



For people aged 65 or over

**Do you feel down?  
Do you feel tired for no reason?  
Have you lost pleasure or  
interest in things?**

If you answered yes to any of these,  
this booklet may be for you.



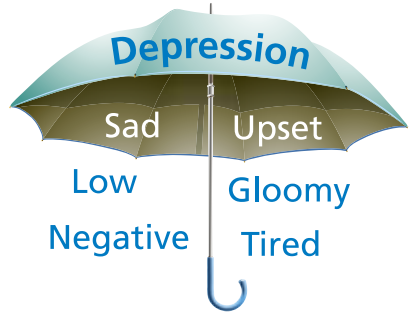
**A self-help booklet for older people  
affected by low mood and depression**

**Birmingham Healthy Minds**  
[www.birminghamhealthyminds.org](http://www.birminghamhealthyminds.org)

Take your time to read through the information and read it in sections if you are finding it difficult to concentrate or to understand.

# What is this feeling?

Feeling sad, alone, down or tired for no reason is often called depression by medical professionals. Depression is normal and can happen to anyone because of different life events or changes. It can be helpful to think of depression as an 'umbrella' term used to describe a lot of other feelings or emotions.



# How common is it?

Depression is very common. Older people could have more chance of becoming depressed because of life experiences and physical health problems.

One in 10 adults are experiencing depression right now.

## Depression can affect us in four ways:

1. The way we feel.
2. The way we think.
3. Our body physically.
4. The way we behave or act.

Sometimes it is hard to notice depression because we may have been feeling this way for a long time or because we think it is normal to feel unhappy when we get older.

## **Some examples:**

*John has arthritis in his knees. Sometimes it gets so bad it is difficult for him to get about. John has stopped going fishing with his neighbour and has stopped going to visit his friends. It can be days before he leaves the house. He feels very down and often thinks what is the point. He feels like he is useless. He has stopped shaving and some days he doesn't get out of his pyjamas.*

*Eight months ago Peggy's husband died. Her husband used to pay the bills and drive her to her appointments and to get the shopping. Peggy now has to ask her children if she needs to get out. She really misses her husband but what is troubling her now is she feels like a burden and thinks "what is the point?" She does not ask for help unless she really needs it. She is not eating properly. She feels useless and has stopped going to her local church group. Peggy spends a lot of her time alone.*

Both of these are examples of depression.

# Do I have depression?

Tick any of the following that you experience often:

## How you feel

- Sad
- Guilty
- Crying a lot or unable to cry
- Numb

## What happens to your body

- Tired for no reason
- No energy
- Waking up or not able to go to sleep
- Unexplained medical problems
- Restless
- Headaches
- Not feeling hungry

## How you think

- Thinking the worst thing will happen
- Feeling useless or a burden
- Feeling that no-one cares
- Thinking “what is the point?”
- Trouble with memory or concentration
- Thinking badly about yourself
- Thoughts of harming yourself

## Changes to your behaviour

- Not doing things you used to enjoy
- Cutting yourself off from friends or family
- Not answering the phone or opening letters
- Eating more or less than normal
- Spending lots of time alone or not doing anything

If you have ticked **some** or **most** of the boxes you may be experiencing depression. You may find the rest of this booklet helpful to work through.

# What causes depression?

There are lots of things that might cause depression to happen. It could be one big thing or lots of small things happening. Some of the most common reasons for feeling depressed are:

- money or finance worries
- physical health problems
- family problems
- adjusting to retirement
- bereavement
- changes in the body.

