



Authors

Jitender Sareen MD, FRCPC
Professor
Department of Psychiatry
University of Manitoba
sareen@umanitoba.ca

Tanya Sala MD, FRCPC
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychiatry
University of Manitoba
tsala@hsc.mb.ca

Jacquelyne Wong MA
Research Associate
Department of Psychiatry
University of Manitoba
jwong8@hsc.mb.ca

Debbie Whitney PhD
Assistant Professor
Clinical Health Psychology
University of Manitoba
dwhitney@deerlodge.mb.ca

Jolene Kinley PhD
Assistant Professor
Clinical Health Psychology
University of Manitoba
jkinley@ierha.ca

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WHAT IS CBT?

CBT, or **Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy**, is a psychological treatment that was developed through scientific research. That is, all of the components of CBT have been tested by researchers to determine whether they are effective and that they do what they are intended to do.

Research has shown that CBT is one of the most effective treatments for the management of anxiety. The good news is that although it is best done with a trained CBT therapist, you can apply CBT principles at home to manage your own anxiety and conquer your fears.

What are the Principles of CBT?

CBT involves learning new skills to manage your symptoms. It teaches you new ways of thinking and behaving that can help you get control over your anxiety in the long-run. There are a few principles that are important to understand when using CBT.

1. CBT focuses on the here and now.

An important principle of CBT is that treatment involves dealing with the symptoms that you are struggling with right now, rather than focusing on the cause of your problem. Although it can be interesting to understand how your anxiety developed, **just knowing why you have anxiety problems is often not enough to help you manage your anxiety.**

Here is an example: Imagine that you are terrified of dogs. Every time you see one, you run the other way, because you are convinced that all dogs are vicious beasts that will bite you. Now, if you wanted to understand why you are so afraid of dogs, you might eventually find out that you were bitten by a dog when you were a child, which is no doubt **the cause** of your fear of dogs.

HERE'S THE PROBLEM: Knowing the cause does not change the fact that you are terrified of dogs, running away from them, and thinking of them as vicious beasts that bite.

2. CBT emphasizes the importance of homework

Whether you are receiving CBT from a trained therapist or you are using self-help CBT techniques at home, homework is a key component. Doing homework for CBT basically means that from week to week, you will need to practise the new skills that you are learning and apply them to your daily life. And like the homework that you were given in school, you need to practise those skills every day.

Why is homework so important?

Unless you practice the new strategies that you learn to manage anxiety, you will not use them very well, and you will probably forget to use them when you need them most: **when you are feeling very anxious.**

Learning new ways to manage anxiety is a little like developing a new healthy habit. If for example, you wanted to start exercising regularly, you would want to fit in a new exercise routine into your schedule. It would be difficult at first, but if you kept at it, that new routine would become a habit, and eventually a part of your regular activities. The same is true with CBT skills: if you practise them every day, they will become a part of your daily routine.

The good news is that the more you use your CBT skills, the easier it gets, and the better you will become at managing your anxiety.

What to Expect if You See a CBT Therapist

If you decide that you need some guidance in CBT and would like to see a trained CBT therapist, here are some other aspects of treatment that you can expect:

1. CBT is structured and educational:

Treatment sessions in CBT involve learning new ways to think about and understand your symptoms. Because of this, sessions are structured so that you are usually reviewing the homework you did, learning new information and skills, and then developing a new homework assignment for the next session.

2. CBT is collaborative:

Because you are learning new skills in CBT, therapy is very active. Both you and your therapist will be working on helping you to understand your symptoms and ways to manage them. You can expect to participate both in and out of session in order to see positive changes.

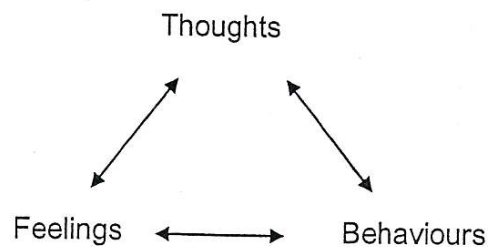
KEEP IN MIND: When it comes to CBT, you get out of it what you put in. If you don't put your best effort into managing your own anxiety, you probably won't get as much benefit from CBT as you could.

3. CBT is time-limited:

People who go to see a CBT therapist to help them with their anxiety will usually have between 8 to 20 sessions. CBT is not supposed to be a life-long process. Rather, **you are learning to become your own therapist**. Once you have learned new skills, had a chance to master them and see positive changes in your life, it will be time for you to leave therapy and continue managing your anxiety on your own.

