

Part 1 Introduction

Depression is a very common problem, and many people on occasion feel low or fed up.

Life can be difficult at times and factors such

as low income, loss of work, divorce and relationship problems can make people more likely to become depressed.

For some people the problem becomes much worse and gets in the way of normal life. The feeling of depression is much more powerful and unpleasant than the short episodes of unhappiness that we all experience from time to time, it goes on for much longer and can last for months or years rather than days or weeks.



There are many symptoms which may be used to diagnose depression, but it is very rare for all of them to occur at the same time in one person.

Symptoms include feeling generally miserable; as well as the following:

- Variation of mood during the day. Often worse in the morning the mood may improve as the day goes on or vice-versa
- Disturbed sleep, either not being able to get to sleep or waking early and being unable to get back to sleep
- Slowing down of thoughts, speech and movement
- Feelings of anxiety
- Tearfulness for little or no apparent reason
- Irritability and/or a lack of patience
- Lack of energy and/or constant exhaustion
- Inability to enjoy things
- Lack of concentration
- Difficulty making decisions
- Feeling that you're forgetful

- Negative thoughts about the future
- Feelings of guilt
- Loss of identity
- Blaming self and low self-esteem
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair
- Unrealistic sense of failure
- Loneliness, even when around others
- Becoming preoccupied with illness
- Loss of appetite and resulting loss of weight
- Reduced desire for sex

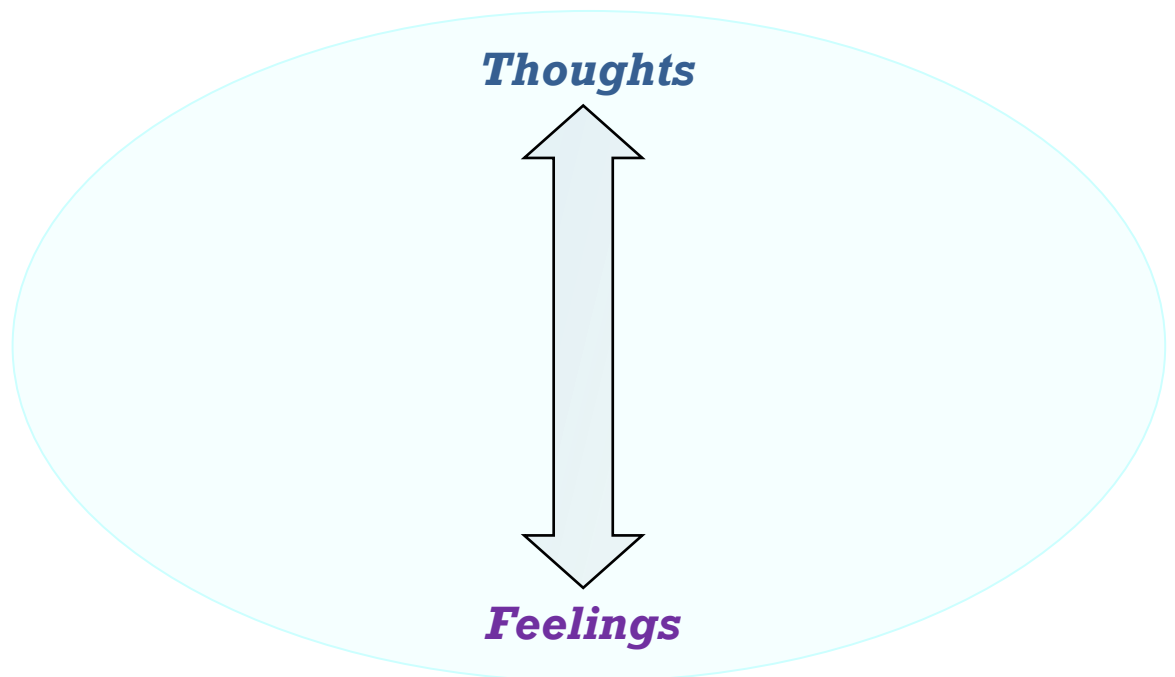
All of these present a very bleak picture. However, it's important to remember that depression isn't an absolute - it's not simply a case of either you're depressed or you're not.

There's a progression from feeling blue to the full clinical illness described on the previous page. Even then, it is unlikely that you will suffer from every symptom.

The effects of depression are now understood more clearly, and it is known that the ways in which we think and behave have a major impact on our emotions or "*how we feel*".

