

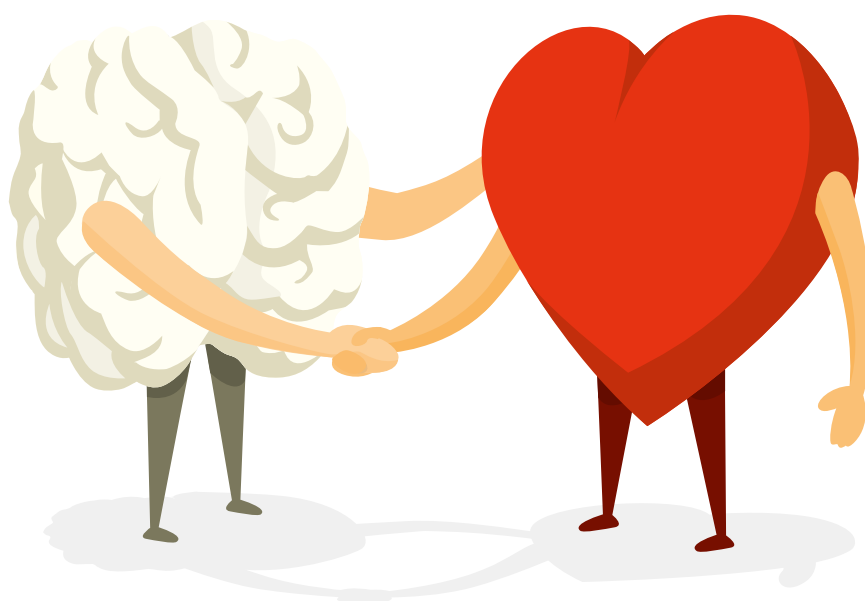
Understanding low mood

A young person's guide to understanding
and coping with low mood



What you'll find in this workbook

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Introduction

As human beings we all experience a wide range of emotions, some positive, some negative and some a mixture of both! It's really common for young people to find their own emotions confusing and may even struggle with understanding other people's emotions too. This workbook has been designed to help you learn more about an emotion we call low mood.

To help you develop your skills each session of the workbook will include a take-home task. There is no right or wrong answer to the tasks but we know that the more we practice something the more changes we notice.



Exercise one: Complete the 'My Workbook Plan' below to plan when you are going to complete the take home tasks:

I'll start at this time...	I'll complete the tasks in this location...	I can talk to the below people if I need help or feel stuck...

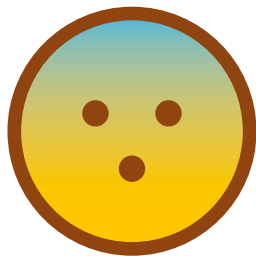
Session One: What is low mood?

At the start of each session in this workbook there is a 0-10 rating scale to rate different areas over the past week including: your mood, college, friendships, home and anxiety. A score of 0 would indicate difficulties within this area and a score of 10 would indicate no difficulties within this area.

Using the below graph as an option you can plot your weekly anxiety 0-10 rating to create a visual representation of any changes throughout the sessions.



Exercise two: Using a pen circle the signs or indicators that may show that someone is experiencing low mood.



Feeling anxious
or worried



Feeling depressed
or unhappy



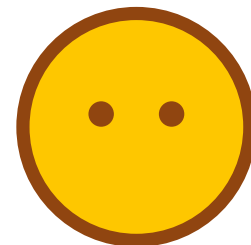
Emotional outbursts



Sleep problems



Weight or
appetite changes



Quiet or withdrawn



Substance abuse



Feeling guilty
or worthless



Changes in behaviour
or feelings

The answer is **all of them** can be signs of low mood.

It is important to remember that everyone's experience of low mood is as individual as they are. This means that one person may show different signs of low mood to another. This is why it is important to understand what your signs and symptoms are so the focus on getting better can be tailored to you too.

Other signs of low mood from the YoungMinds website are:

- Not wanting to do things that you previously enjoyed
- Avoiding friends or social situations
- Sleeping more or less than normal
- Eating more or less than normal
- Feeling irritable, upset, miserable or lonely
- Being self-critical
- Feeling hopeless
- Maybe wanting to self-harm
- Feeling tired and not having any energy

Often these signs can be linked, causing an increase in feelings of low mood. This can be known as a vicious cycle.



Sometimes low mood can feel like it takes over, and it can feel difficult to remember times when you used to enjoy things. It is important to remember that this feeling won't last forever and that there are things you can do to feel better.

Often people stop doing things that they enjoy when feeling low which can also play into the vicious cycle.



Exercise three: Can you write down some of the activities you enjoy or used to enjoy here in these boxes. This activity will help us work towards building some of the things you might like to start doing again and helping to set some goals.

(Use the pictures below to help prompt you if you are struggling to think of some activities)



Activities that I like/liked doing	Goals (what would I like to do more of?)
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

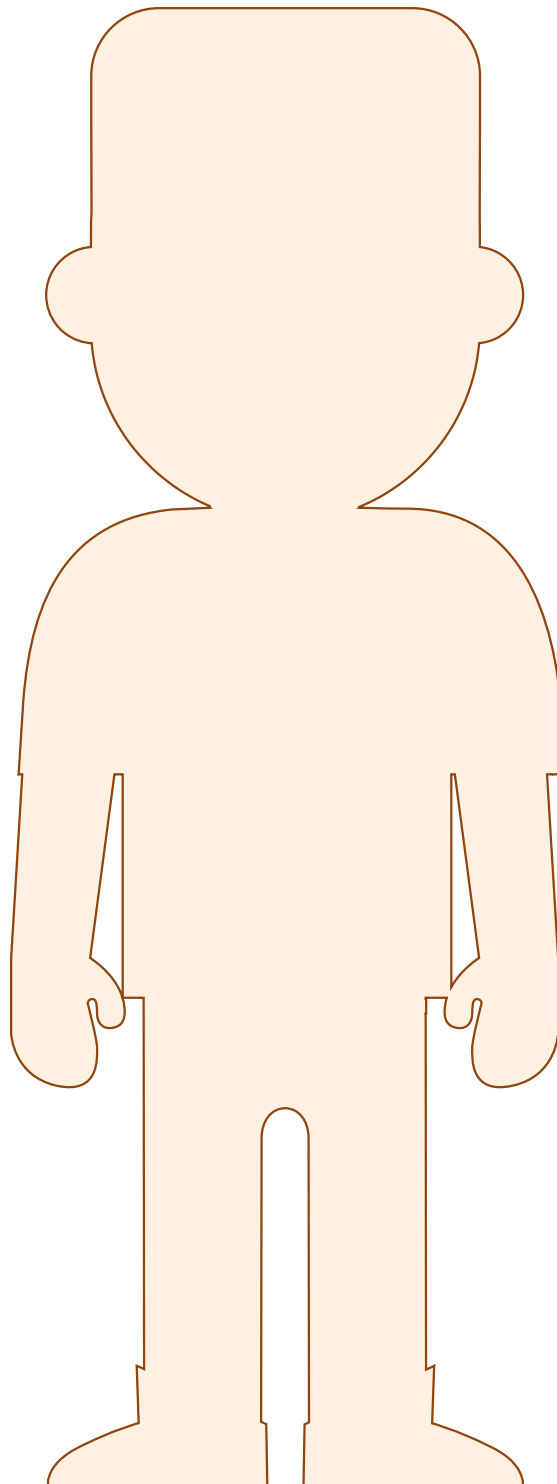




Take home task: Body map

The aim of this task is to understand your signs of low mood. Thinking about the signs that we explored in today's session, have a think about which ones are relevant to you. Use the image of a body below to map your signs of low mood. Once you have written some signs down have a think about how often they feel these physical symptoms and write either **sometimes**, **often** or **always** next to the word.

