

what is depression?

Many people experiencing the symptoms of depression might begin to wonder if there is something really wrong with them. One typical fear is that they might be going crazy. Unfortunately, the reactions and comments from other people such as, "Just get yourself together!" are not very helpful.

Although you might feel alone in your struggle against depressive moods, the reality is that many people experience these moods from time to time, or even regularly. In fact, it is estimated that 1 in every 4 people experience significantly depressed mood at some time in their life.

Depression can affect any kind of person at any stage of their life. You may be an introvert or an extrovert, socially active or shy, youthful or elderly, male or female, wealthy or poor. Whatever your distinction, you can become depressed. That means that any person you know is fair game. So remember, you are not alone.

Depression is a word used in everyday language to describe a number of feelings, including sadness, frustration, disappointment and sometimes lethargy. However, in clinical practice, the term "Depression" or "Major Depression" differs from these everyday 'down' periods in three main ways:



- Major Depression is more intense
- Major Depression lasts longer (two weeks or more)
- Major Depression significantly interferes with effective day-to-day functioning

In this handout, the word **depression** is referring to Major Depression or a clinical depression.

Depression as a Syndrome

A syndrome is a collection of events, behaviours, or feelings that often go together. The depression syndrome is a collection of feelings and behaviours that have been found to characterise depressed people as a group. You may find that you experience all or some of these feelings and behaviours. There are many individual differences to the number of symptoms and the extent to which different symptoms are experienced. These symptoms are described in this next section.

Mood

Depression is considered to be a disorder of mood. Individuals who are depressed, describe low mood that has persisted for longer than two weeks. In mild forms of depression, individuals may not feel bad all day but still

describe a dismal outlook and a sense of gloom. Their mood may lift with a positive experience, but fall again with even a minor disappointment. In severe depression, a low mood could persist throughout the day, failing to lift even when pleasant things occur. The low mood may fluctuate during the day – it may be worse in the morning and relatively better in the afternoon. This is called 'diurnal variation,' which often accompanies a more severe type of depression.



In addition to sadness, another mood common to depression is anxiety.

Thinking

Individuals who are depressed think in certain ways, and this thinking is an essential feature of depression. It is as much a key symptom of depression as mood or physical symptoms. Those who are depressed tend to see themselves in a negative light. They dwell on how bad they feel, how the world is full of difficulties, how hopeless the future seems and how things might never get better. People who are depressed often have a sense of guilt, blaming themselves for everything, including the fact they think negatively. Often their self-esteem and self-confidence become very low.

Physical

Some people experience physical symptoms of depression.

- Sleep patterns could change. Some people have difficulty falling asleep, or have interrupted sleep, others sleep more and have difficulty staying awake
- Appetite may decline and weight loss occurs, while others eat more than usual and thus gain weight
- Sexual interest may decline
- Energy levels may fall, as does motivation to carry out everyday activities. Depressed individuals may stop doing the things they used to enjoy because they feel unmotivated or lethargic

Interacting with Other People

Many depressed people express concern about their personal relationships. They may become unhappy and dissatisfied with their family, and other close, relationships. They may feel shy and anxious when they are with other people, especially in a group. They may feel lonely and isolated, yet at the same time, are unwilling or unable to reach out to others, even when they have the opportunities for doing so.

what causes depression?

It is important to understand that depression is not caused by one thing, but probably by a combination of factors interacting with one another. These factors can be grouped into two broad categories – *biology* and *psychology*. Many biological and psychological factors interact in depression, although precisely which specific factors interact may differ from person to person.

Biological Factors

The biological factors that might have some effect on depression include: genes, hormones, and brain chemicals.

Genetic Factors

Depression often runs in families, which suggests that individuals may inherit genes that make them vulnerable to developing depression. However, one may inherit an increased vulnerability to the illness, but not necessarily the illness itself. Although many people may inherit the vulnerability, a great many of them may never suffer a depressive illness.

Hormones

Research has found that there are some hormonal changes that occur in depression. The brain goes through some changes before and during a depressive episode, and certain parts of the brain are affected. This might result in an over- or under-production of some hormones, which may account for some of the symptoms of depression. Medication treatment can be effective in treating these conditions.

Brain Chemicals (Neurotransmitters)



Nerve cells in the brain communicate to each other by specific chemical substances called neurotransmitters. It is believed that during depression, there is reduced activity of one or more of these neurotransmitter systems, and this disturbs certain areas of the brain that regulate functions such as sleep, appetite, sexual drive, and perhaps mood. The reduced level of neurotransmitters results in reduced communication between the nerve cells and accounts for the typical symptoms of depression. Many antidepressant drugs increase the neurotransmitters in the brain.

Psychological Factors

Thinking

Many thinking patterns are associated with depression. These thinking patterns include:

- overstressing the negative
- taking the responsibility for bad events but not for good events
- having inflexible rules about how one should behave
- thinking that you know what others are thinking and that they are thinking badly of you

Loss

Sometimes people experience events where loss occurs, and this can bring on depression. The experience of loss may include the loss of a loved one through bereavement or separation, loss of a job, loss of a friendship, loss of a promotion, loss of face, loss of support, etc.



Sense of Failure

Some people may stake their happiness on achieving particular goals, such as getting 'As' on their exams, getting a particular job, earning a certain amount of profit from a business venture, or finding a life partner. If for some reason they are not able to achieve those goals, they might believe that they have failed somehow, and it is this sense of failure that can sometimes bring on, or increase, depression.

Stress

An accumulation of stressful life events may also bring on depression. Stressful events include situations such as unemployment, financial worries, serious difficulties with spouses, parents or children, physical illness, and major changes in life circumstances.

Conclusion

While we cannot do much about the genes we have inherited, there are a number of things we can do to overcome depression, or to prevent us from becoming depressed. Your doctor may have suggested medication, especially in a severe depression. While taking medication can be of assistance in overcoming depression, psychological treatments are also available. Ask your doctor or mental health practitioner for more details.

psychotherapy for depression



Depression can be treated with medical treatments such as antidepressant medication or electroconvulsive therapy, and psychotherapy. Please see your medical doctor or psychiatrist for more information about medical treatments as this will not be discussed in this handout.

We're now going to talk briefly about two psychological therapies that have been proven to be effective most of the time. You might have come across words such as "best practice" "evidence-based practice," "evidence-based treatment" or "evidence-supported therapy." These words refer to a particular type of treatment or therapy that has been evaluated and has proven to be effective. For the treatment of depression, the evidence-supported therapies include cognitive therapy and behaviour therapy.