What will I learn in CBT?

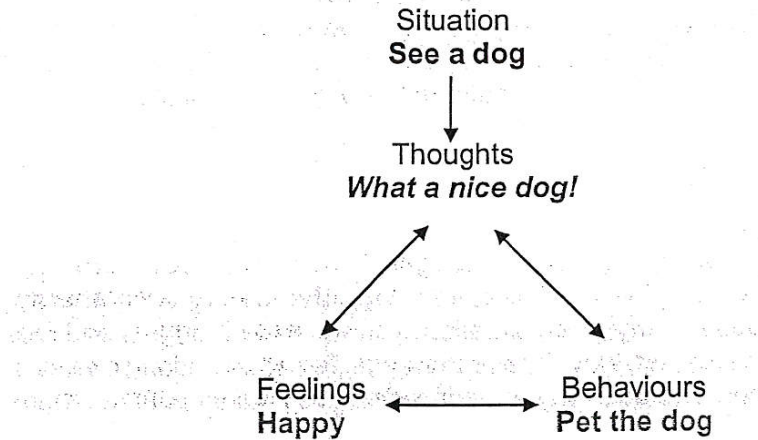
CBT involves learning how to change your thoughts (also called **cognitions**) and your actions (or **behaviours**), which is why it is called **cognitive-behavioural therapy**. Why is this important? Because in any given situation, you will have thoughts and feelings about it, and behave in a certain way. These thoughts, feelings, and actions all interact and influence each other. The best way to understand this is to think about them as a triangle:



Returning to our example of a fear of dogs, imagine a situation where you are walking down the street and you see a dog. You might expect to feel afraid, to think that the dog will bite, and to run away or avoid the dog in some way. In our triangle, it would look like this:



However, if we imagine that you have a friend who is not afraid of dogs and actually likes them very much, your friend's thoughts, feelings, and actions might be very different:



REMEMBER: One thing to notice in these two examples is that the **situation** did not change: but if you change your **thoughts**, then your feelings and actions change as well.

If we return to the first example, you might be able to reduce your fear of dogs if you either:

Change your behaviour:

By using exposure, you could gradually approach dogs rather than avoid them. Over time, your fear of dogs would be reduced, and you would probably learn that not all dogs bite. Exposure is one of the best tools at your disposal to face your fears and manage your anxiety in the long run (see [Facing Your Fears - Exposure](#))

OR

Change your thoughts (cognitions):

You might also change the triangle if you were able to challenge the thought that all dogs bite. For example, you might tell yourself that if all dogs were vicious and bit people, no one would have them as pets. When we feel anxious, our thinking tends to be overly negative, because it is completely focused on danger and threat: we don't always see the whole picture.

If you are afraid of dogs, for example, when you see a dog you might only be thinking about how sharp his teeth look and not about whether he is on a leash or if his tail is wagging. Learning to take a closer look at your thoughts, and coming up with more balanced and realistic thoughts, is another important tool for managing your anxiety (see Realistic Thinking for more information).



Key Points to Remember:

1. CBT, or Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, is based on research – so we know it works!
2. CBT teaches you new ways of thinking and behaving.
3. Thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are inter-connected, so if you change one, it has an effect on the other two.
4. If you change the way you think and behave, you can also change the way you feel.

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Why is it important to learn about anxiety?

Most people do not recognize their anxiety for what it is, and instead think there is something “wrong” with them. Some people are preoccupied with the physical symptoms of anxiety (e.g., stomach aches, increased heart rate, shortness of breath, etc.). Others think they are weird, weak, or even going crazy! Unfortunately, these thoughts only make people feel even more anxious and self-conscious.

Therefore, the first step to successfully managing anxiety is to learn to understand and recognize it. Self-awareness is essential.

The Facts!

Myth: Reading, thinking, and learning about anxiety will make you even MORE anxious.

Fact: If you do not know what you are dealing with, how do you manage it? Having accurate information about anxiety can reduce confusion, fear, and shame. Anxiety is a common and normal experience, and it CAN be managed successfully.