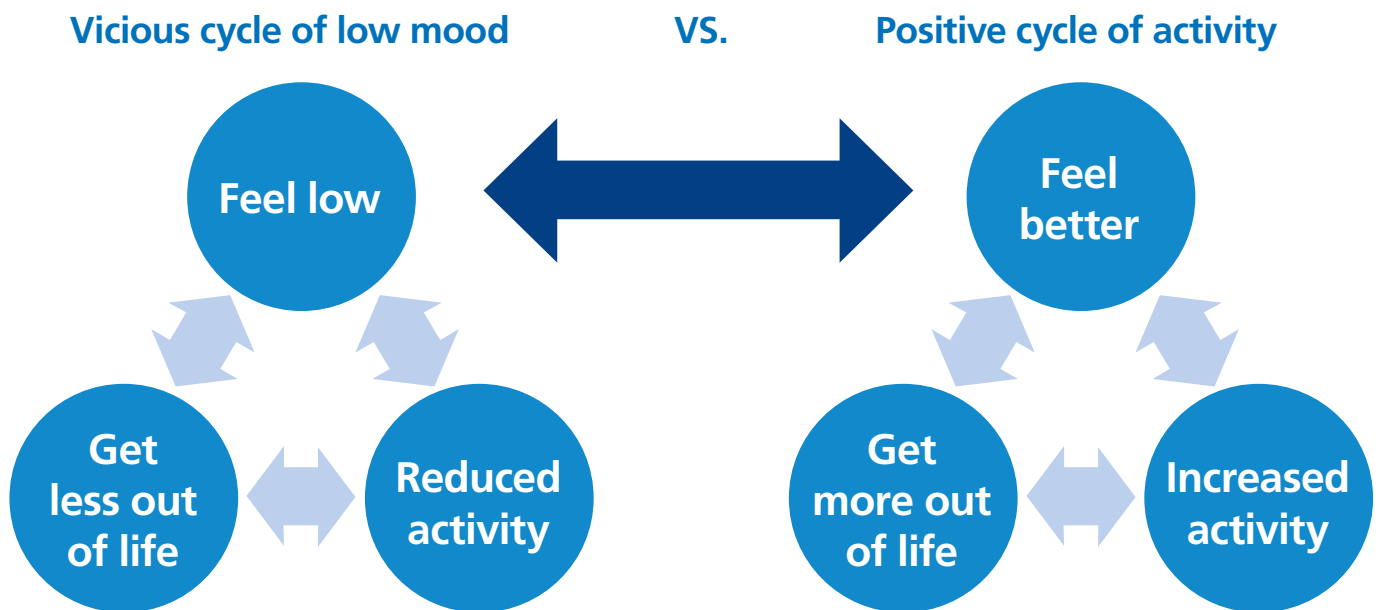
For example – **I am tired, often**



Session Two: Introducing 'the vicious cycle' of low mood

Inactivity and low mood

As motivation, energy and enjoyment are lower when we are sad it can feel harder to engage in any kind of activity-even the things we used to love doing. However, the less we do, the worse we tend to feel. Doing more of the things we enjoy helps us to feel better and helps us to build **a life worth living**.

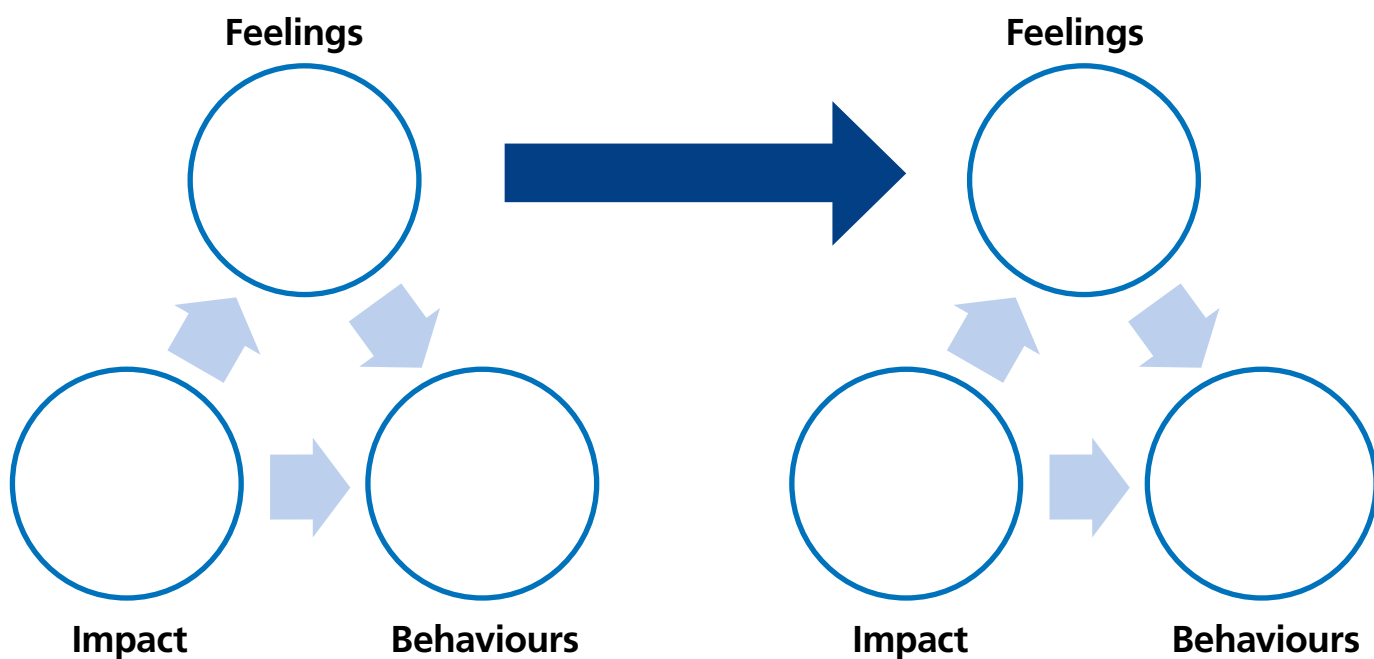


Often people want to wait until they feel better before doing more, but we have to do more in order to feel better. The key idea here is we **change our behaviour to impact our mood**.