Cognitive Therapy

The aim of cognitive therapy is to help individuals realise that they can influence their mood by identifying and changing their thoughts and beliefs. When people are depressed, they often think very negative thoughts about themselves, their lives, and their future. This further worsens their mood. Cognitive therapy focuses on discovering and challenging unhelpful assumptions and beliefs, and developing helpful and balanced thoughts. Cognitive therapy is also structured, time-limited, and focused on the 'here-and-now.' This form of treatment for depression has been proven to be effective when individuals are able to acquire the skills that are being taught in therapy.



Behaviour Therapy

Depressed people tend to feel lethargic and unmotivated. They often stay at home and avoid going out and interacting with people. As such, they may miss out on opportunities that help lift their mood. Behaviour therapy aims to identify and change aspects of behaviour that may perpetuate or worsen the depression. Some behavioural strategies include: goal setting, activity scheduling, social skills training, and structured problem solving.



In Summary

These two therapies have been shown to be effective most of the time. Often, a combination of these therapies are offered for people who experience depression. This information package focuses on providing information on the cognitive and behavioural aspects of depression, which includes suggested strategies for how you could better manage your mood.

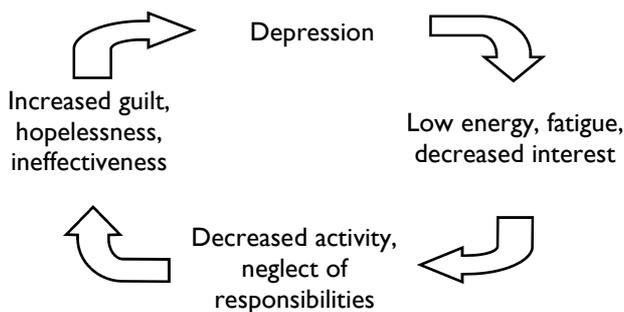
the vicious cycle of depression

The symptoms of depression can bring about some drastic changes in a depressed person's life, daily routines, and their behaviour. Often it is these changes that makes the depression worse and prevents the depressed person from getting better.

For example, a lack of motivation or a lack of energy can result in a depressed person cutting back on their activities, neglecting their daily tasks and responsibilities, and leaving decision-making to others. Have you noticed these changes in yourself when you are depressed?

You may find that you have become less and less active, don't go out much anymore, avoid hanging out with friends, and stopped engaging in your favourite activity. When this happens, you have become locked in the vicious cycle of depression, which might look like this:

The Vicious Cycle of Depression



When your activity level decreases, you may become even less motivated and more lethargic. When you stop doing the things you used to love, you miss out on experiencing pleasant feelings and positive experiences. Your depression could get worse.

Similarly, when one begins neglecting a few tasks and responsibilities at work or at home, the list may begin to pile up. As such, when a depressed person thinks about the things they have to do, they may feel overwhelmed by the pile of things they have put off doing. This may result in them feeling guilty or thinking that they are ineffective or even, a failure. This will also worsen the depression.

Reversing the Vicious Cycle of Depression

One of the ways of breaking the vicious cycle of is through the use of medication. Medication such as antidepressants can help change your energy level and improve sleep. Another way is to simply increase your activity level, especially in pleasurable activities and

tackling your list of tasks and responsibilities, but doing it in a realistic and achievable way, so that you set yourself up to succeed.

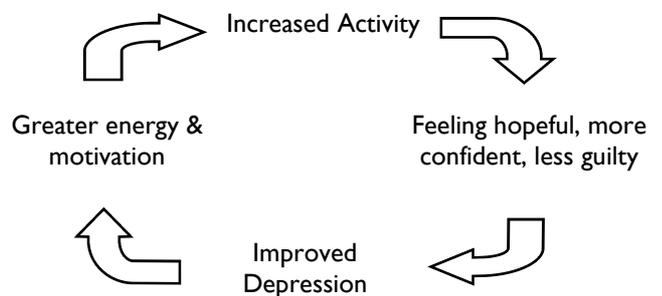
Becoming more active has a number of advantages:

- Activity helps you to feel better
- Activity helps you to feel less tired
- Activity can help you think more clearly



When the depression cycle is broken, it will look like this:

Reversing The Vicious Cycle of Depression



Here's a list of possible fun things to do. You can add your own to this list.

1. Soaking in the bathtub
2. Collecting things (coins, shells, etc.)
3. Going for a day trip
4. Going to see a comedy at the movies
5. Going to the beach
6. Playing squash/tennis/badminton
7. Having a barbecue at the park
8. Going for a walk, jog, or hike
9. Listening to uplifting music
10. Gardening

Try some of them out and evaluate how you feel before and after the activity. Chances are, you'll find that you'll feel a little better. The important thing is to persist – keeping your activity levels up is the first step to breaking out of that vicious cycle!

The second step is to look at how *thinking patterns* contribute to the vicious cycle of depression. The "Improving how you feel" information sheet starts to look more closely at this.

improving how you feel

People often believe that the feelings and emotions they experience are caused by external events, situations, and the behaviour of others. For example, we might hear ourselves say, “My partner made me so angry,” “My boss made me so nervous,” “This trip down south made me feel so relaxed,” or “I’m depressed because I didn’t get the job I wanted.” What is the assumption underlying these statements? That someone or something other than ourselves was directly determining the feelings we experienced. However, if we stop to analyse the process that links an external situation to our emotional responses, we will find that there is a step in between.

What Influences My Feelings?

What really makes us feel and respond the way we do, is not the situation or the words and actions of another person, but how we perceive that situation or that person’s actions. It is our thoughts and beliefs about an event that significantly influences our feelings and actions.



Here’s an example. Suppose you went to a party and your host introduces you to Mike. As you talk to him, you notice that he does not look directly at you but often looks around the room. How would you feel if you thought, “Boy, this guy is so rude! He won’t even look at me while I’m talking with him! How nasty!” What if you thought, “Mike must think that I’m really unattractive and uninteresting. I must be a really boring person. Nobody wants to talk to me!” What about if you were to think, “Mike’s probably waiting for a friend to come. Maybe he’s getting a bit anxious.” You probably realised that you felt three different emotions as a result of those three different thoughts. Often, we are not aware of our thoughts and beliefs because they are so automatic and happen quickly. But they are there, and they affect the way we feel.

Why do I feel distressed?

We’ve talked about the way our thoughts affect how we feel. If we are feeling happy and excited, chances are we have been thinking positive thoughts and about positive things. On the other hand, if we are feeling anxious, depressed, and upset, it is very likely that we have been thinking negative thoughts. We call these unhelpful thoughts (simply because they lead to unpleasant feelings or unhelpful actions!). All of us, at times, think things that make us feel sad or anxious, and that is a normal part of life. However, if you often feel distressed or upset, you might need to examine your thinking in order to improve how you feel.

