they- how do you know this is true? – How could you find out?
– I'm a real loser	– What would you say if your best friend said this about herself?
– I'm just not as popular as the others	– What evidence do you have for this? – Does being popular make everyone happy? – Are there any examples of popular people who aren't happy? – Or examples of less popular people who are happy

- You might also notice times when their mood or behaviour changes abruptly.
- These changes can signal that an automatic thought has happened to change their mood.
- That moment is probably not a good time to start a discussion about what the young person is thinking, and why that might be helpful or not helpful to them.
- However, it might be useful as an example that you could mention to them another time.

Finding alternative thoughts

- When we check and challenge an automatic thought what then?
- It's possible that this process quickly highlights some thoughts that are easy to challenge and amend.
- Often it's useful to replace negative thoughts with alternatives, and the alternatives don't have to be positive.
- This is not about 'positive' thinking. What we're aiming to do is to show that thoughts aren't facts.
- Usually there's more than one way to interpret or make sense of a situation and here we're looking for plausible alternative thoughts.

Thought	– Feeling – How strong is the feeling?	New alternative thought	– Feeling – How strong is the feeling?
I won't understand what anyone's talking about	– Stupid – 100%	If I don't understand I'll listen and ask someone later	–Stupid – 80%
The teacher will think I'm lazy	– Embarrassed – 90%	If I ask for help they will know I'm not lazy	– Embarrassed – 50%

Dealing with 'stuck' thoughts

- Sometime thoughts are really hard to catch and pin down – they go around and around and get stuck.
- Sometimes this is because we try to work out a problem and think about it over and over.
- This kind of thinking keeps us awake at night – it's called rumination and is a really common problem when people are depressed.

Thoughts that are common in rumination

- Why on earth did I do it like that?
- Would it have made it better if I'd done it differently
- What if I'd said x instead of y?
- Maybe if I had done this instead of that it would have worked out better
- Why does this kind of thing always happen to me?
- What makes me so stupid?
- Am I being punished?
- What's wrong with me?

It's hard to break away from repetitive thoughts like these but some strategies can help.

Distraction

- Rumination tends to fill empty spaces and time, and is a particular problem at bedtime or when a young person is alone and unoccupied.
- For this reason, activities that involve paying attention or being physically active can really help with rumination – the young person just doesn't have enough spare mental or physical energy to ruminate at the same time.

Letting negative thoughts 'go'

- This is a different way of managing stuck thoughts. Thoughts are just thoughts. Thoughts come and go, in and out of the mind.
- Some are positive and some are negative – either way they're not 'facts'. Mindfulness practice treats thoughts in this way and many schools and community organisations now offer training in Mindfulness for young people.

- Another excellent way to let negative thoughts go is based on self-compassion. Many of the negative thoughts that are common in depression, are highly self-critical and involve a lot of self-blame. Young people who are their own worst critic may find self-compassion very useful.

Writing

- Writing about bad experiences can help sort out jumbled up thoughts and feelings, and there's evidence that emotional writing has a positive effect on well-being. It's not important how to write completely, or particularly well, or to worry about grammar and spelling.
- Just getting thoughts down on paper (or computer) can make them a little more manageable.

Worry time

- A specific time which is allocated just to worry can be helpful, as long as it's bounded by distracting activities before and immediately afterwards.
- Worry time allows young people to 'hold' their worries for a period, as they know they'll be able to spend time thinking them through at a later date.
- It is invaluable if they are able to use worry time in conjunction with thought capturing and seeking alternative thoughts and solutions.

Family relationships and communication

- Despite your support and encouragement, there's a limit to how much influence you'll be able to have on your teenager's world outside of the home.
- This is fine for the most part and part of growing up for every young person.
- You may, however, have more influence on what's going on at home. Some forms of stress for a young person may be affected by relationships and if this is the case, this is something that might be more within your control.

How well people are getting along in your family.

- Are there a lot of arguments?
- Do family members often end up misunderstanding what others are trying to say or what they mean?
- Does your teenager express anger or irritability when speaking to others in the family?
- Are there topics that always seem to lead to arguments?

Identify opportunities for reducing stressful situations in the family home.

- Reducing stress in the home can be another piece of the puzzle in helping with your teen's depression, and you might want to discuss these ideas with them.
- What are their views about how people are getting along in the home?
- Do they recognize any relationship difficulties that then cause them to feel stressed, angry, irritable or low?
- What ideas do they have about helping people to get along more?
- Is there anything they could be doing differently to change this for the better?