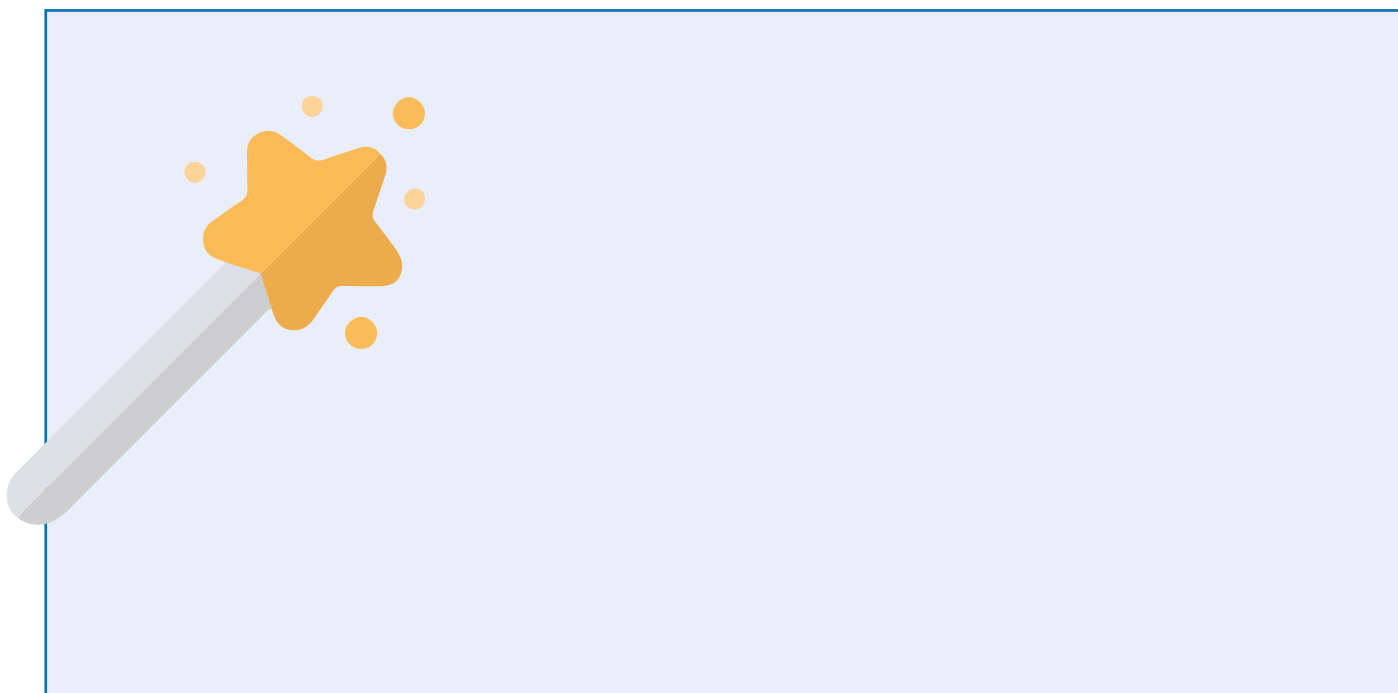
Exercise four: Time to map your own 'vicious cycle of low mood' and 'positive cycle of activity'. Use the cycles on the previous page to identify what a cycle of low mood looks like for yourself and make sure you use specific examples. **E.g. feelings - sad, behaviours - stopped playing football, impact - loneliness.** Then on the right use the three circles to identify how this can be changed round into a positive cycle of activity. **E.g. - behaviours - go to football training again, impact - see friends, feelings - feel happier.**



Exercise five: Write down some of the ways the vicious cycle of low mood impacts on you e.g. affecting college/school work, relationships or sleep.



Can you now write down or draw what it would your life would look like if you felt better?



Recognising that we feel low is usually the first step towards being able to do something about it. Once we have an understanding of what low mood looks like for us and how it impacts on us, we can start to use this as a base to understand how to change it. Having a good understanding about what recovery looks like can help to give us a starting point and a focus to betting better too.



Illustrations ref: www.freepik.com



Take home task: Logging activity

Over the next week log your activities in the worksheet below to help us see how much time you spend doing different activities. This log will be an important part of future sessions, so try completing this often so that you can make sure it is accurate. Try to record any activities you do (no matter how small or boring you think they are) in the log. Also this week keep a track of your mood by rating your mood out of 10 and recording this in the daily mood monitoring score chart.

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	

Daily mood monitoring

Make a note of a score for your mood each day. Use a scale of 0 to 10 where:
0 = really low and 10 = really happy

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Session Three: What can affect my mood?

Our mood can be affected by lots of different things including biological, psychological and social factors.

Psychological factors

- **Thinking styles:** Sometimes the way we think about a situation can contribute to us feeling low for example we might focus on the negatives or be very self-critical.
- **Loss and adjusting to a change:** We may struggle with low mood following the loss of a loved one, a significant relationship, plans for the future or a job. Being diagnosed with an illness can also bring about feelings of loss for our health and we can feel a sense of loss if we believe we are not achieving the goals we have set for ourselves (e.g. getting A's on exams or being in a settled relationship).
- **Identity:** As we grow older our teenage years are seen as the time to work out who we are and who we would like to be. As well as being an exciting time for self-discovery these questions can be confusing, difficult and sometimes overwhelming.

Social factors

- **Stress:** Experiencing lots of stressful life events at once e.g. moving house, transitioning from secondary school to college, physical illness or financial worries can all add to feelings of low mood.
- **Relationships:** Changes to relationships such as parental separation or arguments with friends can also cause us to feel low in mood.

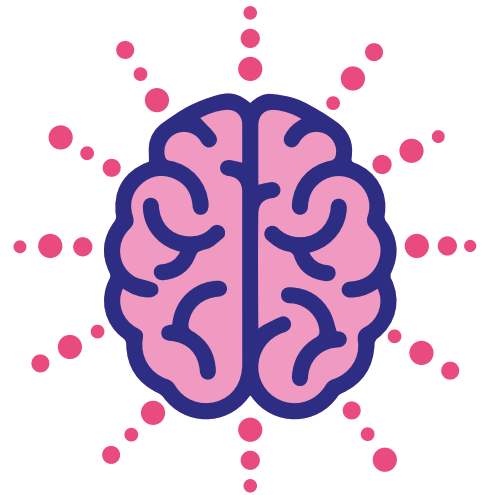
Circle any of the above that may apply to you. Write anything else that you think may contribute to your low mood in the box below:

Biological factors

Our mood can be affected by biological factors such as our genes, our hormones and our brain chemicals. When our brain chemicals becomes unbalanced this can cause difficulties related to low mood and depression.

Dopamine and Serotonin are the main chemicals that can have a large impact on our mood. They are sometimes nicknamed the 'happy hormones'. These chemicals help regulate many of our bodily functions such as sleep, memory, digestion and emotional wellbeing.

This table looks at some of the roles Dopamine and Serotonin play in our bodies:



Dopamine	Serotonin
Learning	Sleep-wake cycle
Sleep	Metabolism and appetite
Movement	Cognition and concentration
Alertness	Hormonal activity

Looking at the above table, what do you think might happen if you had too little dopamine or serotonin?

- When our dopamine levels are depleted we can feel down and lack motivation or drive. Higher levels of dopamine can lead to feelings of euphoria, bliss and enhanced motivation and concentration. When we are rewarded for something we get a boost of dopamine which helps motivate and drive us to repeat this behaviour.
- When there is an imbalance of serotonin in our brains we may struggle with motivation, concentration and feelings of hopelessness or helplessness. This may make it hard to get enjoyment from our usual activities.
- When we do more activity we get a 'boost' of dopamine, endorphins and serotonin which can help improve our mood.

What influences your mood?



Exercise six: Write here some of the things that you have noticed can make you feel better and worse in mood.

What improves my mood?	What can make me feel worse?
Example – when I've slept well	Example – when I've not eaten breakfast before college

What kind of things can make a difference to my mood?



Exercise seven: Looking at the list of things that improve your mood, write 3 ways that you can try to plan these into your week.

My goals this week:

1.
2.
3.



Take home task

Using a goal from the exercise above, plan to complete it this week to see how it impacts on your mood. Remember the more we do something the easier it becomes! Repeating activity helps it to become a habit. Continue to use the activity log to monitor activity and mood.

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where
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Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	
Morning	
Afternoon	
Evening	

Daily mood monitoring

Make a note of a score for your mood each day. Use a scale of 0 to 10 where:
0 = really low and 10 = really happy

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Session Four: The importance of activities

Today's session is going to focus on the importance of activities and how they can help us overcome low mood. Think about a time when you have enjoyed an activity, this could either be alone, with friends or with family.

Write your memory here:

Thinking about this time how do you feel?

Engaging in a hobby or interest can give us more than just an energy boost, it can help remind us of the things that make us feel happy and also gives us the opportunity to feel connected with the things that matter to us as well as important people in our life.

Here is a list of enjoyable activities below. Have a look through them and underline the ones that you have in the past or currently do enjoy from time to time.