Feelings are not Thoughts

When we first try to distinguish thoughts from feelings, it can be easy to confuse them. We might be used to talking about thoughts and feelings as being part of the same experience, but it is more helpful to separate them and

remember that feelings are not thoughts. For example, you might hear a person saying “I *think* I’m anxious,” but they’re probably *thinking* “Everyone will laugh at me,” and *feel* anxious. More commonly, you might hear someone saying something like “I *feel* that my boyfriend doesn’t appreciate the gift I bought for him,” when they are actually *thinking* “My boyfriend doesn’t appreciate the gift I bought for him,” and *feel* hurt.

Unhelpful Thinking Styles

What sorts of thoughts are unhelpful? Unhelpful thoughts are those that tend to focus on the negative aspects of a situation, or those that overestimate the chances of a negative event occurring, or those that place unrealistic demands on yourself or others. These are also often known as unhelpful thinking styles because they are patterns of thinking that have become a habit and contribute to a person feeling unhelpful negative feelings.

What Can I Do?

Plenty! There are lots of things you can do to help yourself feel better, and this next suggestion has been proven to be pretty effective. If unhelpful thoughts lead to distressing emotions, then it might be quite reasonable to say that the most effective thing to do would be to change those unhelpful thoughts to helpful ones! Yeah? Okay, so, how can you do that?

First, identify how or what you are feeling. Then, ask yourself “What am I thinking? What conclusions am I making?” to see how and why you are feeling distressed. Remember, unhelpful thoughts will lead to you feeling upsetting emotions.

The next step is to challenge your thinking by exploring other possible explanations and looking at a situation from different points of view. You might ask yourself, “What other ways are there of viewing this situation? How might someone else view this situation? What other explanations could there be?”



The final step is to ask yourself, “How can I revise my original thoughts to take into account these other possible viewpoints?” Then, think of an alternative explanation. This becomes your new, balanced, and helpful thought. A balanced and helpful thought or belief is one that takes into consideration alternative viewpoints and helps you feel better. Replace your original, unhelpful thought with this new, balanced, and helpful belief. Once you have done this, you will probably find that you feel better and your mood will be improved.

thinking & feeling

People often believe that the feelings and emotions they experience are determined by external events, situations, and the behaviour of others. For example, we may hear ourselves say, "My boss made me so nervous," "My partner made me so angry," "This trip down south made me feel so relaxed," or "I'm depressed because I didn't get the job I wanted." What is the assumption underlying these statements? That someone or something other than ourselves was directly determining the feelings we experienced.

We come to these conclusions automatically without asking ourselves if this assumption is true. However, if we stop to analyse the process that links an external situation to our emotional responses, we will find that there is a step in between.

How Our Thoughts Influence Our Feelings

What really makes us feel and respond the way we do, is often not the situation or the words and actions of another person, but how we perceive that situation or that person's actions. It is how we see something or someone and what we think about it or them that really influences how we feel. It is our thoughts and beliefs about an event that significantly influences our emotions and actions.

Here's an example. Suppose you went to a party and your host introduces you to Mike. As you talk to him, you notice that he does not look directly at you but often looks around the room. How would you feel if you thought, "Boy, this guy is so rude! He won't even look at me while I'm talking with him! How nasty!" What if you thought, "Mike must think that I'm really unattractive and uninteresting. I must be a really boring person. Nobody wants to talk to me!" What about if you were to think, "Mike's probably waiting for a friend to come. Maybe he's getting a bit anxious." You probably realised that you felt three different emotions as a result of those three different thoughts. Often, we are not aware of our thoughts and beliefs because they are so automatic and happen quickly. But they are there, and they affect the way we feel.

What am I Feeling?

It is often difficult to know exactly what we are feeling, and sometimes it can also be difficult to put it into words. The list below contains words that describe feelings, and this might be a useful starting point in you being able to understand the connection between your thinking and your feelings.

Words That Describe Feelings

Tense	Enraged	Frightened	Cheerful
Annoyed	Happy	Panicky	Euphoric
Unhappy	Exhilarated	Frustrated	Mad
Exuberant	Keyed-up	Scared	Uneasy
Anxious	Irritated	Flat	Sad
Depressed	Joyful	Tired	Discouraged
Angry	Excited	Nervous	Jealous

This is only a limited list but it should give you an idea of the kinds of words we could use to describe our feelings.

Automatic thoughts

Just as we are not always conscious of the way we walk or how we drive a car, we are often not aware of our thinking. Some of our thinking is so habitual that it is automatic, and just like driving, when things are automatic, we might not be conscious of them. All of the time, our brains are turning over thoughts and ideas. However, we are not consciously aware of most of them because it happens relatively fast and we are not accustomed to slowing them down. Our automatic thoughts, however, play an important role in our emotional well-being.

There are three kinds of automatic thoughts:

Neutral thoughts, e.g. "I think I will buy some bread today."

Positive thoughts, e.g. "This is something I can do really well."

Negative thoughts, e.g. "I often find it hard to concentrate – I must be really stupid."



Automatic thoughts often reflect worries and concerns, however they can be about anything at all, anything we have ever seen, heard or learned. In addition, it can be anything we know about from any source at all. Obviously, though, negative automatic thoughts are the ones that can cause us emotional distress. People who are depressed tend to think negative thoughts about themselves, the world about them, and their future, and it is these thoughts that can be changed to lift your depression.

Feelings are not Thoughts

When we first try to distinguish thoughts from feelings, it can be easy to confuse them. We might be used to talking about thoughts and feelings as being part of the same experience, but it is more helpful to separate them and remember that feelings are not thoughts. For example, you might hear a person saying "I *think* I'm anxious," but they're probably *thinking* "Everyone will laugh at me," and *feel* anxious. More commonly, you might hear someone saying something like "I *feel* that my partner doesn't appreciate the gift I bought for him," when they are actually *thinking* "My partner doesn't appreciate the gift I bought for him," and *feel* hurt.

Being aware of your feelings and your thoughts is the first step towards feeling better. If thinking influences feelings, then it makes sense that if you want to change the way you feel, you need to change the way you think. Look out for the information flyer entitled "Changing the Way You Think" for more details on how to do this.

analysing your thinking

We've talked about the way our thoughts affect how we feel. If we are feeling happy and excited, chances are, we have been thinking positive thoughts and about positive things. On the other hand, if we are feeling anxious, depressed, and upset, it is likely that we have been thinking negative thoughts. We call these unhelpful thoughts (simply because they lead to unpleasant feelings or unhelpful actions!). All of us, at times, think things that make us feel sad or anxious, and that is a normal part of life. However, if you often feel distressed or anxious, you might need to examine your thinking to improve how you feel.