Promoting good communication and avoiding conflict

- Communication with teenagers at the best of times can be challenging.
- When a teenager is depressed, the situation can become even more difficult. You may recall the biases in thinking when someone is depressed highlighted earlier and how it becomes much more likely that the depressed person hears the things that are said to them in negative ways.
- This increases the likelihood of communication problems and conflict.

- Research shows that conflict with family members is higher for depressed teenagers compared with teenagers who aren't depressed.
- There are also suggestions by studies that family conflict may have a further negative effect on the teenager's depressed mood.
- It's understandable that when a member of the family has depression, it often puts a lot of strain on family relationships and therefore the likelihood for conflict is much higher.

You say, they hear

- Below are some examples of how depression can twist what young people hear and interpret from what others say.
- It isn't something that people tend to think about when they're communicating with people who are depressed.
- It's also not something that depressed young people are consciously aware of if they haven't been taught about the thinking errors in depression.

You say	They hear
'Why are you in your room again?'	'You're no fun, why can't you be different'
'Pick up this mess'	'You can't do anything right'
'What's wrong?'	'There's something wrong with you'
'Help me with dinner'	'You never help around here'
'You haven't seen your friends this week'	'You're not trying hard enough'

Tips for good communication

When trying to avoid or reduce communication problems and conflict, we suggest you keep the following points in mind:

- Spend time talking.
- Be available.
- Try not appeal to judge.
- Choose the right time.
- Guide rather than tell
- Avoid issue that are emotional.
- Listen to understand not to answer.
- Choose neutral places to talk about difficult topics.

- Spend more time talking to your teen about positive, humorous or neutral things at appropriate times (to model and encourage better and more frequent communication in general – you may not get the response you want but giving a consistent and clear message that you want to communicate regularly can be very helpful).
- If you know certain topics often lead to arguments (for example, helping more around the house, using the computer, getting to school on time) ask yourself whether it's absolutely necessary to bring these things up now.

- Think about the timing of your requests. If you know that your teenager is in a bad mood or has had a bad day at school, delay the request until they seem to be more relaxed.
- Give your teenager choices when asking them to do something: 'Would you like to go for a walk with me and the dog or would you prefer to take the dog out on your own?'
- Give very short requests with a brief rationale: 'Please could you empty the dishwasher, I need to do the hovering and I could really use your help in the next half hour.'

- Give the message that you're available to talk any time they need but don't pressure them into it: 'You look like you had a tough day at school, I'm downstairs if you want to talk or we could go for a coffee and cake tomorrow afternoon.'
- If you've noticed something that concerns you, tell your teenager in a way that'll help them to hear you in a less negative way: 'I like it when you spend time with friends, it brings out your fun side. You've not seen your friends for a while, let's invite them over this weekend.'

- Take some time and think beforehand about what you want to communicate and what you need to say in order for this to be heard in the way you want it to.
- Give clear instructions with a clear rationale to avoid misunderstandings (for example, 'I'd really like to clean the house a bit this weekend and I need some help').
- You know where most of your things go in your room, and you cleaned it well last time, could you give that a tidy and this will leave less for me to do? I can do the Hoovering bit if you want

- If you feel yourself becoming irritated, frustrated or angry, take a moment out of the situation. In this quiet moment ask yourself whether your child is responding in ways that fit with a depressed way of thinking.
- Decide on the best course of action depending on your evaluation (for example, change communication style, delay it for a while, give a rationale).
- Give choices in order to hand over more responsibility for resolving conflict and improving communication (for example, ‘we need to talk about this difficulty and see if we can solve it, would you rather talk about it this evening or on the weekend when we’ve more time?’).

Problem-solving

Depression can get worse when there are high levels of external demands, pressures and changes in the family that cause stress.

Pressure and stress can make a person feel more anxious and overwhelmed, and therefore affect mood in a negative way.

There are different forms of stress.

- Some forms of stress for a teenager come from the pressures of schoolwork, exams, and wanting to do well academically.
- Other stresses may originate from peers, friends and social media.
- Often at this age, relationships with friends and boyfriends/girlfriends can be intense and changeable.
- There's a lot to be dealing with in terms of 'fitting in' whilst at the same time trying to find your own identity and confidence as an individual.