List of enjoyable activities

- Spending time with family and friends
- Reading
- Watching TV
- Playing or listening to music
- Video games
- Cooking or baking
- Sports
- Going for a walk or being outdoors
- Doing some creative like art or photography
- Researching my interests on the internet
- Taking a bath
- Eating a nice healthy meal
- Connecting to my faith or spirituality
- Learning a new skill
- Relaxing
- Laughing
- Thinking about an enjoyable trip or holiday
- Planning for the future
- Dancing

Can you think of anymore activities not on the list that you like? Write them here:

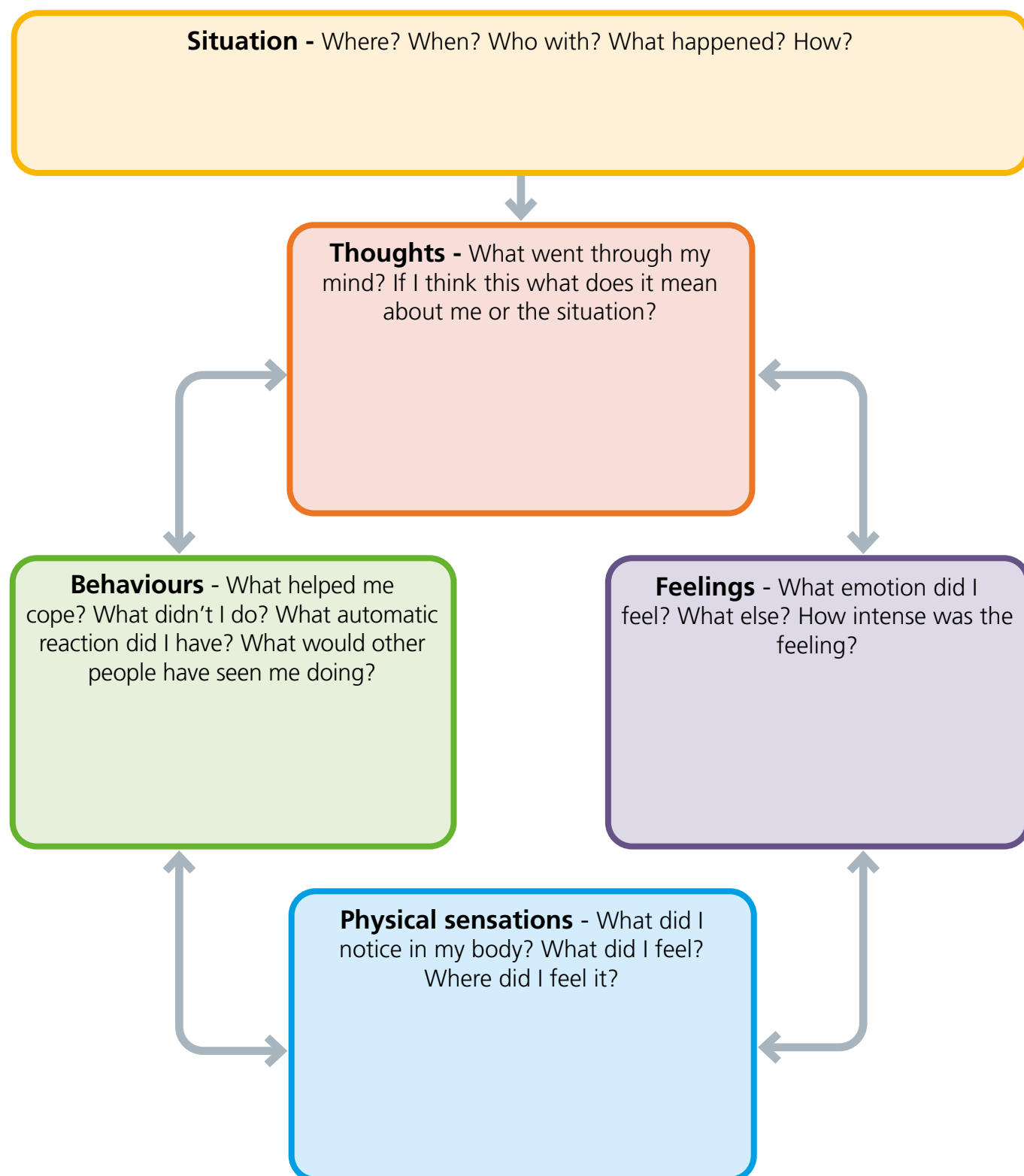
It is helpful to have a variety of activities that we like in our lives to help boost feelings of wellbeing. Our likes and dislikes are as individual to us as our own personalities, so creating a list of hobbies and interests can be helpful to remind ourselves and others around us what we enjoy doing. This may include activities that you can do in different environments such as: at home, at college, with friends and family or even on your own.



What influences your mood?



Exercise eight: This activity will map out a time when you have felt low in mood. Think about the links between the thoughts, feelings and behaviours you might have had. Can you see how this situation might have become a vicious cycle of low mood? Can you also identify any behaviours that might have kept it going?



If you look again at the exercise on page 20 can you see how a situation can lead to thoughts, feelings and behaviours linked to low mood? So if we want to turn a vicious cycle of low mood into a more positive cycle of activity, this would always start with a situation or activity to help change our thoughts and feelings.



Exercise nine: Using the activities on page 18 and 19 as a prompt, write your favourite activities down in the box below, and rank them from favourite to less enjoyable.

Favourite activities

1.

2.

3.

4.

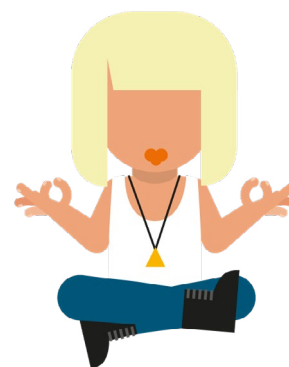
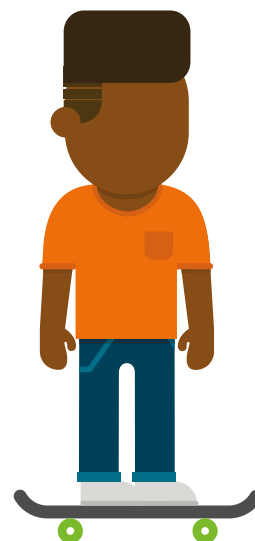
5.

6.

7.

8.

Less enjoyable activities



Now you have rated these activities in order from highest enjoyment to lowest, can you identify any activities that you are currently doing already by circling them? Are there any activities that you have stopped doing that you used to like? Is the reason you stopped doing some activities related to your low mood? Is there anything that you feel you want to get back to? Underline the ones that you would like to try doing again.



Take home task: My activity log

For this week's take home task try increasing enjoyable activities across week and logging your overall activity levels. This week to help monitor mood throughout the week use the new column to rate your mood before and after the activity with 0 being low and 10 being high. Continue to rate mood daily as well.