**List any of the things that you think may be affecting you:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

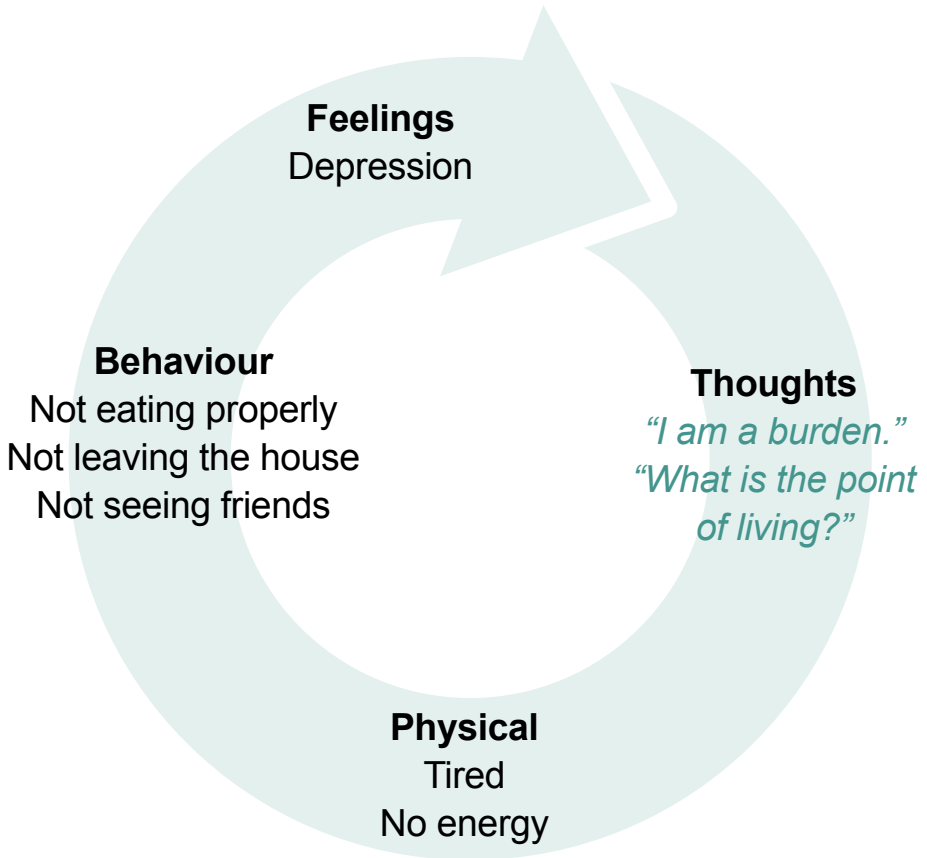
.....

.....

# What keeps depression going?

Depression affects different people in different ways. Because depression can change the way we think, feel, behave or make changes to our body it can keep it going. This can be called the cycle of depression.

Thinking back to page 4 this is Peggy's example:





# How do I help myself to feel better?

It is important to realise when we are feeling depressed because we can do things to help us feel better.

There are four main ways we can change the way we feel:

1. Do something active
2. Talk to someone
3. Look after yourself
4. Changing our negative thoughts

## 1. Do something active

Activity is very good at helping to lift peoples mood. Any physical activity is good. It is important to only do what you can do and not put pressure on yourself to do too much. Try to plan to do 15 - 20 minutes of activity every other day. It is important to do something you might enjoy or try doing it with a friend or family member.

Physical activity could be:

- walking
- gardening
- cycling
- swimming
- dancing
- golf
- Tai Chi.

Any enjoyable activity can also help to lift your mood. Try doing something you used to do or something you have wanted to try. Try learning a new skill or be creative.

Some examples are:

- knitting
- sewing
- craft
- painting
- writing
- poetry
- playing music
- crosswords
- reading.

## 2. Talk to others

Try and tell people who are close to you how you are feeling. They might be able to help you. It is important that you talk to a professional about how you feel. This could be your doctor, nurse, social worker or support worker. They will be able to point you in the right direction.

## 3. Look after yourself

Try not to drink alcohol to help with your problem. Make sure that you look after yourself by eating regular healthy meals. Try and treat yourself to things you normally would enjoy. Even if you are not planning to leave the house, make sure you still get up, get washed and get dressed. Simple things like these will help us little by little.

## 4. Noticing and changing your negative thoughts

If we think back to the example of Peggy and her cycle of depression on page 8 we can see how some of our thoughts can keep our low mood going.

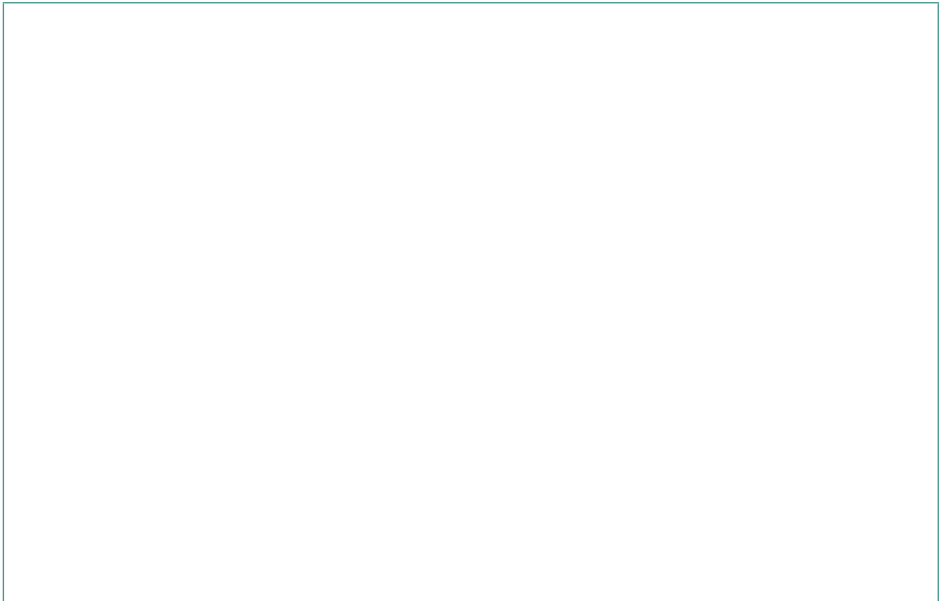
In Peggy's case her thoughts were:

*"I am a burden."*

*"What is the point in living?"*

Negative thoughts are different from everyday thoughts because they make us feel worse.