How we see problems

- Everyone encounters problems, from small daily situations such as finding the time to juggle competing demands to much bigger issues that may affect the whole family or our future. The way we approach problems is very important.
- If we see problems as terrible, as a nuisance, there to ruin our lives, or as overwhelming and unmanageable, this will not motivate us to try to solve them and we will tend to avoid facing up to things.
- If we see problems in a slightly different way, we will be much more inclined to be proactive and to work to find solutions.

- It may be helpful to think about your child's general approach towards problems.
- Do they tend to see problems as an opportunity to find solutions and to learn something or do they tend to view problems as overwhelming and to be avoided at all costs?
- Are there ways that you can encourage your child to approach situations more and to have a more positive attitude towards problems and solving them?

Encouraging your teenager to solve problems

- If you feel that your teenager could be applying problem-solving more often in order to help them feel more in control, more confident and more engaged in life's decisions and situations,.
- Sometimes simply starting with something very simple and minor can give a person a sense of motivation and confidence and it can counteract those very unhelpful thoughts such as 'it's all hopeless', 'I'm useless', 'it's no good', 'there's nothing I can do', 'it will be awful' and so on.

Solving problems step-by-step

This skill has particular steps that are best taken in the right order.

STEP 1

- Decide on what the problem is – name it:

‘The problem is

Remember that attitude towards problems is important at this stage so this is a good time to see the problem as an opportunity rather than as a nuisance.

STEP 2

- Come up with some possible solutions – it’s helpful to let your imagination run wild for a while and to note down some funny and ridiculous solutions.
- Keeping the humour in this helps some people to come up with more solutions and to be creative with it.

STEP 3

- Think about each solution and how good you think it is – will it solve the problem completely or maybe even just a little?
- Sometimes you can solve an entire problem with one solution and other times you may need a few different ones.

STEP 4

- Choose one or two of your favourite solutions – they don't have to be perfect, in fact most of the time solutions are not perfect, they're just OK.
- If they don't work 100% you can always tweak them.

STEP 5

- Plan how and when you'll try them out.

STEP 6

- Try them. Did they work?.
- Which parts worked and which parts didnt

STEP 7

- If not, try some other ones.
- Take note of the aspects of your solutions that did work

STEP 8

- Stop and remind yourself that it's great you've remembered to practice solving problems, no matter what the outcome.

Anxiety

- Depression and anxiety often occur together.
- Anxiety usually the precursor to depression.
- Anxiety is a very old and fundamental emotion, the modern day or flight, it is usually the sign that something is wrong and we are not aware of what potentially threatens us.
- We feel anxious when faced with what we do not know or situations that are strange or threaten to upset our homeostasis and sense of balance.

Low level feelings of anxiety are a normal reaction to stress.

- This is generally a good thing; anxiety can help motivate you to accomplish things in your life that are important to you (eg to study harder),
- It can warn you when you're in a dangerous situation and it helps you to be more vigilant about your environment. However, an anxiety disorder involves extreme and excessive anxiety, along with other debilitating symptoms.

So as a general rule of thumb, anxiety is likely to be a problem when:

1. It's disproportionate to the severity of the threat.
- It might be reasonable to experience intense anxiety if a poisonous spider is about to walk over your hand, or you are told that the plane you are travelling in is about to make an emergency landing.
 - However, it's less reasonable to experience the same amount of fear in response to the discovery of a small house spider in the corner of your living room, or simply boarding a plane to go on holiday.

2. There is no obvious stressor.

- People who struggle with an anxiety disorder may feel anxious most or all of the time, and yet there may be times when they are unable to spot the source of the stress.
- Generalised anxiety disorder (or GAD) is when individuals may have a constant sense of unease, worry or dread without knowing why, making it difficult to get through the day. Even seemingly small responsibilities, like paying the bills, might make such individuals anxious.

3. The anxiety differs in terms of intensity and length.

- As we've seen, it's entirely normal to experience anxiety on occasion – eg when taking a driving test. However, some people will worry about these kinds of things for a significant period (eg a number of weeks) beforehand (or afterwards).

4. Other symptoms may be present.

- Those experiencing excessive anxiety and worry may experience a range of physical symptoms - dizziness, light-headedness, sweating, trembling, heart pounding, headaches and nausea, having to go to the bathroom frequently and feeling like one can't breathe.
- They may experience feelings of detachment or being disconnected from reality. They may also feel like they can't think straight and have difficulty concentrating, or experience racing or negative thoughts, or be unable to concentrate and have worries about day-to-day things.