If unhelpful thoughts lead to distressing emotions, then it might be quite reasonable to say that the most effective thing to do is to change those unhelpful thoughts to helpful ones!



So, how can you do that? To start influencing the way you feel, you need to learn to be aware of, and "capture," those unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, with the ultimate aim of changing them. To do that, let's start with doing an ABC analysis.

The ABC analysis begins with identifying the '**A**' which stands for '**Activating Event**.' Simply write down an event or a situation in which you experienced a strong negative emotion, such as, depression. Record the situation the same way a video camera might record it – just the facts. This means that you do not include your thoughts about why the situation occurred, who was responsible, and how you felt about it. Just describe the event simple, without any 'frills.'

The next step is to identify the '**C**' which stands for '**Consequences**,' and this includes both your feelings and your actions/behaviour. Write down the words that best describe your feelings. When you have written down these words, rate the intensity of the emotion from 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more intense the emotion. Have a look at all those feelings and then choose the feeling that best represents the emotion you actually felt at the time and underline it. You might also want to note any actions that you carried out, for example, drawing all the curtains, putting on the answering machine, and going to bed.

Now, bearing in mind the situation and the feelings you experienced, identify the '**B**,' which represents your '**Beliefs**' or thoughts, expectations, perceptions, and attitudes. Ask yourself "What was I thinking of when the event occurred?" "What was going through my mind at the time?" Write down all of these thoughts in a list. When you have completed this task, read through each statement and then underline the thought that is most associated with the primary emotion you felt during the '**A**'. We'll now call it your hot thought. Now rate how much you believe this thought on a scale from 0 to 100.

Let's look at an example. Imagine walking into a party and feeling anxious. To do an ABC analysis, you might ask yourself, "How am I making myself anxious? What am I thinking?" You might identify a thought such as, "I don't want to be here." If you only had this thought, you'd probably not experience a strong emotion but only feel mildly anxious. If you do experience a strong emotional response to this thought, it probably indicates that there are other thoughts underlying this thought. Therefore, the thought, "I don't want to be here" is only an initial thought, and you would need to discover what other unhelpful thoughts were present to invoke such a strong emotional response.

How to Uncover Your Unhelpful Thoughts

By asking yourself a number of questions, you can uncover any other unhelpful thoughts underlying an initial thought. Let's use the example of being at the party to identify the unhelpful thoughts underlying the initial thought "I don't want to be here." The following is a description of the thoughts that might be going through your head as you uncover other unhelpful thoughts. The questions in bold are your unhelpful thought discovery questions.



"I don't want to be here".

"I don't want to be here because...?"

"...people will look at me and know that I am depressed"

"...and that is bad because...?"

"Well, they will think something is wrong with me"

"...and what is bad about that..?"

"....They will think I'm crazy!"

"...and what does that say about me?"

".....that I must be crazy."



Your task is to become an expert at identifying your unhelpful thoughts. Sometimes, one or two thoughts might not represent the other unhelpful ones you might have had. As such, to get to those other thoughts, you might need to ask some of the following questions, called Thought Discovery Questions:

"What is bad about that?"

"What is it that I see happening in this situation?"

"What am I concluding about myself or others in this situation?"

"... and that is bad because ..."

"... and what does this say about me ...?"

It is best to be as specific as you can, even if some of your unhelpful thoughts sound stupid or embarrassing when you think about them. Discovering your unhelpful thoughts, no matter how silly they sound, is important in learning how to better manage your mood.

After you have done this, the next step is to do some 'Detective Work' and 'Disputation.' At this point, it is important that you understand how to identify your feelings and thoughts surrounding a particular situation, especially one in which you experienced unhelpful, negative emotions. When a person experiences unhelpful emotions, they might get a stronger physical reaction in their body, such as a tightness in the chest when anxious, an increase in blood pressure when angry, or a sense of heaviness when depressed. Emotions such as depression, guilt, fear, rage, and anxiety might also lead to avoidance and unhelpful behaviours towards yourself and others, get in the way of effective problem solving, and contribute to long term difficulties such as hypertension, heart disease, interpersonal problems, and psychological problems. Doing the ABC analysis is taking the first step toward learning to better manage your mood and helping yourself feel better.

unhelpful thinking styles

When a person experiences an unhelpful emotion (eg, depression or anxiety), it is usually preceded by a number of unhelpful self-statements and thoughts. Often there is a pattern to such thoughts and we call these, "unhelpful thinking styles". One of the things we have noticed is that people use unhelpful thinking styles as an automatic habit. It is something that happens out of our awareness. However, when a person consistently and constantly uses some of these styles of thinking, they can often cause themselves a great deal of emotional distress. This information sheet describes a number of "unhelpful thinking styles". As you read through them, you might notice some thinking patterns and styles that you use consistently. Some of these styles might sound similar to one another. They are not meant to be distinct categories but to help you see if there is a kind of pattern to your thoughts.

Mental Filter:

This thinking style involves a "filtering in" and "filtering out" process – a sort of "tunnel vision," focusing on only one part of a situation and ignoring the rest. Usually this means looking at the negative parts of a situation and forgetting the positive parts, and the whole picture is coloured by what may be a single negative detail.

Jumping to Conclusions:

We jump to conclusions when we assume that we know what someone else is thinking (mind reading) and when we make predictions about what is going to happen in the future (predictive thinking).



Personalisation:

This involves blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong or could go wrong, even when you may only be partly responsible or not responsible at all. You might be taking 100% responsibility for the occurrence of external events.

Catastrophising:

Catastrophising occurs when we "blow things out of proportion", and we view the situation as terrible, awful, dreadful, and horrible, even though the reality is that the problem itself is quite small.

Black & White Thinking:

This thinking style involves seeing only one extreme or the other. You are either wrong or right, good or bad and so on. There are no in-betweens or shades of gray.

Shoulding and Musting:

Sometimes by saying "I should..." or "I must..." you can put unreasonable demands or pressure on yourself and others. Although these statements are not always unhelpful (eg "I should not get drunk and drive home"), they can sometimes create unrealistic expectations.

Overgeneralisation:

When we overgeneralise, we take one instance in the past or present, and impose it on all current or future situations. If we say "You always..." or "Everyone...", or "I never..." then we are probably overgeneralising.

Labelling:

We label ourselves and others when we make global statements based on behaviour in specific situations. We might use this label even though there are many more examples that aren't consistent with that label.