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where	Enjoyment scale (0-10)
Morning		
Afternoon		
Evening		
Morning		
Afternoon		
Evening		
Morning		
Afternoon		
Evening		

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where	Enjoyment scale (0-10)
Morning		
Afternoon		
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Morning		
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Morning		
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Afternoon		
Evening		

Daily mood monitoring

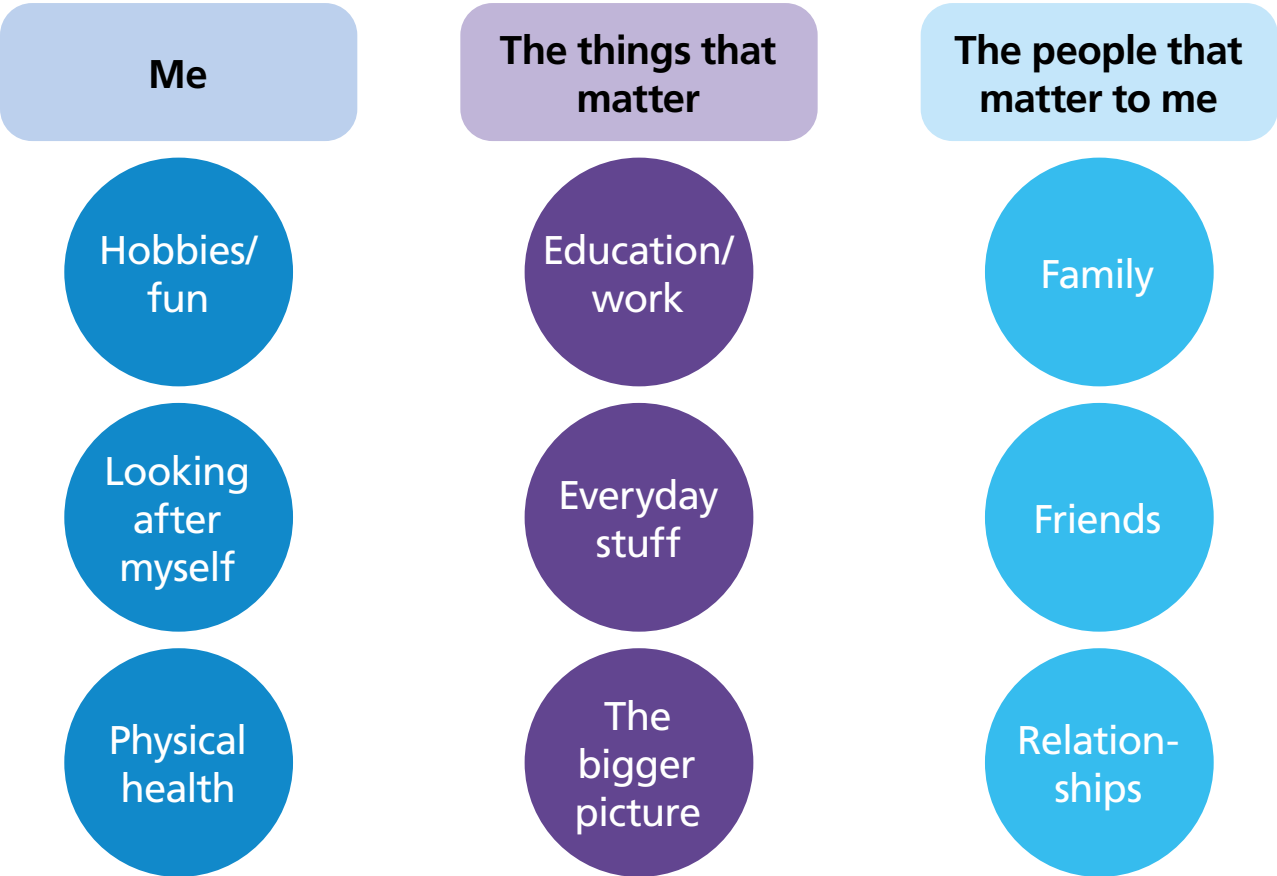
Make a note of a score for your mood each day. Use a scale of 0 to 10 where:
0 = really low and 10 = really happy

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Session Five: Understanding values

Today’s session is going to look at values and how these interlink with activity. It has been proven that when we do an activity that we engage in activities that we value this boosts our well-being more than engaging in activities that hold less meaning to us. We will explore what matters to you in the next activity using a worksheet that looks at different kinds of values. It is important that these are values that are true to you and not something that you think should be important.

Here is a way of categorising values known as LAVA (life areas values and activities inventory):



Exercise ten: Can you think of some values of your own for each category above? Write them in the boxes below for your own LAVA inventory.


Me	The things that matter	The people that matter to me



PAUSE – It is time to look back at your activity logs and see how many of the activities you value are in there. Are there some activities of value in your log that are more present than others? Are there some that are not as present as others? Is there a way you could introduce some more balance?



Exercise eleven: Now that you have reviewed your activity logs and thought about your values, it is time to plan how you can introduce more activities of value or more balance in across your week. This exercise involves setting two goals using the 'SMART' acronym to help. If you struggle to set goals see if someone can help you with this task using the prompts below.

S	M	A	R	T
				
Specific	Measurable	Achievable	Relevant	Time Bound
State what you'll do Use action words	Provide a way to evaluate Use metrics or data targets	Within your scope Possible to accomplish, attainable	Makes sense within your job function Improves the business in some way	State when you'll get it done Be specific on date or time frame

My SMART goals are:

- 1.
- 2.



Take home task: My activity log

Continue to record any activities you do (no matter how small or boring you think they are) in the log below for this week. This week try ticking each box if you felt the activity gave you **achievement**, **closeness**, and/or **enjoyment**. If the activity matters to you, tick the importance box. These elements can help us identify activities of value. Make sure to remember to complete or make steps towards your SMART goal too. Also continue to rate mood daily as a tracker for how you are feeling.

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where	Achievement?	Closeness?	Enjoyment?	Important?
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where	Achievement?	Closeness?	Enjoyment?	Important?
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Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					

Daily mood monitoring

Make a note of a score for your mood each day. Use a scale of 0 to 10 where:

0 = really low and 10 = really happy

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Session Six: Targeted Activities

The activities that you choose to fill your week will influence your feelings. When these activities are easy to measure and directly related to the values you listed on your personal LAVA inventory from Session Five, we can assess clearly how much of an impact they are having on how you feel.

Finding balance – It is important that you have a balance of activities that relate to different life areas. For instance if you only ever did activities that were about getting good grades at college, there would be a lot of other areas of your life that would not be getting enough attention.



This unbalance can keep low mood going, as there aren't many opportunities to feel close and enjoy yourself when you are doing college work even if you feel it is important and you are achieving something. Equally if you never felt you were doing anything that gave you a sense of achievement that would not be good either.

Therefore the balance across life areas as well as the number of activities is important

This next section looks at some activity logs and how balance can be created. Look at the examples below and see if you can identify which values the young person needs to spend a bit more time focusing on.

Here is an example of Ellie's activity log:



Activities Ellie is doing:

Ellie's activity log shows she spends lots of her time on activities related to the 'Things that matter' value of doing well at school. She feels pressure from her parents to keep up with activities like her piano lessons, that don't fit with any of her values and she doesn't really enjoy any more.

Activities Ellie would like to do:

Ellie would like to do more activities focused on the 'Me' and 'People that matter' life areas:

- Have a movie night with Tom
- Walk the dog
- Have a pamper evening with Carly
- Join a Zumba class
- Help out at the animal shelter
- Speak to at least one person in every lesson
- Go to church on Sundays
- Help dad wash the car

Activities Ellie needs help to do:

Ellie needs help from her parents to agree she should stop her piano lessons, and to give her the money to go to the Zumba class. She'd like her friend Emma to join with her.



Here is an example of Dan's activity log:

Activities Dan is doing:

Dan noticed his activity log had very few entries that were important to him, and his ACE levels were pretty low across the board.

Activities Dan would like to do:

Dan wanted to add in activities that related to his values in all three life areas: 'Me', 'Things that matter' and 'People that matter':

- Rejoin the basketball team
- Clear up my bedroom
- Help my mum cook dinner
- Go to my Saturday job at the garden centre
- Get up before 10am during the week
- Visit my grandparents
- Spend 15 minutes sorting out the garden
- Help out at the community centre
- Go to Jamie's house to hang out with him

Activities Dan needs help to do:

Dan wasn't sure when the basketball team trained anymore, so he needed to find out. He knew he would have to speak to the community centre manager about volunteering. He also thought he might need some help from his mum to get out of bed earlier each day.



Here are some changes that Dan and Ellie have made:

Review of progress: What’s changed?