Learning the Facts about Anxiety

1. **Anxiety is normal.** Everyone experiences anxiety at times. For example, it is normal to feel anxious when on a rollercoaster, or before a job interview.
2. **Anxiety is adaptive.** It is a system in our body that helps us to deal with real danger (for example, anxiety allows us to jump out of the way of a speeding car) or to perform at our best (for example, it motivates us to prepare for a big presentation). When you experience anxiety, your body’s “fight-flight-freeze” response (also called the “adrenaline response”) is triggered. This response prepares your body to defend itself.

We experience anxiety when we PERCEIVE or THINK that we are in danger. This response is great when there is an actual danger (such as encountering a bear), but becomes a problem when the “perceived danger” is not actually dangerous (giving a talk, seeing a dog).

More on Flight-Flight-Freeze

Our body's *fight-flight-freeze* response can be activated when there is a *real* danger, such as coming across a black bear when hiking in the woods. In this case, you may flee (e.g., run away from the bear), freeze (e.g., stay still until the bear passes), or fight (e.g., yell and wave your arms to appear big and scary).

But this response can also happen when something simply *feels* dangerous, but really isn't, such as being interviewed for a job. For example, you may feel jittery, on edge, or uncomfortable. You may snap at people (fight) or have a hard time thinking clearly (freeze). These feelings can become overwhelming enough that make you want to avoid doing the interview (flight). Many people stop doing things or going places that make them feel anxious.

3. **Anxiety is not dangerous.** Although anxiety may feel uncomfortable, it is not dangerous or harmful to you. Remember, all the sensations you feel when you are anxious are there to protect you from danger, not hurt you.
4. **Anxiety does not last forever.** When you are anxious, you may *feel* like the anxiety is going to last forever. But anxiety is temporary and will eventually decrease.
5. **Anxiety is mostly anonymous.** Most people (except those close to you) cannot tell when you are anxious.

What happens to your body when you are anxious?

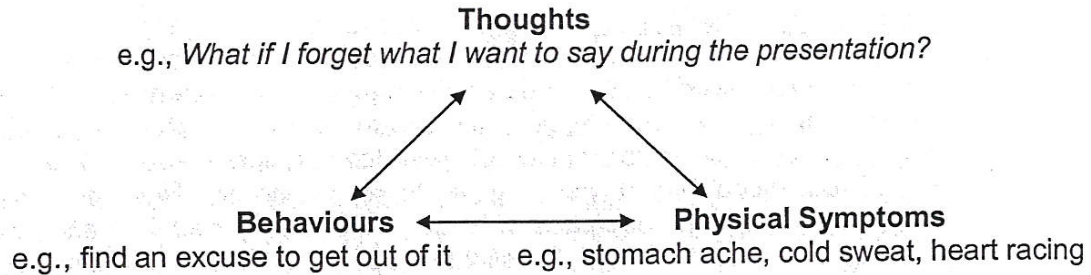
Anxiety can cause many sensations in your body as it prepares for danger. These sensations are called the “alarm reaction”, which takes place when the body's natural *Alarm System* (the “fight-flight-freeze” response) has been activated.

- Rapid heart beat and rapid breathing – When your body is preparing itself for action, it makes sure enough blood and oxygen is being circulated to your major muscle groups and essential organs, allowing you to run away or fight off danger.

- Sweating – Sweating cools the body. It also makes the skin more slippery and difficult for an attacking animal or person to grab hold of you.
- Nausea and stomach upset – When faced with danger, the body shuts down systems/processes that are not needed for survival; that way, it can direct energy to functions that are critical for survival. Digestion is one of the processes that is not needed at times of danger. Because of this, anxiety might lead to feelings of stomach upset, nausea, or diarrhea.
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded – Because our blood and oxygen goes to major muscle groups when we are in danger, we breathe much faster in order to move oxygen toward those muscles. However, this response can cause hyperventilation (too much oxygen from breathing very rapidly to prepare the body for action), which can make you feel dizzy or lightheaded. Also, since most of your blood and oxygen is going to your arms and legs (for “fight or flight”), there is a slight decrease of blood to the brain, which can also make you dizzy. Don’t worry though: the slight decrease in blood flow to the brain is not dangerous at all.
- Tight or painful chest – Your muscles tense up as your body prepares for danger. So your chest may feel tight or painful when you take in large breaths while those chest muscles are tense.
- Numbness and tingling sensations – *Hyperventilation* (taking in too much oxygen) can also cause numbness and tingling sensations. The tingling sensations can also be related to the fact that the hairs on our bodies often *stand up* when faced with danger to increase our sensitivity to touch or movement. Finally, fingers and toes may also feel numb/tingly as blood flows away from places where it is not needed (like our fingers) and towards major muscle groups that are needed (like our arms).
- Unreality or bright vision – When responding to danger, our pupils dilate to let in more light and to make sure that we can see clearly enough. This reaction makes our environment look brighter or fuzzier, and sometimes less real.
- Heavy legs - As the legs prepare for action (fight or flight), increased muscle tension, as well as increased blood flow to those muscles, can cause the sensation of heavy legs.
- Choking sensations – Increased muscle tension around the neck or rapid breathing dries out the throat, which may make you feel like you are choking.
- Hot and cold flashes – These sensations may be related to sweating and constriction of blood vessels in the upper skin layer. This constriction also helps to reduce blood loss if you are injured.

