

Coping with Low Mood

Session 2

Weekly check-in

- How has your week been overall?
- What's been positive about your week?
- How are you feeling today?



What about your target?

- Did you keep your mood diary?
- Did you notice any patterns?
- What are your thoughts when you look back at your mood diary?



Did you talk to somebody about how you're feeling?

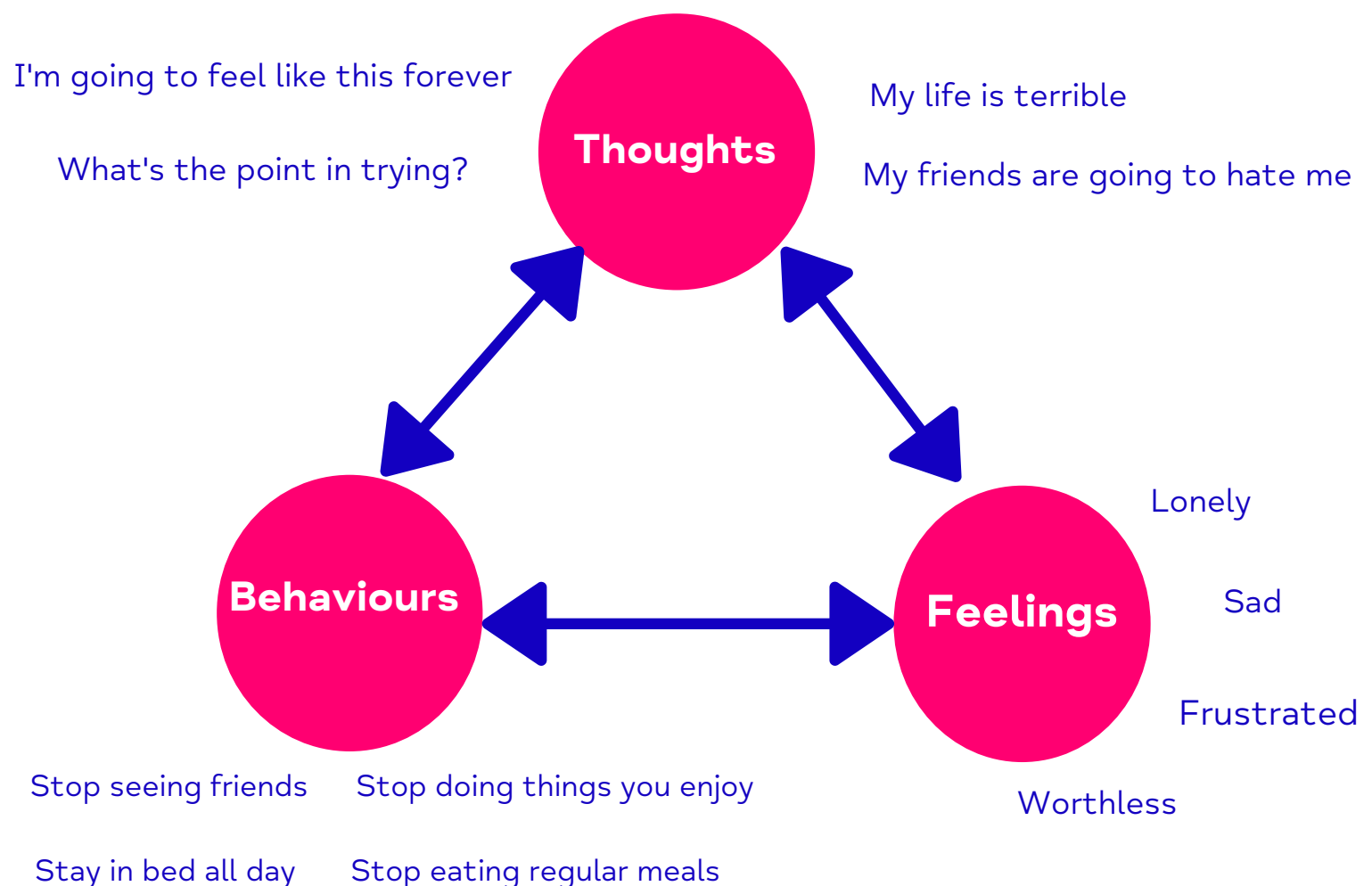
- How did it feel to talk about it?
- How did it feel after?
- Would you consider talking to this person again in the future?

Thoughts, Feelings and Behaviours

In this session, we will start to look at how we can break the cycle of low mood and explore things we can do to start feeling better about ourselves.