**Think of a negative thought you have had and write it here. You might find it easier to draw the thought.**



It can be helpful to keep a diary of our negative thoughts so we get better at noticing when they happen.

**Look at the example of Peggy's diary.**

<p><b>What was happening when you had the thought?</b> <b>Where were you?</b> <b>Who were you with?</b></p>	<p><b>What was the thought or image?</b></p>
<p><i>Tuesday. At home alone. I had decided not to go to my church group because it will put my daughter out to take me.</i></p>	<p><i>I am a burden to my children. I'm not good company for anyone.</i></p>

Try to fill in your own diary over the next week.

<p><b>What was happening when you had the thought? Where were you? Who were you with?</b></p>	<p><b>What was the thought or image?</b></p>
<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

Once you have noticed your negative thoughts it is important to challenge them and think a more balanced thought. To challenge thoughts it can be helpful to think what advice you would give to someone else.

**Look at Peggy’s example below:**

*“I am a burden to my children.”*  
*“I’m not good company for anyone”*

Peggy challenged her thoughts by asking herself what advice she would give a friend. Peggy’s balanced thought was:

*“My children love me and would miss me if I wasn’t around.”*  
*“My friends keep ringing me and asking me to see them.”*

It can be helpful to put this in two columns. Take one of your depressive thoughts and have a go at challenging it:

<b>What was the thought or image?</b>	<b>Balanced thought</b>
<i>“I’m not good company for anyone”</i>	<i>“I am a good friend, I know this because my friends keep ringing me to talk to me.”</i>

<b>What was the thought or image?</b>	<b>Balanced thought</b>

**We hope you have found this self-help booklet useful. If after completing this booklet you feel you need more help, you should talk to your GP, therapist or mental health practitioner who can tell you about what to do next.**

## Additional sources of help

The following organisations and help lines may also be useful:

**Age UK:** services, advice and support for older people

Advice line: 0800 169 6565

Website: [www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

### **Birmingham Carers Helpline**

Telephone: 0121 675 8000

Website: [www.birmingham.gov.uk/carers-centre](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/carers-centre)

### **Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team**

Telephone: 0800 073 0817

Website: [www.bdaat.co.uk](http://www.bdaat.co.uk)

### **Citizens' Advice Bureau**

Telephone: 08444 111 444

(new helpline number being rolled out)

Website: [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

### **Customer relations - PALS**

Tel: 0800 953 0045; Text: 0798 588 3509

Email: [pals@bsmhft.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@bsmhft.nhs.uk)

[www.bsmhft.nhs.uk](http://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk)

Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust offers support and advice from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.



## **Cruse Bereavement Care**

Telephone: 0121 687 8010 or 0844 477 9400

Website: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

## **Depression UK**

[www.depressionuk.org](http://www.depressionuk.org)

c/o Self Help Nottingham, Ormiston House,  
32-36 Pelham Street, Nottingham, NG1 2EG

A national mutual support group for people suffering from depression although does not provide a helpline.

**National Debtline:** free expert advice.

Telephone: 0808 808 4000

Website: [www.nationaldebtline.co.uk](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk)

## **NHS Choices – Your health, your choices**

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Information about conditions, treatments, local services and healthy lives.

## **NHS 111**

Call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. Available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Relate:** relationship counselling.

Telephone: 0121 643 1638

Website: [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

**Samaritans:** 24-hour emotional support, for any problem, big or small.

Telephone: 08457 90 90 90 or (0121) 666 6644

Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### **SANE Line**

Tel: 0845 767 8000

[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

1st Floor Cityside House, 40 Adler Street, London, E1  
1EE

Offers practical information, crisis care and emotional support. Helpline available 6pm - 11pm (local rate).

**The Silver Line:** helpline for older people.

Telephone: 0808 328 8888

Website: [www.thesilverline.org.uk](http://www.thesilverline.org.uk)





[www.bsmhft.nhs.uk](http://www.bsmhft.nhs.uk)

Main switchboard: 0121 301 0000

**Improving mental health wellbeing**