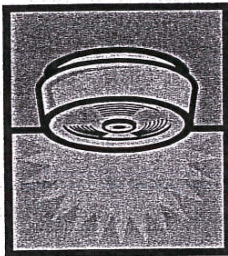
More about How Anxiety Works

Anxiety does not only affect your body, it also affects your thoughts and behaviours. Therefore, there are **three parts** to anxiety: **physical symptoms** (how our body responds), **thoughts** (what we say to ourselves), and **behaviours** (what we do, or our actions). Learning to recognize these *signs* of anxiety can help you to be less afraid of it.



When Does Anxiety Become a Problem?

1. Anxiety is a problem when your body reacts as if there is danger when there is no real danger. It's like having an overly sensitive smoke alarm system in your body!
2. **Anxiety problems are common.** One in four adults will have an anxiety disorder in their lifetime.



Anxiety is like a smoke alarm system:

A smoke alarm can help to protect us when there is an actual fire, but when a smoke alarm is too sensitive and goes off when there isn't really a fire (e.g., burning toast in toaster), it is rather annoying.

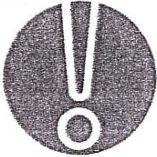
Like a smoke alarm, anxiety is helpful and adaptive when it works right. But, if it goes off when there is no real danger, it is not only scary, it is also very exhausting.

However, we DO NOT want to get rid of the alarm (or eliminate anxiety) because it protects us from danger. We want to fix it (i.e., bring the anxiety down to a more manageable level) so it works properly for us.

Recognizing Anxiety

→ Recognizing the physical symptoms of anxiety

You can learn to identify the physical signs of anxiety by asking yourself: “*What happens when I’m anxious? Where do I feel the anxiety in my body?*” For example, when you feel anxious, you may get butterflies in your stomach, sweat a lot, breathe heavily, and feel dizzy or lightheaded.



REMEMBER: If you often experience many uncomfortable physical symptoms, but doctors cannot find anything wrong with you physically, you may have problems with anxiety. You are definitely not “going crazy”. Although these symptoms may be uncomfortable, they are not harmful.

→ Recognizing anxious thoughts

Anxiety also affects how we think. Anxious thoughts typically involve a fear of something bad happening in the future – the future can be the next 5 seconds, 5 minutes or 5 years. See Realistic Thinking for helpful tips on how to identify and challenge your anxious thoughts.

→ Recognizing anxious behaviours

Anxiety can make us feel very uncomfortable, and it can make us believe that we are in danger, so it is no wonder that you may feel a strong urge to escape or avoid situations/activities/people that make you anxious. For example, if you are scared of dogs, you would probably avoid going to places where you may encounter a dog (e.g., a dog park).

To help you identify situations that you avoid, try to come up with as many answers as possible to the following:

- If you woke up tomorrow morning and all your anxiety had magically disappeared, what would you do?
- How would you act?
- How would someone close to you know you weren’t anxious?

Finish the following sentences:

- My anxiety stops me from...
- When I am not anxious, I will be able to...

Once you are able to understand and recognize anxiety, you will be better prepared to move on to the next stage – learning how to manage anxiety!



Understanding Depression – Frequently Asked Questions

Who gets depressed?

Anyone. Depression can be triggered by many things: for example, a loss, a change for the worse, an increase in overwhelming responsibilities, or intolerable living conditions.