Firstly take a look at this:

Scenario: Sam's parents recently broke up. Since the break-up, Sam has been feeling really low in mood - he really misses his life how it was and feels stuck in the middle. Since he started to feel low, Sam has had little motivation, stayed in bed for longer during the day time and has stopped seeing friends. Sam has now started to believe his friends don't like him anymore because he hasn't been going out with them as much.



Where can we control the cycle?

As you can see from the cycle above, Sam's cycle started with an unhelpful thought which led on to feelings such as sadness and frustration. Because Sam felt this way, it caused him to stop seeing friends, he stopped eating regular meals and began staying in his room all the time. These are Sam's behaviours. The more unhelpful behaviours Sam does, the stronger his unhelpful thoughts get which then leads on to even more difficult feelings. Can you see how the cycle continues to go round? The good news is that we can learn to break this cycle- but what can we control to do this?

We can't always control our thoughts straight away - these are often called Negative Automatic Thoughts (NAT's for short). We can learn to challenge them but often they will pop into our mind when we are feeling low.



We can't control how we feel either. Our feelings are there for a reason and often we get them depending on what is happening around us i.e. imagine a puppy walked into the room right now- try your hardest to be unhappy (if you like puppies, this would be impossible to do).

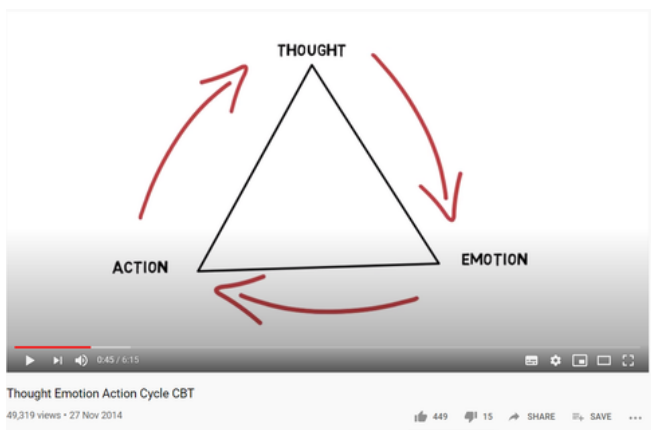
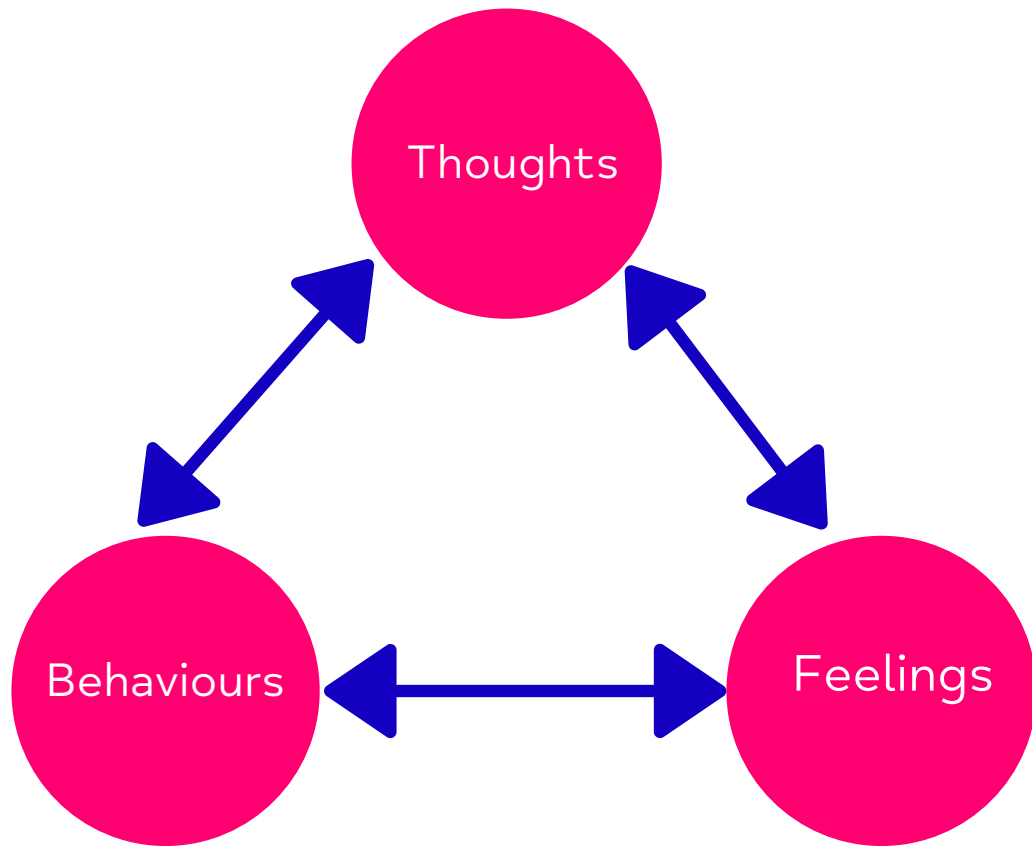
This brings us on to behaviours. You might not realise it but we can always decide to change our behaviour. Behaviour is a choice that only you can make - it will either have a positive or negative consequence. If your behaviour is unhelpful to your mood, it is likely that your low mood will continue for longer.