5. It causes significant distress and has a significant impact on one's functioning in one or more areas of life.

- Many people are still able to continue to function in their work, social and home life despite experiencing moderate levels of anxiety. However, for others, this becomes increasingly difficult to do.
- Avoidance is a symptom of most anxiety disorders and can be quite debilitating. In other words, the anxiety can cause you to avoid normal everyday activities, for example missing a test at school, staying home from work, not going to the grocery store and avoiding friends (anything in fact which might make someone anxious).

Modelling

- It's important to think about what you may be modelling to your teenager.
- Seeking help for your own difficulties or tackling them with guidance and support from those close to you is a great example of modelling helpful and proactive behaviour.
- Children and adults learn many behaviours and skills in a number of different ways, including through rewards and punishments, and by watching other people.
- People who teenagers admire are likely to be more powerful models than people they don't.

- Research also shows us that there appears to be a link between parental depression and child depression.
- The reasons for this are not well understood and are very complex but it's another important reason why parents need to look after themselves and their own mental health.
- Researchers have discovered that there are some particular areas of concern for parents of depressed teens and that parents have to deal with a lot of stress in general in these situations.

The main issues included

- Lack of awareness of the depression
- Living with constant uncertainty
- Emotional turmoil
- Trying to find a reason for the depression
- Feeling helpless and frustrated
- Trying to cope with a 'changed' son or daughter and the impact on family
- Not dealing with own emotions and needs
- Change in parenting approaches

- You may feel that by asking for help yourself you're somehow not being strong enough for the family. In fact, this may be the best thing that you can do for yourself and for your family.
- The better you feel, the more able you'll be to support those who need you.
- Your young person may have been worrying about you and if you show them that the right things are being put in place for you, this will reduce their worry and help them to focus more on getting well too.
- On another level, you'll also be showing your teenager that it's OK to have these types of problems and it's fine to ask for help. This is a fantastic message to be sending out.

It's important to think about what you may be modelling to your teenager.

- Seeking help for your own difficulties is a great example of modelling helpful and pro-active behaviour.
- Even though teenagers are going through the process of becoming independent from the family, it's important not to underestimate how much they still pay attention to their parents' behaviour for information and guidance.
- Often adolescents act as if their parents are hugely irritating or even irrelevant. They may be defiant, disagree with everything their parents say, stay away from home as much as possible, and avoid shared activities and outings.
- However, teenagers are still picking up powerful and important messages from their parents all the time – it's just not obvious that this is happening.

- It's incredibly important to reflect on what you may be modelling from moment to moment.
- It's a great opportunity to help your teenager to take charge of their own low mood or other difficulties by showing them that you're able to take charge of your own problems.
- The messages you'll be giving is that 'things can change', 'there are always ways to overcome difficulties' and 'it's OK to try things and to ask for help if needed'.
- Another very important message to send out is that 'it's OK to reward and treat yourself for small achievements or simply for just being you'

- Perhaps you're experiencing low mood and/or anxiety too? Are there strategies from this course that you can apply to yourself?
- Looking at your eating, exercise and sleeping patterns
- Reflecting on my valued activities and whether I'm engaging in things that give me pleasure and meaning
- Understanding and addressing my thinking patterns
- Looking after myself and problem solving

Looking after yourself

- As an adult supporting a teenager who is unhappy, this is likely to be an upsetting and challenging time for you.
- It can be really hard to know where to find help and support for yourself.
- It's important that you take time to look after yourself.
- This very act may go a long way to helping your teenager through their depression.
- As they see you taking care of yourself, making time and effort for yourself they may well mirror or model your behaviours in small ways.
- This will also allow you to “stay the course”

- This principle works for behaviours that you want young people to learn, and that you and others demonstrate every day.
- These can include being kind to others, practical skills such as cooking or DIY, taking exercise and keeping fit, and enjoying a social life.
- You're an important source of learning for your teenager – they're learning to be an adult, and you're likely to be one of the most important adults they know.

Practicing what you preach

Are you:

- Getting enough sleep?
- Eating well?
- Getting some exercise or taking part in some form of physical activity
- Maintaining your social life?
- Getting support from other people?
- Communicating your concerns?
- Reaching out for help and support when you need it?

Not only will this help you get through this difficult time, it will also provide a good 'model' for your teenager. ‘