Here are some examples:

- 1 Since George lost his wife, he has become withdrawn, spends much of his day thinking about happier times, as well as his faults as a husband. He can see no reason to keep on living.
- 2 Isabelle has chronic back pain and cannot take care of her family. She feels guilty about this and also about her irritability. She has lost interest in her appearance and can see no hope for the future.
- 3 Tony is a single parent with 3 small children and a low-paying job. He feels overwhelmed trying to make ends meet and feels helpless to cope with all his problems. Most days, he'd like to just give up.

Why are some of us more vulnerable to depression than others?

Depression is more easily triggered in some of us. Those of us who have had trauma in our lives or who have a family history of depression may be more at risk than others. Some common beliefs can trigger depression; for example, "In order to feel good about myself I should always do well in everything..." "I must always please everyone..." "I must never make any mistakes..."

Isn't it just brain chemicals out of balance?

While brain chemicals are likely out of balance, this is only one aspect of depression; for example, our circumstances, our social supports, and the resources we have influence whether we get depressed.

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Why doesn't depression just go away?

Depression goes far beyond normal feelings of grief or sadness. Depression creates intense thoughts and feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, and guilt. The fatigue and slowness of depression can make us withdraw, procrastinate, or have trouble concentrating. Sleep, appetite and interest in sex can be affected. When we are depressed we have trouble enjoying life. Our thoughts turn to the most depressing and negative aspects of a situation. We become self-blamers. All of these symptoms make it almost impossible to cope, even with small everyday tasks. The less we see ourselves coping, the more depressed we become.

All of these feelings, thoughts, and behaviours help keep depression alive.

What can be done about depression?

The good news is the many things can help with depression. Research shows that using several approaches provides the best outcome in treating depression. These include (in various combinations) medication, therapy, and self-management activities.

A healthy outcome is most likely to occur if depression is tackled early using self-management.

Depression: System-Wide Crash

Depression is not who you are. Depression is like a blanket or mask that hides your real personality.

Depression is not your fault; it is not because you are weak, or a "loser." Depression is an illness, with symptoms like any other illness.

These are some of the common symptoms of depression:

BODY	BEHAVIOUR	MIND	FEELINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No energy Sleep changes Appetite changes Weight changes Stomach problems No sexual interest Lump in throat Tense muscles Diarrhea Constipation Feel weighed down Pain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agitated, restless Cry at least thing Can't start things Social withdrawal Can't finish things Clumsy Slowed down Snap at people Frantically busy Do nothing Stop hobbies, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily distracted Poor memory Can't think clearly Body image worry Can't make decisions Slowed thinking Racing thoughts Spaced out Obsessive thinking Self-critical Negative focus Worrying Suicidal thoughts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depressed, down Anxious, scared Hopeless Numb Discouraged Worthless, inadequate Ashamed, guilty Can't feel pleasure Helpless Lost Frustrated Alone

Anti-Depression Activities

The activities below are helpful in recovering from depression. To start working on your recovery, put a check mark whenever you do one of the activities below. Push a little, often, but not to exhaustion. As you persist, day after day, you may gradually find your mood brightening and your energy returning.

	ACTIVITY	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
1	Self-care (shower, shave, teeth etc.)							
2	Eat three meals, however small (check for each)							
3	Sleep (# of hours)							
4	Exercise, however little (# of minutes)							
5	Relaxation (# of minutes)							
6	Accomplish one small task or goal each day							
7	Social contact (enough but not too much)							
8	Pleasure activities/hobbies (check for each)							
9	Do something nice for yourself							
10	Do something nice for someone else							
11	Replace negative thoughts with helpful thoughts (check # times)							
12	Miscellaneous (your choice)							

Depression's Energy Budget

Every day, we wake up with "resources" available for our use that day. These resources might be energy, time, sense of well-being, motivation, etc. The amount of available resources changes every day, even throughout the day.

If we consistently spend beyond our resources, we will go "bankrupt." The more depressed or anxious we are, the fewer our resources.

This means we need to figure out the actual resources we have at any particular time — not the resources we think we should have, or used to have. This helps us decide what we really can do each day.

Living Within Your Resource "Box"

TOM	MARY	RANDY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra resources + • Resources need for basic tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources needed for basic tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depleted resources

As you can see Tom has so many resources that he can easily accomplish the required basic tasks for the day. He has extra energy, time, and enthusiasm for other things.