Changes example: Dan



Dan has filled in his application form for the community centre, and is now waiting to hear back about helping out at the youth club. He has managed to get to his Saturday job over the past few weeks, and is now doing the food shopping for his mum on a Tuesday. He still finds it hard to get out of bed every morning, but now tries to plan a visit to his grandparents for lunch twice a week that means he has a reason to get up.

Ellie has agreed with her parents she will stop her piano lessons, as she wasn’t enjoying them anymore. She has also changed her twice weekly dance class to a drop-in Zumba class she goes to with her friend once a fortnight. This has given her more time for herself, where she has time relaxing in the evenings after finishing homework, and manages to get to bed a bit earlier after reading a book from her favourite vampire series.



Exercise twelve: What area do you think would help create more balance in your life this week? Could you write down a day and time you could do an activity that would balance out your values? When we are specific with a time and day to do activities we are much more likely to do it, this is why setting goals can help us achieve the things we want to. Are your goals different to last week?

My goals
this week:

1.

2.



Take home task: My activity log

Continue to record any activities you in the log below for this week and to tick each box if you felt the activity gave you **achievement**, **closeness**, and/or **enjoyment**. If the activity matters to you, tick the importance box. Make sure to remember to complete or make steps towards your SMART goals and to track your mood too.

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where	Achievement?	Closeness?	Enjoyment?	Important?
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where	Achievement?	Closeness?	Enjoyment?	Important?
Morning					
Afternoon					
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Evening					

Daily mood monitoring

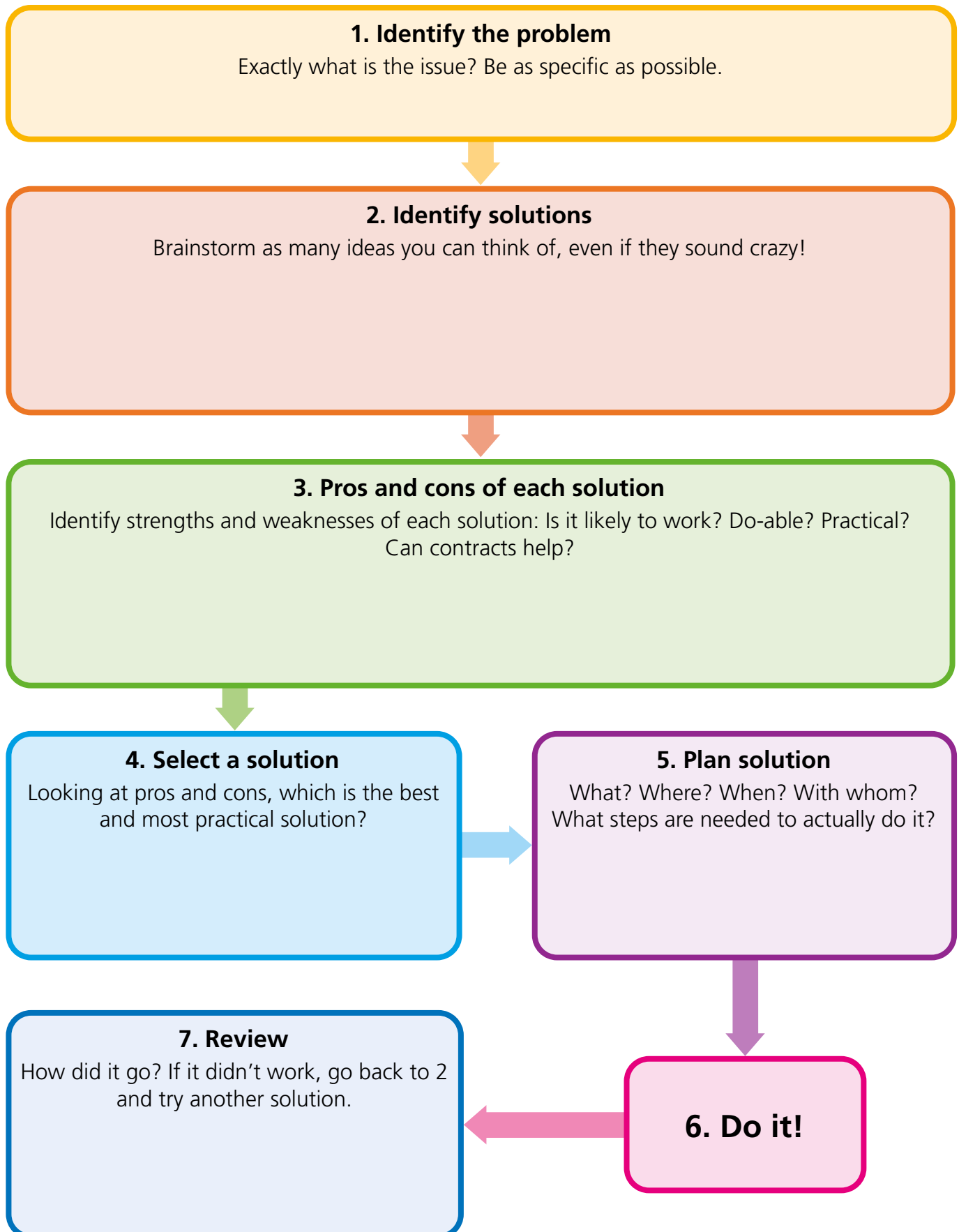
Make a note of a score for your mood each day. Use a scale of 0 to 10 where:

0 = really low and 10 = really happy

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Session Seven: Problem solving

To only be completed with support if there are problems identified with completing tasks between sessions.



Session Eight: Relapse prevention plan

Beating low mood with activity



and activity monitoring

Day, time	Activity - what I did, with who, and where	Achievement?	Closeness?	Enjoyment?	Important?
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					

Daily mood monitoring
Make a note of a score for your mood each day. Use a scale of 0 to 10 where:
0 = really low and 10 = really happy

Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

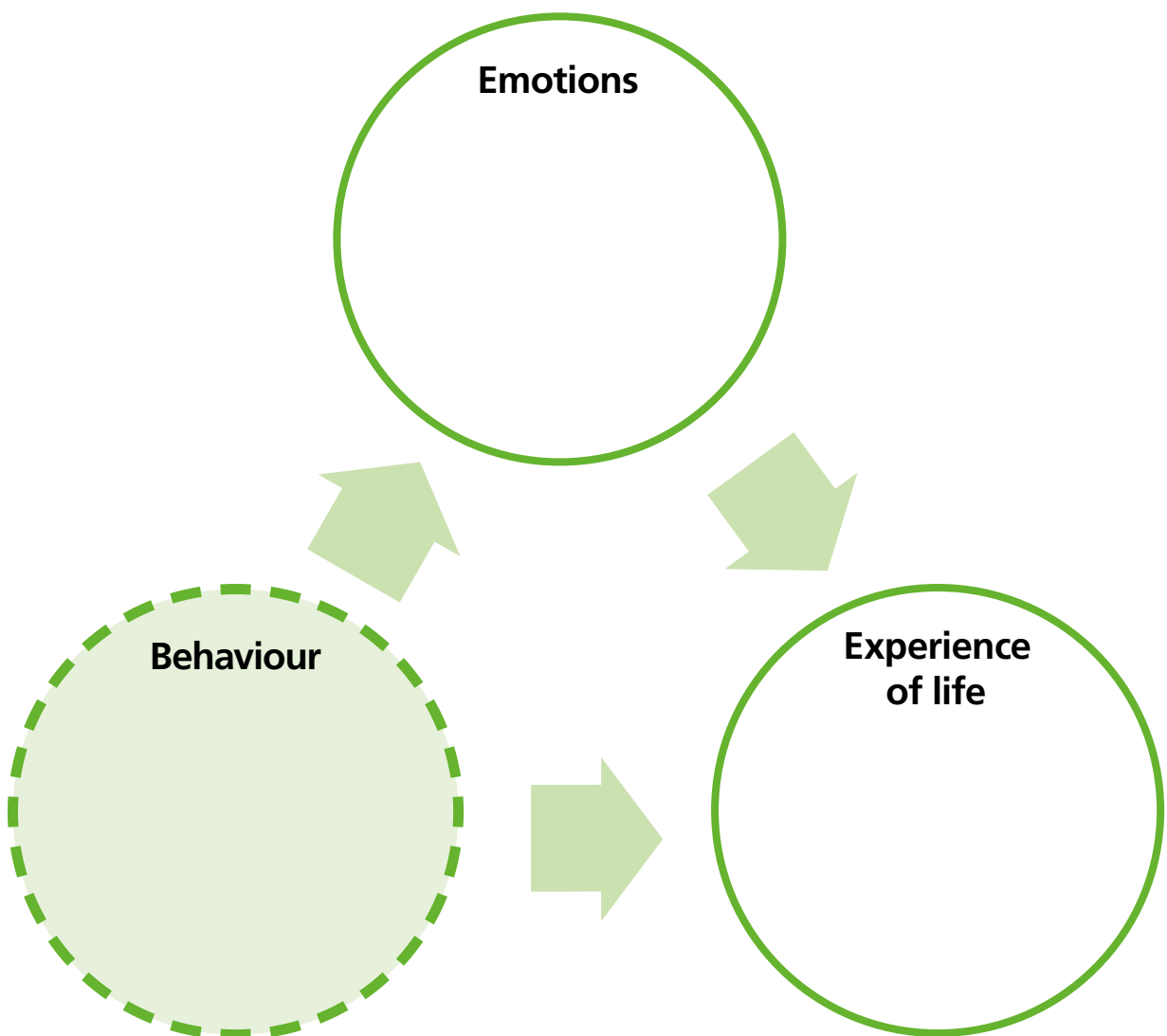
What stood out on my activity log?