So if we **think** sad thoughts.....

we **feel**..... **sad**,



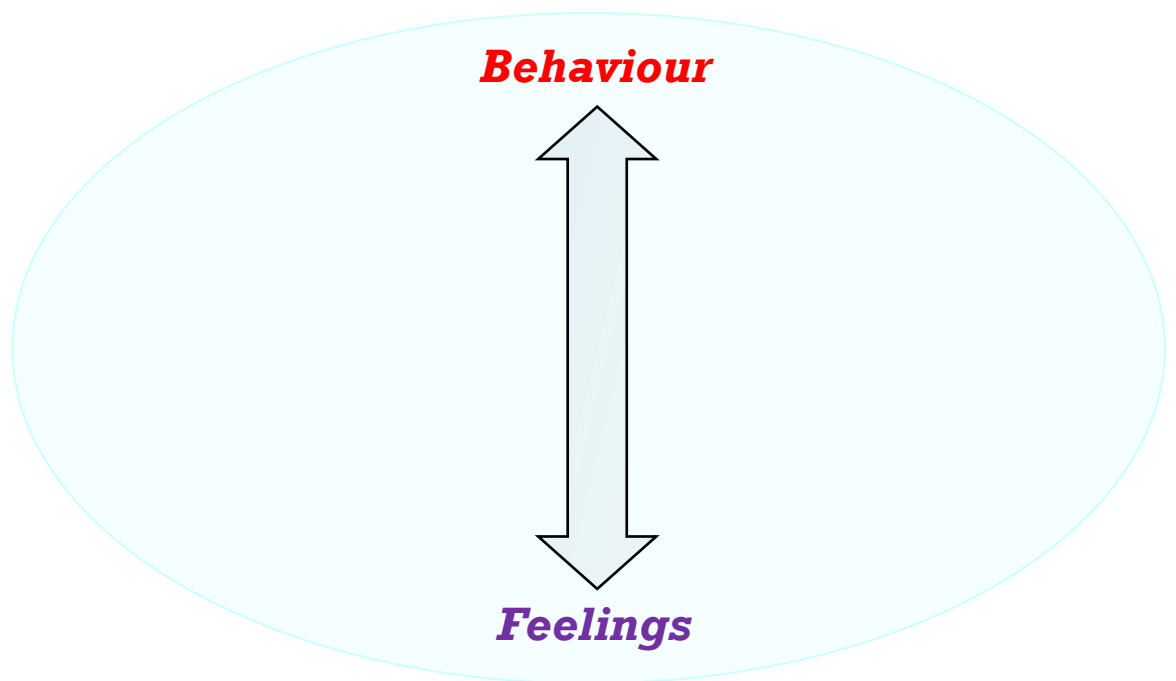
And.....:

if we feel **sad**.....

.....We **think** sad thoughts.

So thinking and feeling is a two way street; what we think affects how we feel and how we feel affects what we think.

What we do also affects how we feel, for example; if we were to stay in the house and think about how awful our lives were how do you think we would feel?