The next box shows that Mary only has enough resources to get through basic tasks such as dressing, making meals, perhaps a few routine chores. If she tries to push herself to do much more than this, she will pay a price. The next day she will feel more exhausted and overwhelmed, and her box may be even smaller.

In the last box, you can see that Randy is having a bad day and can only reasonably expect to do the bare minimum to get through the day.

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Increasing the Size of Your Resource Box

It's important to go slowly.

- 1 Don't push yourself outside your box.
- 2 However small your box, use a bit of your daily resources to do anti-depression activities such as self care, exercise, relaxation, hobbies etc.
- 3 Healthy energy and motivation are released and increased when you reduce negative thoughts and replace them with more realistic, helpful thoughts.
- 4 Repeat and persist — it is far more effective to do a very small thing 100 times than to do a big thing once. You are trying to develop new habits, and these only come with frequent practice.
- 5 Congratulate yourself for every effort you make no matter how small. The brain responds very well to this kind of appreciation and you will be rewarded with more resources, such as hope, well-being, energy and self-confidence.



Small Goals

The concentration, fatigue and memory problems that go along with depression make it impossible for people to keep up their same pace.

Depression feeds on withdrawal and inactivity.

A strategy to help people feel more in charge of their lives and improve their self-esteem is through the attainment of daily small goals.

The emphasis on small goals is important. It slows down the person who pushes too hard so they don't get overwhelmed and gently encourages the withdrawn person to begin taking charge of their life.

Select a Small Goal

- Choose something that you would like to accomplish and are certain you can achieve in the time you set for yourself.
- The task should be easy enough to achieve even if you feel very depressed.
- Have a clear idea of when and how you are going to carry out your goal.
i.e., "go swimming at the community center pool this Thursday evening for 15 minutes," rather than "go swimming."

If you don't complete the goal don't give up — choose another time or break your goal into smaller parts.

Goals that involve action and thoughts are easier to know you've achieved than those involving emotions.

When you meet your goal, or part of it, congratulate yourself.

Start small — you can always do more when you've achieved your goal.

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Opposite Action Strategy

Here is an effective way to start fighting back against depression. Catch yourself acting or thinking the way depression wants you to — then do or think the opposite. By doing so, you DEFY depression and take back some control, even if only for a short while.

ACTIONS OR THOUGHTS THAT STRENGTHEN DEPRESSION	ACTIONS OR THOUGHTS THAT WEAKEN DEPRESSION
Stay in bed when you feel too miserable to get up. Don't attend to hygiene. Don't get dressed.	Make yourself get up even for a short while. Attend to hygiene and get dressed each day.
Punish yourself by calling yourself names every time you make a mistake ("stupid," "loser," "useless")	Encourage yourself to learn from the mistake and try again. You will do better in life if you focus on what you do right instead of what you do wrong.
Worry about all your past mistakes, how bad things are now and how things could go wrong in the future.	Set aside a small amount of time per day to worry and distract yourself from worry thoughts at other times. Use problem solving skills on real problems.
Talk excessively about depressing topics or how bad you feel to anyone who will listen.	Deliberately choose lighter topics. Focus on others. Take timeout from depression — talk or limit it to a few minutes at a time.
Withdraw, i.e. don't go out, refuse invitations, ignore the phone.	See or talk to someone for a short time each day, even when you don't feel like it.
Tell yourself that everything you do must be done really well, if not perfectly, or it's not worth doing at all.	Tell yourself that you just need to muddle through, not everything needs to be done perfectly. Dare to be average!
Take on all your usual tasks and expect to do them as well as usual.	Remind yourself that depression seriously limits your energy. Set realistic expectations that take into consideration your depressed state.
Pretend that nothing is wrong and get exhausted by the effort to keep up a good front.	Tell others that your energy is low (or whatever you feel OK sharing) and that this limits what you can do. Say "No!"



Chunk the Day

Strategies that give people a chance to accomplish something are particularly helpful for depression.

Sometimes you feel too depressed, unmotivated or exhausted to face the day. Here is a strategy that breaks the day into manageable chunks of time:

- 1 Decide on the smallest amount of time you think you might be able to spend on a task. This might be a morning, an hour, even just 10 minutes. This is your “chunk” of manageable time.
- 2 Decide what you will do for the chunk of time. Tell yourself: “I only have to keep going for this chunk. Then I can stop if I want.”
- 3 When the chunk is over, you can decide to rest, carry on with what you were doing, or change to something else for the next chunk. You can do a whole day in chunks. Most people who try this report that they actually get more done, and as a bonus, their mood improves.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Let's say Mary decides she can handle 15 minutes. In those 15 minutes she decides she can clear off the kitchen table. Once she's completed this task she can then decide to carry on with another chunk, rest for a while, or decide to do another chunk later in the day. The key is to choose manageable chunks and activities. Keep it small!