Vicious cycle of low mood/irritability

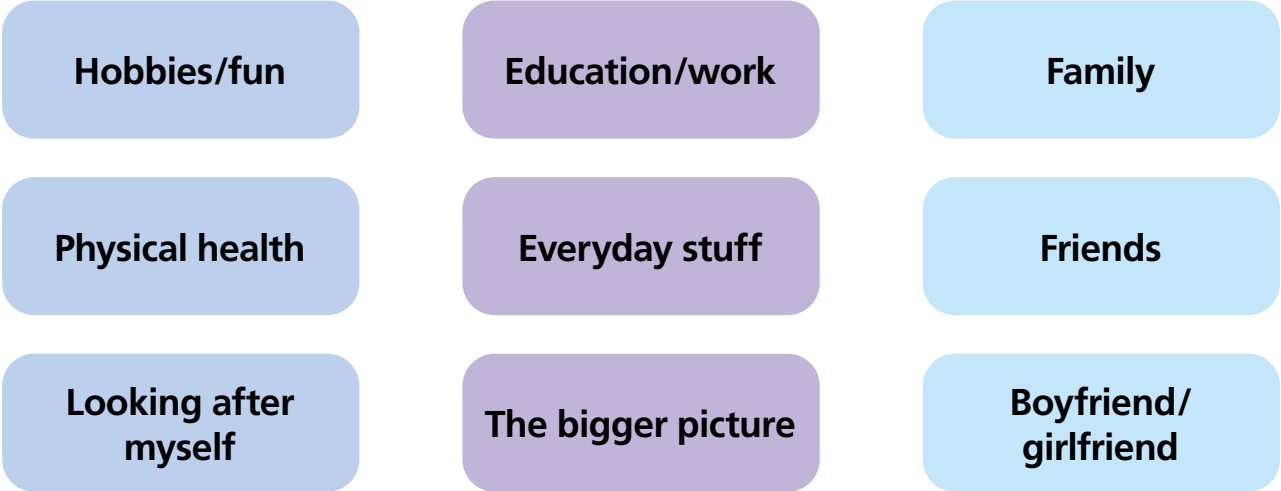
Positive cycle of activity



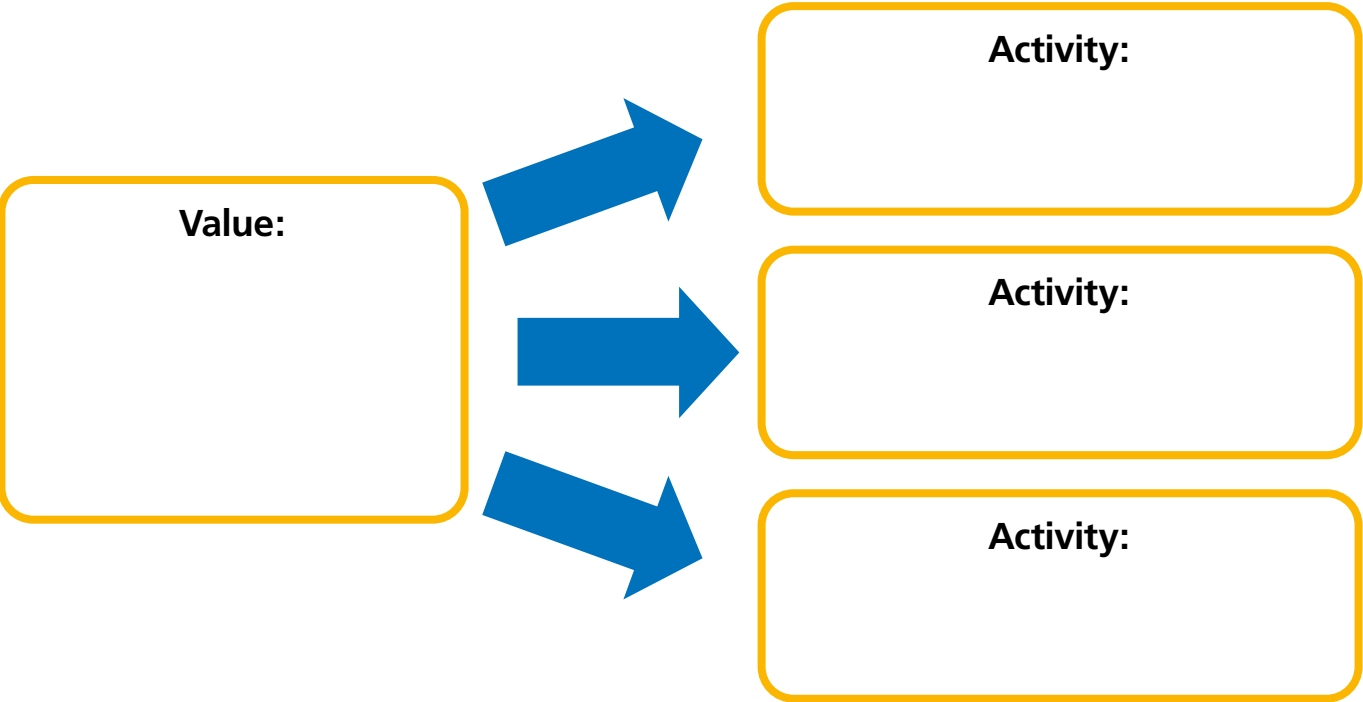
Here and now cycle: What are things like for you now?