Emotional Reasoning:

This thinking style involves basing your view of situations or yourself on the way you are feeling. For example, the only evidence that something bad is going to happen is that you feel like something bad is going to happen.

Magnification and Minimisation:

In this thinking style, you magnify the positive attributes of other people and minimise your own positive attributes. It's as though you're explaining away your own positive characteristics

what are core beliefs?



By now you are probably becoming used to the process of challenging your thinking in a range of situations. You know how to identify the thoughts that are causing you distress and how to challenge them and replace them with more balanced thoughts. However, you might notice that there are times when it is harder to believe the new balanced thought and the old unhelpful thoughts seem to be very powerful. You might notice that this happens in certain kinds of situations.

A possible explanation for this 'difficulty in letting go' of an unhelpful thought is that there may be a strong core belief at the root of that unhelpful thought. **Core beliefs** are the very essence of how we see ourselves, other people, the world, and the future. Sometimes, these core beliefs become 'activated' in certain situations. Here's an example:

Erica is able to challenge her thinking in most situations. However, she has noticed that she has trouble challenging her thinking in situations involving her flatmates and friends. In these situations, she has recognised that her thinking is often about being unlikeable. In fact, when she really looks hard at her thinking, she can see that often the underlying self-statement is, "I'm unlovable."

Core beliefs, such as the one from the above example, develop over time, usually from childhood and through the experience of significant life events or particular life circumstances. Core beliefs are strongly-held, rigid, and inflexible beliefs that are maintained by the tendency to focus on information that supports the belief and ignoring evidence that contradicts it. For example, Erica focuses on any feedback from her flatmates that isn't positive and then uses this to confirm that yet again she is unlikeable. Even neutral statements from her flatmates and friends are often interpreted as negative. Over the years, this narrow focus gives strength to the belief and Erica no longer thinks to question it. It is just totally and absolutely accepted. It is not surprising, then, that these types of beliefs are the hardest to shake.

Identifying Themes from Thought Diaries

So, how can you start identifying your core beliefs? The first step is to look over your Thought Diaries to see if your 'hot' thoughts have any common themes. You might notice that there are certain patterns to your thoughts – similar themes that occur in the B columns. Look closely at these to identify the patterns. You may become aware of one or two common themes found in the things you say about yourself, others, and the world.

Identifying A Core Belief

The process of identifying a core belief is not a great deal different from what you have already been doing in your thought diaries. Essentially, the idea is to extend the hot thought further to reveal the bottom line or root of what you might be thinking. Use questions such as: "If that's true, what does that mean?" "What's bad about that?" "What does that say about me?"

This process is like sifting through the layers of self-talk to get at what is at the bottom layer. Now, you are ready to challenge your core beliefs. Even though these beliefs are strongly held, it is important that they are challenged, just like any unhelpful thoughts. Once you have fully identified what you are telling yourself, you can begin to see if your core beliefs hold up against all that you have experienced. This process of challenging your core beliefs may not be an easy one. If you find the process too difficult or distressing, do consider seeing a mental health professional and discussing this with them.

Challenging Your Core Beliefs

To evaluate and challenge your core beliefs, ask yourself "What experiences do I have that show that this belief is not completely true all the time?" List as many experiences, and be as specific, as possible. Remember to write down everything even when you're not sure if they are relevant. When you have considered all the experiences you have written down, develop an alternative, balanced core belief. Remember that these experiences show that your unhelpful core belief is not completely true all the time. What would be an appropriate balanced and helpful core belief? Write this down.

Behavioural Experiments

You could also try doing a behavioural experiment to challenge those hard-to-budge unhelpful core beliefs. The purpose of doing an experiment is to find out how true your core beliefs are. Here's how you could conduct an experiment.

1. Write down the core belief you want to test
2. Think of a few tasks you could do to test your core belief
3. Write down what you would expect would happen if your core belief were true
4. Carry out the tasks
5. Record what actually happened when you carried out the tasks
6. Compare the actual results with your prediction and write down what you might have learned from the experiment. Then, write down a new balanced belief that fits with your conclusion.

Following Through

You might find it useful to write your balanced core beliefs onto cards that you can carry around with you as a reminder when this type of thinking is triggered. Once you've developed balanced core beliefs, follow through on them. Balanced core beliefs require careful nurturing and 'tender loving care.' Affirm yourself by using positive self-statements, remind yourself of all the evidence against the unhelpful core belief. Also, **act against** your unhelpful core belief. Ask yourself, "If I really believed my balanced belief, what are the things I would do?" Then, go out and do them. The more you do these things, the more you will come to believe your balanced beliefs. Over time, these new core beliefs will be integrated into your belief system.

changing your thinking

In the handout 'Thinking & Feeling,' we established that it is our thoughts that influence our feelings, emotions, and behaviours – the thoughts and feelings connection. We also discussed and identified some unhelpful thinking patterns and styles that we frequently use. Often, a depressed person will think negative thoughts that are characterised by these unhelpful thinking patterns, which lead them to feel depressed, miserable, and distressed. This, in turn, maintains and perpetuates the depression.

The key to changing the way we feel is found in challenging and changing our unhelpful thoughts and beliefs. This begins with you taking a good hard look at them. Imagine that you are a detective and a lawyer, and your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs are to be investigated or on trial.

To assess whether or not your thoughts and beliefs are valid, you need to gather and examine evidence. As such, we liken this process to that of being a detective. This is the fourth step (or **D**) that follows on from the ABC Analysis.

Detective Work

“**D**” stands for “Detective Work” where you look for evidence that does or does not support your thoughts and beliefs. Like all good detectives, we need to find out the facts, and gather the evidence. Here are some helpful questions:

- Where is the evidence (or proof) that my thoughts/beliefs are true?
- Are there any evidence that disproves my thoughts/beliefs?
- How do I know that my thoughts/beliefs are true?
- Are there facts that I'm ignoring or I've overlooked?
- What other explanations could there possibly be?
- How realistic are my thoughts, beliefs, and expectations?



Disputation

“**D**” also stands for “Disputation.” Remember, you are also like a lawyer, asking questions that challenge your thoughts, beliefs and expectations, ultimately testing and challenging whether or not they stand true, and whether they help or hinder you. Here are some other helpful questions to ask yourself:

- What other ways are there of viewing the situation?
- How might someone else view the situation?
- If I were not depressed, how might I view the situation differently?
- Realistically, what is the likelihood of that happening?
- Is it helpful for me to think this way?

Detective work and disputation is about trying to be objective about our thoughts. It is about analysing them, assessing, and evaluating them to see if they are indeed valid and true, as opposed to accepting these thoughts and believing them without question.