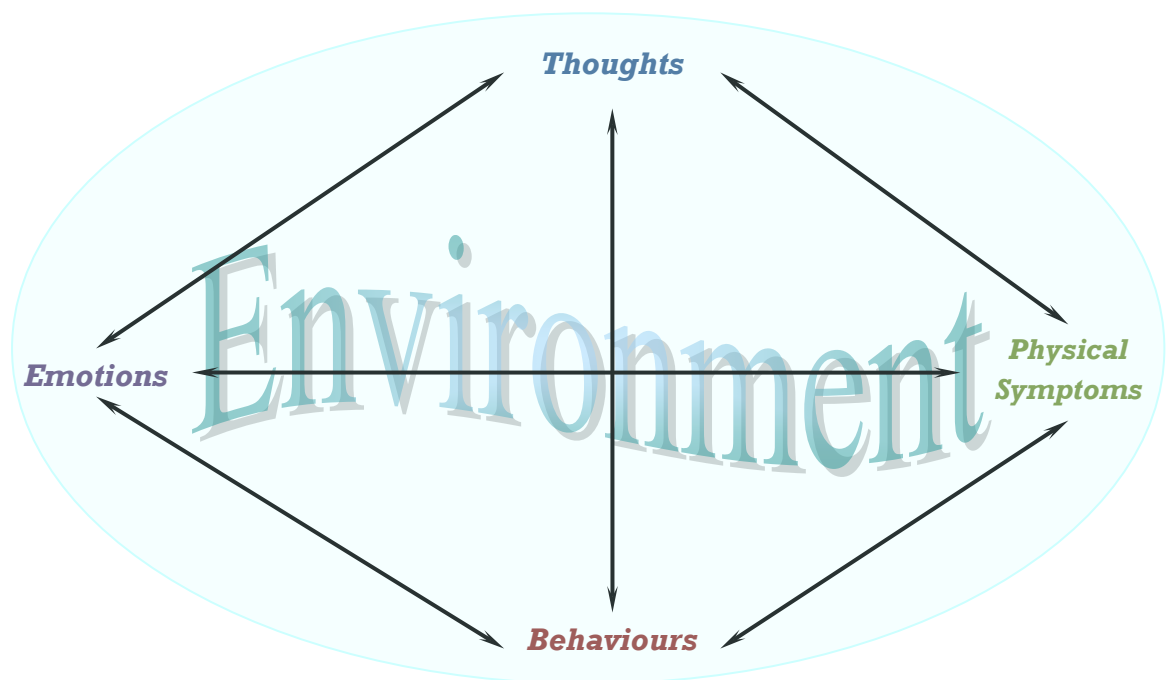


Happy?

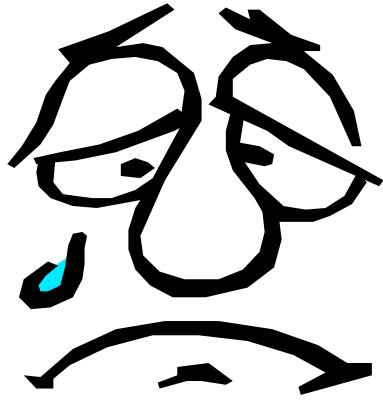
..... or sad?

Depression is also influenced by our **Environment** and affects:

1. our **Emotion** (how we feel)
2. our **Cognition** (what and how we think)
3. our **Behaviour** (what we do- or don't do)
4. our **physical symptoms** (what we feel)



It may help to think of depression not as a single entity but as a series of interlinked segments, each of which contribute to the problem as a whole. The above diagram illustrates the connection between each of these segments and their influence on the others.



Changes in feelings may occur gradually, the feeling of depression may creep up on you. You may find that you don't want to see your friends as much, you may not feel like doing anything, you don't feel hungry or don't feel like eating anything and that you just 'can't be bothered'.

How you think also changes, you may find that it is difficult to concentrate, to make decisions or to remember things.



Depressed people routinely think in a pessimistic way, they may picture themselves as ugly, defective, distasteful, repellent, inadequate, bad or even evil, believing that their situation appears thankless and the future grim and forbidding.

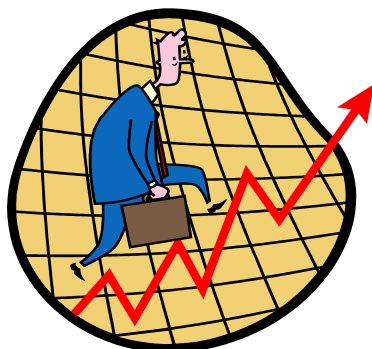
Depressive symptoms include low mood, loss of interest and/or enjoyment, reduced energy (which can lead to tiredness, lethargy and reduced activity). Concentration may suffer, self-esteem and

confidence may suffer, sleep disturbances and diminished appetite are also common.

Behaviours tend to either be in **deficit** (e.g. do not do enough/anything) or **excessive** (doing too much of: e.g. rumination (or thinking in circles), staying in bed all day, etc.)

You may have unhelpful styles of thought, such as jumping to conclusions, self-blame, black and white thinking, etc. which, *at the time, are believed* to be an accurate and true representation of events.

Generally for a diagnosis of depression these symptoms are present for two weeks or more and are fairly constant.



With each negative thought the feelings of depression are likely to increase. Often

negative thoughts stop you from working or doing anything constructive.

Thoughts that life is not worth living can come to mind, which usually go away once the depression improves

Because of this you may criticise yourself for being lazy, careless, selfish or thoughtless which makes you feel even worse. e.g.:



Depression means different things to different

people- in reality it is just a collection of symptoms which affect you physically, emotionally, cognitively and behaviourally. These symptoms, taken one by one, may not really cause you too many problems but put them together and they unite to drag you down into a vicious cycle of negative thoughts, behaviour and misery.



There is a type of psychotherapy which encourages us to examine our behaviours, thoughts and beliefs and to **test** them rather than just accepting that they are true; this approach is commonly called cognitive behavioural therapy or CBT.

CBT uses methods that have been tried and tested and found to be effective.