

## What is Depression?

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

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

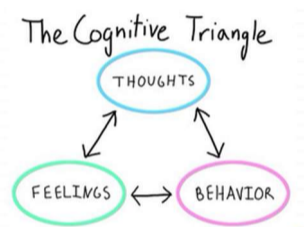
## Common symptoms

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

## What causes and keeps depression going?

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

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



## What can help?

### Get to know your depression

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

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

### Notice your thought patterns

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

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

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

### Coping Strategies

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

Coping strategies include:

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