The End Result

We've spent some time examining the link between thinking and feelings, and discussed how to identify your unhelpful thoughts and thinking styles. We've also talked about looking for evidence that might prove or disprove your unhelpful beliefs as well as considering other alternative ways of viewing the situation. Now let's look at how you can change the way you are thinking in order to improve how you are feeling.

By this time, you would have learned how to describe an **A**ctivating Event, identify your automatic and unhelpful **B**eliefs and thoughts (including the Hot Thought) that have contributed to your experiencing distressing emotions (**C**onsequences), and recognise a few unhelpful thinking styles you might have used. You would have also used the **D**etective Work and **D**isputation section to challenge your hot thought. Now, take a good look at the evidence you have listed and the answers to the other challenging questions. Is there enough evidence to believe that your hot thought is true all of the time? Are there other alternative explanations?

At this point, ask yourself, “How can I revise my hot thought to take into account all the evidence I have listed?” Then, write out an alternative explanation. This becomes your new, balanced thought. A balanced and helpful thought or belief is one that takes into consideration all the evidence, objective information, and alternative viewpoints. This is the fifth step of the ABC analysis – the **E**nd Result, where you replace your original, unhelpful thought with this new, balanced, and helpful belief.

After you have written down your new, balanced thought or belief, ask yourself, “How do I feel now?” Look at the most intense emotion you identified in section **C**, and re-rate how intense that emotion feels for you now. Often, you will find that it is not as extreme and distressing.

Finally, read through the Detective Work and Disputation section again, and re-rate how much you believe the hot thought now.

This final step of replacing your unhelpful (hot) thoughts with balanced thoughts is very important. Challenging your beliefs and evidence testing is the process of change, but the final step is where you **MAKE** the change. You'll probably find that this process becomes easier after some practice. So keep it up. Keep practising and remember that you can be your own expert at managing your moods!

grief and bereavement

Uncomplicated Grief

Grief and loss are part of life and is experienced by most of us at some point in life. People deal with grief in many different ways, and not necessarily going through a predictable group of 'stages,' although some do.

How people grieve can depend on the circumstances of the loss (e.g., sudden death, long illness, death of a young person) as well as past experiences of loss. There is no time limit on grief - some people get back to their usual routine fairly quickly, others take longer. Some people prefer time alone to grieve, others crave the support and company of others.

Below are just some of the range of experiences which can be part of uncomplicated grief:

- Symptoms of depression or anxiety, such as poor sleep, lowered appetite, low mood, feeling of anxiety - for some people the anxiety will be more obvious, for others the depression.
- A sense of the loss not quite being 'real' at first, or refusal to believe it has occurred
- Feeling disconnected from others, sense of numbness
- Guilt about not initially feeling pain about the loss
- Worries about not grieving 'normally' or 'correctly'
- Mood swings and tearfulness
- Guilt about interactions with the person who has died (e.g. *I should have spent more time with her or I wish we didn't have that argument*)
- Waves of sadness or anger which can be overwhelming and sometimes suddenly triggered by reminders
- Seeking reminders of the person who has died, e.g. being in their home or with their belongings, or perhaps at times even feeling you see or hear the deceased person
- Guilt about gradually getting back to 'normal' life and at times not 'remembering' to feel sad

Coping with Uncomplicated Grief

Most people going through the pain described above will eventually adjust to the loss and return to normal life, although of course carrying some sadness about the loss. Most people do not require medication or counselling to manage uncomplicated grief, and should simply be



supported to go through their individual grief process. It is important to maintain a healthy diet and some physical activity during this time. Some people may find it helpful to engage in counselling or to attend groups with others who have suffered a recent loss.

Complicated Grief

Complicated grief is a general term for describing when people adjust poorly to a loss. **This is very difficult to define, as there is no standard which limits what is normal or healthy grief.**



Below are some warning signs which *may* suggest that a person is not coping well with grief and may be at a greater risk of the grieving process taking longer to resolve or being more difficult:

- Pushing away painful feelings or avoiding the grieving process entirely
- Excessive avoidance of talking about or reminders of the person who has died
- Refusal to attend the funeral
- Using distracting tasks to avoid experiencing grief, including tasks associated with planning the funeral
- Abuse of alcohol or other drugs (including prescription)
- Increased physical complaints or illness
- Intense mood swings or isolation which do not resolve within 1-2 months of the loss
- Ongoing neglect of self-care and responsibilities

Again, it is important to emphasise that there are no 'rules for grieving' and that many of the items above may occur as part of uncomplicated grief. However, people who are coping very poorly one month after a loss may continue to cope poorly 1-2 years later, so if these warning signs are present then it is often worthwhile seeking some help early on, to increase the chances of adjusting in the long term.

Coping with Complicated Grief

Psychological therapy can support people to safely explore feelings of grief and connect with painful feelings and memories, paving the way for resolution. Therapy may also support people to use strategies such as relaxation, engaging in positive activities, and challenging negative thoughts, in order to combat the associated symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Antidepressant medication may also be used to alleviate depression associated with grief, and this can be useful in conjunction with psychological strategies. Tranquilizing medications can interfere with the natural grieving process.

Although early help is recommended, health professionals are able to support people to work through complicated grief even years after the loss.



behavioural activation fun & achievement

The symptoms of depression such as tiredness, lethargy, loss of interest, loss of motivation, loss of pleasure, and indecisiveness can lead to inactivity, and this often keeps the depression going or even make it worse.

Also, because of the lack of motivation, a depressed person might begin to neglect everyday tasks and responsibilities at work or at home, and the list begins to pile up. As such, when a depressed person thinks about the things they have to do, they might feel overwhelmed by the pile of things they have put off doing. This might result in them feeling guilty or thinking that they are ineffective or even, a failure. This will also worsen the depression.



Increasing Your Activity Level

One of the ways of overcoming depression is to increase your level of activity. There is a lot of evidence that shows that the more people do, and the more pleasant activities they get involved in, the better they feel. Becoming more active has a number of advantages:

Activity helps you to feel better. At the very least, when you start engaging in some kind of activity, it gives your mind something else to think about – a different focus. Doing things, even a little at a time, can help give you a sense that you are moving forward, taking control of your life again, and achieving something – experiencing a sense of MASTERY. You may even find PLEASURE and enjoyment in the activities you do.



Activity helps you to feel less tired. Usually, when you are physically tired, you need rest. However, when you are depressed, the opposite is true. Sleeping more and sitting around doing nothing will only cause you to feel more lethargic and tired. Also, doing nothing leaves room for your mind to ruminate on depressive thoughts, which will make you feel even more depressed.