To conclude, we can break the cycle by controlling our behaviours. The more helpful behaviours we choose to do when we feel low, will mean your thoughts will probably start to become more balanced (instead of focusing on the negatives). In turn, this means our feelings are likely to improve too.

Activity

Can you create your own example from a time you have felt low?



Click on the video to watch a Youtube clip explaining the cycle .

Did your behaviours continue the cycle?
What are the thoughts that usually trigger the cycle?

Helpful vs Unhelpful Coping Behaviours

As we looked at in the cycle earlier, often when we feel low it leads to unhelpful behaviours. By unhelpful coping behaviours, we mean things you do that actually cause the feeling to last longer.

We are now going to look at helpful coping behaviours and learn some alternatives.

Can you come up with a list of helpful vs unhelpful behaviour for low mood?

Helpful Coping

- Listening to favourite music
- Drawing
- Spending time outside



Unhelpful coping

- Always being alone
- Staying in bed all day



Helpful Coping Strategies

Use An Activity Menu To Give You Some Ideas To Stay Occupied



Animals

Pet an animal
Walk a dog
Listen to the birds



Be active

Go for a walk
Go for a run
Go for a swim
Go cycling
Use an exercise video at home



Clean

Clean the house
Clean the yard
Clean the bathroom
Clean the toilet
Clean your bedroom
Clean the fridge
Clean the oven
Clean your shoes
Do the washing up
Fill / empty the dishwasher
Do laundry
Do some chores
Organise your workspace
Clean a cupboard



Connect with people

Contact a friend
Join a new group
Join a political party
Join a dating website
Send a message to a friend
Write a letter to a friend
Reconnect with an old friend



Cook

Cook a meal for yourself
Cook a meal for someone else
Bake a cake / cookies
Roast marshmallows
Find a new recipe



Create

Draw a picture
Paint a portrait
Take a photograph
Doodle / sketch
Organise photographs
Make a photograph album
Start a scrapbook
Finish a project
Do some sewing / knitting



Expression

Laugh
Cry
Sing
Shout
Scream



Kindness

Help a friend / neighbour / stranger
Make a gift for someone
Try a random act of kindness
Do someone a favour
Teach somebody a skill
Do something nice for someone
Plan a surprise for someone
Make a list of your good points
Make a list of things or people you are grateful for



Learn

Learn something new
Learn a new skill
Learn a new fact
Watch a tutorial video



Mend

Repair something in the house
Repair your bike / car / scooter
Make something new
Change a lightbulb
Decorate a room



Mind

Daydream
Meditate
Pray
Reflect
Think
Try relaxation exercises
Practise yoga



Music

Listen to music you like
Find some new music to listen to
Turn on the radio
Make some music
Sing a song
Play an instrument
Listen to a podcast



Nature

Try some gardening
Plant something
Do some pruning
Mow the lawn
Pick flowers
Buy flowers
Go for a walk in nature
Sit in the sun



Plan

Set a goal
Create a budget
Make a 5 year plan
Make a 'to do' list
Make a 'bucket list'
Make a shopping list



Read

Read a favourite book
Read a new book
Read the newspaper
Read your favourite website



Schedule

Get up extra early
Stay up late
Sleep in late
Tick something off your 'to do' list



Self care

Take a bath
Take a shower
Wash your hair
Give yourself a facial
Trim your nails
Sunbathe (wear sunscreen!)
Take a nap



Try something new

Try a new food
Listen to some new music
Watch a new TV show or movie
Wear some new clothes
Read a new book
Do something spontaneous
Express yourself