The Circle of Depression

Cognitive-behavioural treatment strategies for depression are based on the inter-relationship between behaviours, thoughts, feelings and body. It is easiest to think of it in terms of a circle where each is affected by and in turn affects another. This means that behaviours, thoughts, feelings and body all affect each other.

How we behave affects what we think and feel. For example, if we make ourselves get up, shower, have breakfast and go for a walk, we'll probably think we accomplished something and feel better physically and emotionally.

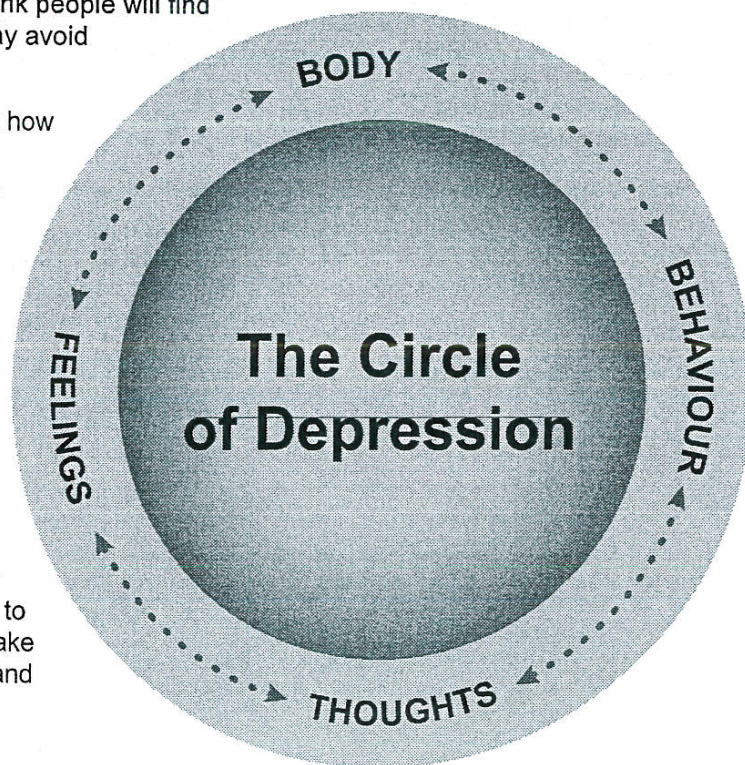
What we think affects how we feel and behave. For example, if we think things are hopeless, we are likely to feel depressed, withdraw and have very little energy.

Our feelings affect how we think and behave. If we feel depressed and have difficulty concentrating, we may think people will find us boring and then we may avoid accepting invitations.

Our body responses affect how we behave, think and feel. When we experience pain, we may stay in bed, think that there is no future and feel depressed and worthless.

Changing feelings directly is almost impossible. The best way to feel better is by changing depressive behaviours and thoughts.

Since behaviours are easy to identify it's a good place to begin when you want to make changes to your thoughts and feelings.



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THE CIRCLE OF DEPRESSION (CONTINUED)

For example, Jack has become depressed since losing his job. He spends most of the day in bed. In order to feel better Jack would have to change his negative behaviours or thoughts.

Example 1: Changing behaviour first

	BEHAVIOUR	THOUGHTS	FEELINGS	BODY
DEPRESSING	Stays in bed all day.	"I'm useless." "What a loser."	Depressed	Low energy.
HELPFUL	Forces self to get up, have a shower, go for a walk.	"At least I did something." "Maybe I could start that small project."	More in control. More hopeful.	More energy.

We can see that when Jack changed his behaviour his thoughts and feelings also changed.