Activity can help you think more clearly. Once you get started, you may find that you take a different perspective on particular problems in your life. Also, because your mind takes a different focus as a result of the activity, your thoughts may become clearer.

Fun & Achievement

It makes good sense to do fun and pleasurable things to make yourself feel better, but these are not the only sorts of activities that will help generate positive feelings. Being depressed isn't just about feeling sad – there are a lot of other feelings involved as well, such as hopelessness, guilt, and despair. So, it also makes sense to do things that result in other positive feelings, such as achievement and a sense of purpose. When you are planning things to do for yourself, it is important to remember to include a mixture of activities, adding those that have the potential to give you other positive feelings. An example of this is paying off money on your credit card, or doing the ironing. Doing these things can help you feel more in control of your life (e.g., paying off your debts) and give you satisfaction that

you have started doing something (e.g., catching up on household chores). Doing tasks that give you a sense of achievement or mastery will help you feel like you are starting to get back on top of things again. Some activities may combine the two. For example, making your bed may give you a sense of pleasure at having a neat, tidy bed, but it may also give you a sense of achievement at having done something to improve your home environment. This sense of achievement is just as important as getting pleasure out of something, and may indeed prompt you to do more.

Start Simple

Even though there are a number of advantages in increasing your activity level, it may not be easy to get started. Often, this is because when you are depressed, you think negative thoughts such as "I won't enjoy doing this," or "It's too hard," or "I'll probably fail at this too." These thoughts may stop you from getting started. Often the big mistake people make is trying to do too much too soon.

When you are depressed, things that you usually don't even have to think about doing (when you are not depressed) can seem to require a huge amount of effort. The idea is to start with small easy steps and begin with things you can do. Think of it in terms of training for a sports event.

If you hadn't been doing any running for 6 months, would you try and run a marathon without doing any training? Of course not! You would go on a training programme that slowly builds up your fitness and endurance. Similarly, when you are depressed, it is unreasonable to expect yourself to be able to jump out of bed and clean the house before going out to meet a friend for a late lunch. If you set your goals too high, you might end up not doing them, become disappointed in yourself, and feel worse than ever. Instead, plan to do things that are achievable at your current level of functioning. Start with small steps and slowly build yourself up to the large tasks that seem unmanageable right now. For example, aim to get out of bed for 10 minutes, then slowly build up the amount of time you are out of bed for. Don't try to clean the whole kitchen – just aim to do the dishes. If this is too much, just stack all the dirty dishes in a pile. Aim to get one bench top clean, or just wash 5 plates. Any task can be broken down into smaller and smaller steps until you find something achievable.

Sometimes it is easier to aim to do a task for a set period of time rather than trying to achieve a set amount. Read a book for 5 minutes rather than reading a whole chapter. Say you will spend 10 minutes weeding the garden rather than aiming to weed a certain area. In this way, it will be easier for you to achieve your goal. In the beginning, the important thing is not what you do or how much you do, but simply the fact that you are DOING. Remember that action is the first step, not motivation, and you'll soon find yourself feeling better!



Fun Activities Catalogue

The following is a list of activities that might be fun and pleasurable for you. Feel free to add your own fun activities to the list.

1. Going to a quiz or trivia night
2. Spending time in nature
3. Watching the clouds drift by
4. Debating
5. Painting my nails
6. Going ice skating, roller skating/blading
7. Scheduling a day with nothing to do
8. Giving positive feedback about something (e.g. writing a letter or email about good service)
9. Feeding the birds
10. Spending an evening with good friends
11. Making jams or preserves
12. Going out to dinner
13. Buying gifts
14. Having a political discussion
15. Repairing things around the house
16. Washing my car
17. Watching TV, videos
18. Sending a loved one a card in the mail
19. Baking something to share with others (e.g. family, neighbours, friends, work colleagues)
20. Taking a sauna, spa or a steam bath
21. Having a video call with someone who lives far away
22. Organising my wardrobe
23. Playing musical instruments
24. Going to the ballet or opera
25. Lighting scented candles, oils or incense
26. Spending time alone
27. Exercising
28. Putting up a framed picture or artwork
29. Flirting
30. Entertaining
31. Riding a motorbike
32. Wine tasting
33. Going to the planetarium or observatory
34. Birdwatching
35. Doing something spontaneously
36. Going on a picnic
37. Having a warm drink
38. Massaging hand cream into my hands
39. Fantasising about the future
40. Laughing
41. Flying a plane
42. Playing tennis or badminton
43. Clearing my email inbox
44. Planting a terrarium
45. Playing lawn games (e.g. bowls, croquet, bocce)
46. Going to a party
47. Getting out of debt/paying debts
48. Seeing and/or showing photos
49. Going on a city tour
50. Going to an agricultural show
51. Jogging, walking
52. Going to home opens
53. Researching a topic of interest
54. Going to the beach
55. Redecorating
56. Volunteering for a cause I support
57. Smelling a flower
58. Opening the curtains and blinds to let light in
59. Going to the zoo or aquarium
60. Doing jigsaw puzzles
61. Donating old clothes or items to charity
62. Lying in the sun
63. Learning a magic trick
64. Talking on the phone
65. Listening to a podcast or radio show
66. Walking around my city and noticing architecture of buildings
67. Doing arts and crafts
68. Going on a ghost tour
69. Sketching, painting
70. Mowing the lawn
71. Going horseback riding
72. Doing the dishes
73. Sitting outside and listening to birds sing
74. Going to a free public lecture
75. Travelling to national parks
76. Going to a fair or fete
77. Playing cards
78. Putting moisturising cream on my face / body
79. Volunteering at an animal shelter
80. Re-watching a favourite movie
81. Gardening
82. Going camping
83. Playing volleyball
84. Going bike riding
85. Entering a competition
86. Doing crossword puzzles
87. Patting or cuddling my pet
88. Cooking a special meal
89. Soaking in the bathtub
90. Having a treatment at a day spa (e.g. facial)
91. Putting extra effort in to my appearance
92. Playing golf
93. Doing a favour for someone
94. Building a bird house or feeder
95. Looking at pictures of beautiful scenery
96. Having family get-togethers
97. Listening to music
98. Learning a new language
99. Taking a free online class
100. Working
101. Washing my hair
102. Singing around the house