Watch

Watch a movie
Watch a TV show
Watch a YouTube video



Write

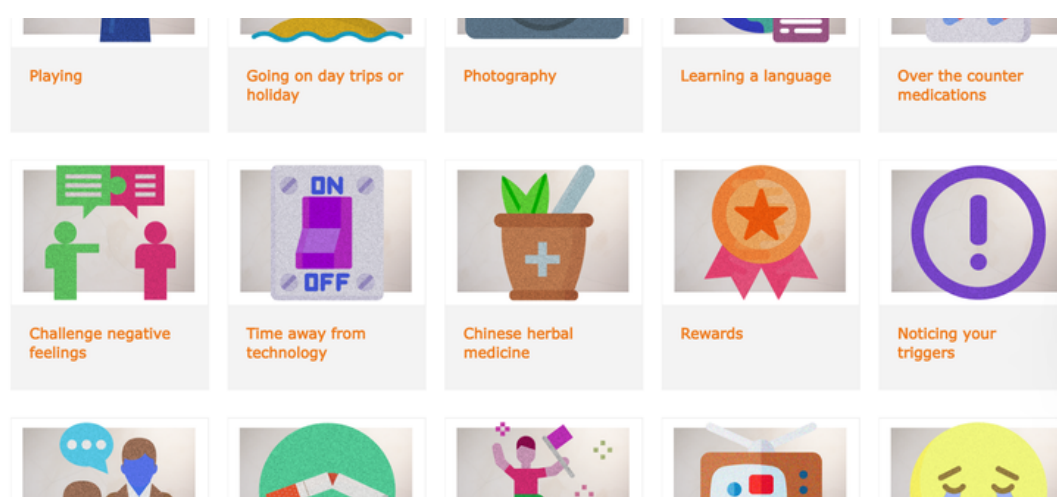
Write a letter with compliments
Write a letter to your politician
Write an angry letter
Write a grateful letter
Write a 'thank you' card
Write a journal / diary
Write your CV
Start writing a book

Helpful Coping Strategies

Check out these really helpful websites for more ideas on helpful coping strategies



Anna Freud web page on Self Care: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care/>



CharlieWaller web page on creating a wellbeing action plan:
<https://www.cwmt.org.uk/schools-families-resources>

CWMT resources

Other resources for schools and families

Wellbeing action plan



Order
Download

*** Please read before ordering***

This is one of our most popular resources and has been designed with those children who need a little more support in mind. It is more suited for children in Key Stages 2 and 3, but also has benefits for those in Key Stage 4.

We do not recommend that you give it out to all pupils in your setting or year group. Instead, we suggest it is used to guide conversations with a pupil to help them identify their strengths and manage their wellbeing when they feel things are tough. This ensures safe and supportive conversations, while also safeguarding against any unhelpful thoughts which would otherwise not be picked up by an adult. It can also aid communication with parents and carers, and consistency of support between home and school.

Weekly Targets

Replace your unhelpful behaviour with your new helpful coping skills when you feel low.

Remember the activity you did earlier about the helpful vs unhelpful coping strategies? Remember your behaviour is a choice and will determine how you continue to feel. What are you going to do this week when you feel low that will be helpful to your low mood?



Create an Emotional First Aid Kit

An Emotional First Aid Kit is similar to a First Aid Kit you might find when somebody has a physical injury. Just because you can't see the pain you feel, doesn't mean it's not there. Can you create a box filled with things that will help you when you feel low? This could include: photographs; letters from friends; a bubble bath; a candle; your favourite chocolate bar; or a colouring book.

Hope box/Happy box

A hope box (or a whatever-you'd-like-to-call-it box) is a place to put special memory trinkets, such as photos of an important day, concert or train tickets, gifts or notes you have given, or even receipts for things you'd like to remember enjoying. You could fill it with words of encouragement, or birthday cards from loved ones. Some people include smells that make them happy, such as a perfume tester or some dried lavender.

Whether it's a stress toy that calms you down or an emergency chocolate bar, anything that can help you in a moment of need can go inside. You can find guidance on how to create a hope box from organisations such as [Papyrus UK](#) and [Box of Hope](#) and there are also [virtual hope boxes](#).



Check out the Anna Freud web page on page 7 for information about creating a 'Hope Box' including apps for creating a Virtual Hope Box.

Information Page

If you are under 18, any professional working with you can refer you to Mind for further support. You can direct them to this website for more information:
<https://cwrise.com/how-to-refer-to-services/>



The best people to talk to about getting a referral are:

- School
- GP
- Support Worker
- School Nurse

Please aim to leave at least 5 days before completing session 3 of this workbook. This will give you time to change your unhelpful behaviours and create an emotional first aid kit.