Example 2: Changing thoughts first

	THOUGHTS	BEHAVIOUR	FEELINGS	BODY
DEPRESSING	"Why bother, there's no use, it's hopeless."	Doesn't get up. Sleeps all day.	Depressed, feels useless.	Fatigued
HELPFUL	"I'm not sure it's going to make a difference, but I'm willing to at least get up and have a shower."	Gets up, has a shower, decides to walk to the corner shop.	Feels good that he accomplished his goal. Is able to enjoy the outing.	More energy, alert

Jack was able to challenge his self-defeating thoughts with positive results. When he successfully completed the goal he set for himself, he felt good about his accomplishment. This increased his self-esteem, which enabled him to walk to the corner shop.

- Whether the circle spirals down into depression or leads upwards towards wellness, depends on the nature of the behaviours, thoughts, and feelings you choose.



Common Thinking Errors

The situations we find ourselves in don't cause our depressed feelings — our ways of perceiving the situations do. Here are some distorted ways of thinking that often increase depression. Check the ones that most relate to you.

FILTERING

Everyone's life has negative aspects. If you focus only on the negative and filter out all positive or neutral aspects, your life will indeed seem depressing.

EMOTIONAL REASONING

"I feel it so it must be true." Remember feelings are not facts. Emotions are based on subjective interpretations, not hard evidence.

OVER-INCLUSIVE

You think of one problem or demand, then another and another, until you feel completely overwhelmed.

BLACK OR WHITE THINKING

You think only in extremes or absolutes, forgetting that most things fall into shades of grey.

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

You predict a negative outcome without adequate supporting evidence.

MIND READING

You believe that others are thinking and feeling negatively about you and you react as if this is true.

PREDICTING THE FUTURE

You anticipate that things will turn out badly and you feel convinced that your predictions are true.

CATASTROPHIZING

You blow things out of proportion and imagine the worse case scenario. This intensifies your fear and makes it difficult for you to cope with the actual situation.

SHOULD

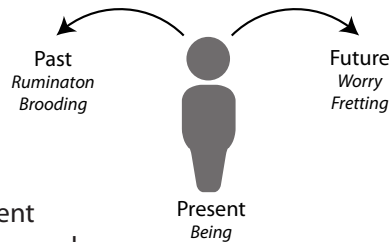
You make rigid rules for yourself and others about how things "should" be. When these rules are not followed you become depressed and angry.

What Is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is the short term for *mindfulness meditation practice*. This is a form of self-awareness training adapted from Buddhist mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness is about being aware of what is happening in the present, moment-by-moment, without making judgements about what we notice. Mindfulness meditation practice is key ingredient in a variety of evidence-based psychotherapies, including dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT).

Why should I practice mindfulness?

Our minds can be focused on things in the past, present or future. We often find ourselves ruminating about events that have already happened, or worrying about things that could happen. These habits of thought are often distressing.



Mindfulness is a practice which encourages us to attend to the present moment. There is good evidence that mindfulness practice can help people cope more effectively with a wide variety of feeling-states such as depression and anxiety, but also with physical health conditions including and chronic pain and illness.

Why do I need to practice? Can't I pay attention to the present moment already?

We can all pay attention to the present moment, at least for a short while. If you haven't tried meditation before, though, you might notice that your attention wanders and is not easily controlled. Mindfulness strengthens our ability to pay attention in the present moment, but also increases our awareness of how our minds fluctuate, often in unhelpful ways. People who practice mindfulness regularly find that it helps their ability to stay in the present moment without being deflected.

What does it mean to 'cultivate a non-judgemental attitude'?

Shakespeare said *"there is nothing is either good or bad, but thinking makes it so"*, and this is a core idea in therapies like cognitive behavioral therapy. Making judgements about our own experiences can often lead to us becoming quite distressed. For example, thoughts like *"this is horrible"* and *"I can't take any more"* are both judgements associated with distress. Practising mindfulness teaches us to accept more of our experience without judging it. This has been shown to help people live more fulfilling lives.

Some helpful quotes about mindfulness

"If you let cloudy water settle, it will become clear. If you let your upset mind settle, your course will also become clear"

- Jack Kornfield, Buddha's Little Instruction Book (1994)

"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally"

- John Kabat-Zinn, Wherever You Go, There You Are (1994)

"The non-judgemental observation of the ongoing stream of internal and external stimuli as they arise"

- Ruth Baer, Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice (2003)

"Keeping one's consciousness alive to the present reality"

- Thich Nath Hanh, The Miracle of Mindfulness (1975)

"Mindfulness is simply the knack of noticing without comment whatever is happening in your present experience"

- Guy Claxton, The Heart of Buddhism (1990)