103. Flipping through old photo albums
104. Upcycling or creatively reusing old items
105. Going sailing
106. Stretching muscles
107. Maintaining a musical instrument (e.g. restringing guitar)
108. Playing soccer
109. Buying clothes
110. Going to the botanic gardens
111. Going to a scenic spot and enjoying the view
112. Going to the speedway
113. Snuggling up with a soft blanket
114. Listening to an audiobook
115. Going to see live stand-up comedy
116. Writing down a list of things I am grateful for
117. Maintaining an aquarium
118. Playing Frisbee
119. Teaching a special skill to someone else (e.g. knitting, woodworking, painting, language)
120. Playing chess (with a friend or at a local club)
121. Going to a games arcade
122. Jumping on a trampoline
123. Sending a text message to a friend
124. Going fishing
125. Doodling
126. Putting a vase of fresh flowers in my house
127. Participating in a protest I support
128. Going to a movie
129. Surfing, bodyboarding or stand up paddle boarding
130. Baking home-made bread
131. Walking barefoot on soft grass
132. Watching a movie marathon
133. Skipping/ jumping rope
134. Being physically intimate with someone I want to be close to
135. Going to karaoke
136. Wearing an outfit that makes me feel good
137. Cooking some meals to freeze for later
138. Hobbies (stamp collecting, model building, etc.)
139. Talking to an older relative and asking them questions about their life
140. Listening to classical music
141. Photography
142. Watching funny videos on YouTube
143. Doing something religious or spiritual (e.g. going to church, praying)
144. Seeing a movie at the drive-in or outdoor cinema
145. Making my bed with fresh sheets
146. Lifting weights
147. Early morning coffee and newspaper
148. Planning a themed party (e.g. costume, murder mystery)
149. Wearing comfortable clothes
150. Shining my shoes
151. Acting
152. Going swimming
153. De-cluttering
154. Going rock climbing
155. Whittling
156. Going on a ride at a theme park or fair
157. Arranging flowers
158. Going to the gym
159. Working on my car or bicycle
160. Juggling or learning to juggle
161. Contacting an old school friend
162. Calligraphy
163. Sleeping
164. Driving
165. Going crabbing
166. Playing with my pets
167. Abseiling
168. Going kayaking, canoeing or white-water rafting
169. Listening to the radio
170. Doing Sudoku
171. Planting vegetables or flowers
172. Walks on the riverfront/foreshore
173. Shooting pool or playing billiards
174. Getting an indoor plant
175. Surfing the internet
176. Doing embroidery, cross stitching
177. Browsing a hardware store
178. Donating blood
179. Buying books
180. Meditating
181. Training my pet to do a new trick
182. Planning a day's activities
183. Waking up early, and getting ready at a leisurely pace
184. Going to a Bingo night
185. Playing ping pong / table tennis
186. Buying an ice-cream from an ice-cream truck
187. Going on a hot air balloon ride
188. Sightseeing
189. Organising my work space
190. Dangling my feet off a jetty
191. Writing (e.g. poems, articles, blog, books)
192. Dancing in the dark
193. Having an indoor picnic
194. Reading classic literature
195. Going on a date
196. Taking children places
197. Going whale watching
198. Putting on perfume or cologne
199. Digging my toes in the sand
200. Hitting golf balls at a driving range
201. Reading magazines or newspapers
202. Calling a friend
203. Sending a handwritten letter
204. Going snorkelling
205. Going hiking, bush walking
206. Reading fiction

207. Meeting new people
208. Doing 5 minutes of calm deep breathing
209. Buying new stationary
210. Turning off electronic devices for an hour (e.g. computer, phone, TV)
211. Buying music (MP3s, CDs, records)
212. Relaxing
213. Going to a footy game (or rugby, soccer, basketball, etc.)
214. Going skiing
215. Doing woodworking
216. Planning a nice surprise for someone else
217. Playing video games
218. Holding a garage sale
219. Saying "I love you"
220. Making a playlist of upbeat songs
221. Colouring in
222. Playing laser tag or paintball
223. Joining a community choir
224. Doing a nagging task (e.g. making a phone call, scheduling an appointment, replying to an email)
225. Taking a ferry ride
226. Shaping a bonsai plant
227. Watching planes take off/ land at the airport
228. Planning my career
229. Reading non-fiction
230. Writing a song or composing music
231. Taking my dog to the park
232. Borrowing books from the library
233. Having a barbecue
234. Sewing
235. Dancing
236. Having lunch with a friend
237. Talking to or introducing myself to my neighbours
238. Holding hands
239. Going to a free art exhibition
240. Making a 'To-Do' list of tasks
241. Travelling abroad, interstate or within the state
242. Having quiet evenings
243. Geocaching
244. Singing in the shower
245. Browsing at a second hand book shop
246. Test driving an expensive car
247. Refurbishing furniture
248. Exchanging emails, chatting on the internet
249. Knitting/crocheting/quilting
250. Napping in a hammock
251. Skipping stones on the water
252. Doing ballet, jazz/tap dancing
253. Archery
254. Going on a Segway tour
255. Visiting a grandparent
256. Making a gift for someone
257. Having discussions with friends
258. Trying a new recipe
259. Pampering myself at home (e.g. putting on a face mask)
260. Watching my children play
261. Going to a community or school play
262. Making jewellery
263. Reading poetry
264. Going to the hills
265. Getting/giving a massage
266. Shooting hoops at the local basketball courts
267. Flying kites
268. Savouring a piece of fresh fruit
269. Playing hockey
270. Eating outside during my lunch break
271. Floating on a pool lounge
272. Making a pot of tea
273. Using special items (e.g. fine china, silver cutlery, jewellery, clothes, souvenir mugs)
274. Doing a DIY project (e.g. making homemade soap, making a mosaic)
275. Taking care of my plants
276. Telling a joke
277. Going to a public place and people watching
278. Discussing books
279. Going window shopping
280. Watching boxing, wrestling
281. Giving someone a genuine compliment
282. Practising yoga, Pilates
283. Walking around the block
284. Shaving
285. Genuinely listening to others
286. Participating in a clean-up (e.g. picking up litter at the beach or park)
287. Eating fish and chips at the beach
288. Rearranging the furniture in my house
289. Doing water aerobics
290. Blowing bubbles
291. Buying new furniture
292. Watching a sunset or sunrise
293. Star gazing
294. Watching a funny TV show or movie
295. Making pottery, or taking a pottery class
296. Playing mini golf
297. Recycling old items
298. Going to a water park
299. Practising karate, judo
300. Boxing a punching bag
301. Cleaning
302. Driving a Go Kart
303. Daydreaming
304. Learning about my family tree
305. Picking berries at a farm
306. Watching kids play sport
307. Setting up a budget
308. Writing a positive comment on a website /blog
309. Getting a manicure or pedicure
310. Collecting things (coins, shells, etc.)