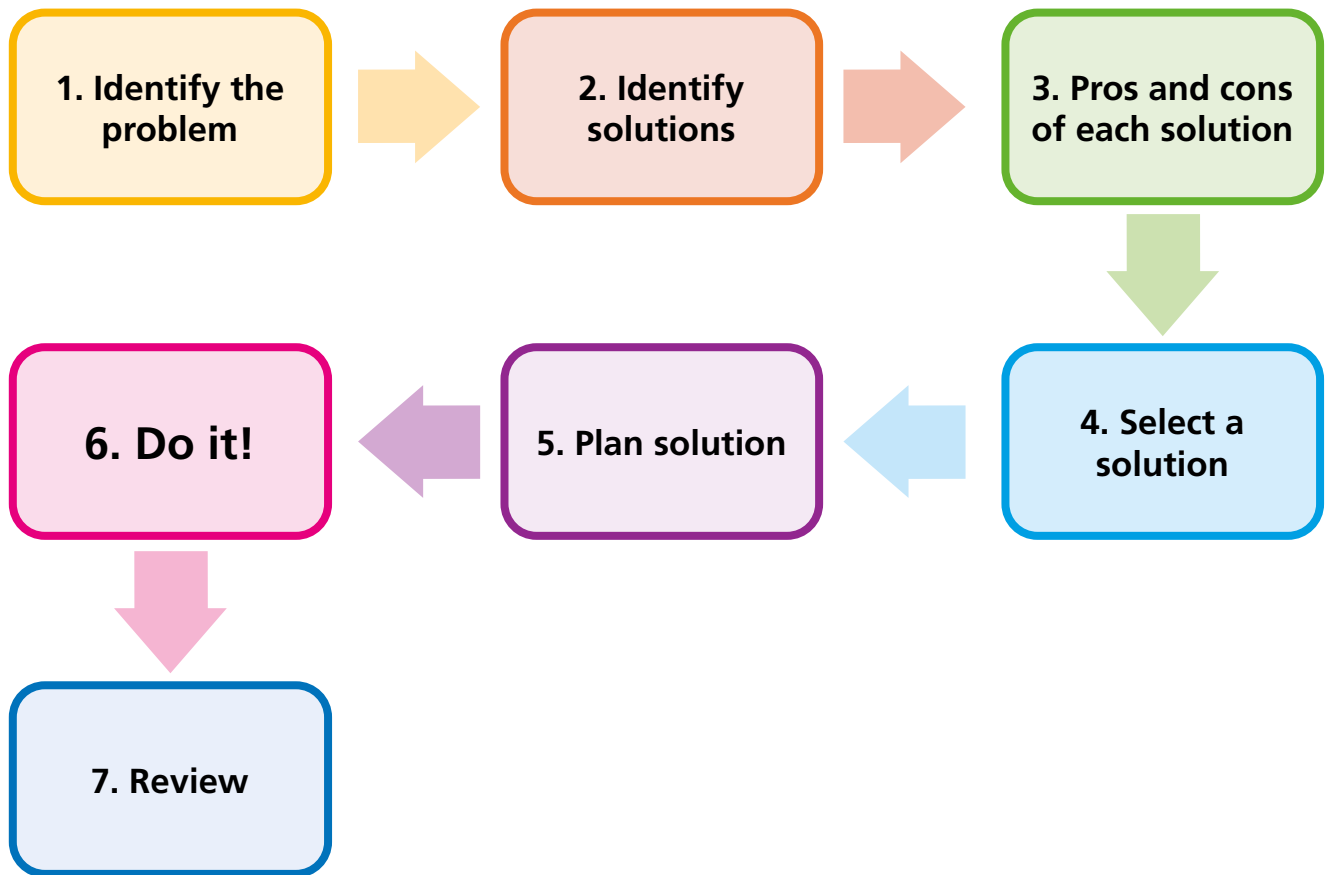
Life areas, values and activities



Life areas I decided to do more activities towards:



Problem-solving support



Times when problem-solving has been helpful:

A large, empty rectangular box with a blue border, intended for writing or drawing.

Reviewing progress

Well done for getting to the end of the understanding low mood workbook I am sure you will have achieved a lot, even if there's still some way to go.

You have worked hard to make changes to get where you are

This last session is a good way to recognise those achievements and to plan for the future.

Planning for the future

You've now learned a number of skills that can help you feel better and live more healthily when you begin to feel down again.

- Keep planning a variety of activities that fit with what matters to you
- Try to get a balance of activities high on Achievement, Closeness, and Enjoyment
- You still might find it useful to review these workbook if you start to feel low again
- It can help to do this with the help of someone else, like a parent or tutor if needing some encouragement

What if I still feel rubbish?

Sometimes people don't realise how much things have changed, and often there are improvements even if they aren't immediately obvious. In some cases, it can take a bit longer for the changes you've made to start affecting your mood, and for your feelings to 'catch up'.

Keep trying out activities that are enjoyable and important to you in different life areas, and your mood should gradually improve.

Sometimes there are things that knock you back (e.g. something bad happening in your life), but you still have the tools to make progress on your own.

What if I start to feel down again?

You might have times in the future that you start to feel low, but the key is using the techniques we've covered in this workbook to help you feel better as soon as you feel your mood dipping.

If your mood problems continue to significantly interfere with your life, please don't hesitate to ask for help from your GP.

Who can I speak to now our sessions have finished?

There are also lots of ways you can get extra help after completing this workbook, including using the resources suggested below:

If you live in the Leeds area and are aged 18 or under, the MindMate website has a lot of information about support local to you: <https://www.mindmate.org.uk/>

Useful resources for self-help

Books

- Reynolds, S., & Parkinson, M. (2015). **Am I Depressed And What Can I Do About It?** A CBT self-help guide for teenagers experiencing low mood and depression. London: Robinson.
- Dummett, N. & Williams, C. (2008). **Overcoming Teenage Low Mood and Depression: A five areas approach.** London: Hodder Arnold.
- Fennell, M. (1999). **Overcoming Low Self-Esteem: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques.** London: Constable & Robinson.
- Gilbert, P. (1997). **Overcoming Depression: A self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques.** London: Constable & Robinson.
- Stallard, P. (2002). **Think Good – Feel Good: A cognitive behaviour therapy workbook for children and young people.** Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. (plus additional online resources after purchasing book <http://www.wileyurope.com/go/thinkgoodfeelgood>)



Websites

- **www.livinglifetothefull.com**
A useful website with a range of booklets, worksheets and computer-based self-help modules.
- **<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/mildmoderate/entry.asp>**
A self-help site full of resources and booklets for dealing with depression, anxiety and other difficulties.
- **<https://moodgym.anu.edu.au>**
Free web-based CBT programme, which includes modules on assertiveness and inter-personal skills.
- **<http://www.thesite.org> The Site** (online guide to life for young people 16 years and over).
- **Childline www.childline.org.uk**
If you would prefer to speak to a counsellor online: <http://www.childline.org.uk/talk/chat/pages/onlinechat.aspx> or you can exchange emails with a counsellor.
- **<http://www.papyrus-uk.org/support/for-you> and <http://www.papyrus-uk.org/support/for-parents>**
Advice and support for young people dealing with self-harm and emotional distress and for those who are worried about them.
- **Harmless www.harmless.org.uk**
User-led organisation that includes a range of information and support for people who self-harm.



Helplines

- **Childline 0800 11 11**
Free confidential 24hr helpline for young people who are aged up to 19 years old.
- **Samaritans 116 123**
Free confidential 24 hour helpline.
- **Papyrus HOPELineUK 0800 068 41 41**
Free confidential helpline for anyone concerned about a young person at risk of harming themselves.
Open weekdays 10am – 5pm, 7pm – 10pm;
weekends 2pm – 5pm.



Support groups

- **Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk/**
Charity committed to improving the mental health of young people. Support for those worried about a young person's behaviour or mental health. Provides information leaflets.
- **Rethink Helpline 0300 500 0927, www.rethink.org**
Provides information and a helpline for anyone affected by mental health problems.
- **Mind Helpline 0300 123 3393, www.mind.org.uk**
(Mon-Fri 9am – 5pm) Provides information on mental health problems and treatments.



Notes and questions page

