

W o r k b o o k

Coping with Low Mood

This workbook is aimed to help you learn about low mood and strengthen your ability to cope with it.

Compiled by

TU Dublin Student
Counselling Service



Welcome

The workbook focuses on improving your mood and as you are likely aware, when our mood suffers, much of our functioning may suffer along with it

We have all been through times when we have felt unhappy, and occasionally, quite sad. We may go through times when we find it hard to motivate ourselves, or have difficulty finding interest in things that we usually enjoy. These experiences are part of life. We all experience these things at various points in our lives, for varying lengths of time. Sometimes there is an obvious reason behind these feelings. When we go through a difficult time, or experience a significant loss (such as, failing a course, ending a relationship, or the death of someone close to us) it is typical for this to have a negative impact on our mood. Other times, there may not be an obvious reason for feeling this way. It is normal to experience low mood on some occasions for varying durations, but if it lasts for more than a couple of weeks, without an obvious cause (such as the end of a significant relationship or death of someone close to you) you may be experiencing symptoms of depression.



The workbook is intended to help you develop greater self-awareness and help you in managing your mood and other aspects of your life.

Just keep in mind, simply reading the material without completing the worksheets is unlikely to produce a significant change. Understanding the concepts is important, applying them is crucial to produce change.



Factors that Affect Mood

Sometimes it may appear that there is no obvious cause for feeling low or depressed, often, there are many different factors that can change our mood or maintain a low mood. For example, moving away from home, dealing with academic stress, experiencing relationship issues (e.g., romantic or housemates), worrying about financial concerns or housing are common difficulties lots of people experience while and university and can have affect mood. On top of that changes in general lifestyle, like sleep patterns, illness, alcohol consumption or other substance use, may have an impact on mood.

Most student's will experience stress at some point during their time at university and can contribute to a more negative mood or anxiety.

We all have personal resources that can act as a buffer in stressful situations and have an impact on our mood. For example, if we feel healthy, have had adequate sleep, generally eat fairly nutritious meals, and exercise appropriately several times per week, we are more likely to have sufficient energy to engage in our usual daily activities. When any of these areas of functioning suffer, our energy and ability to maintain our usual activities will likely suffer as well.

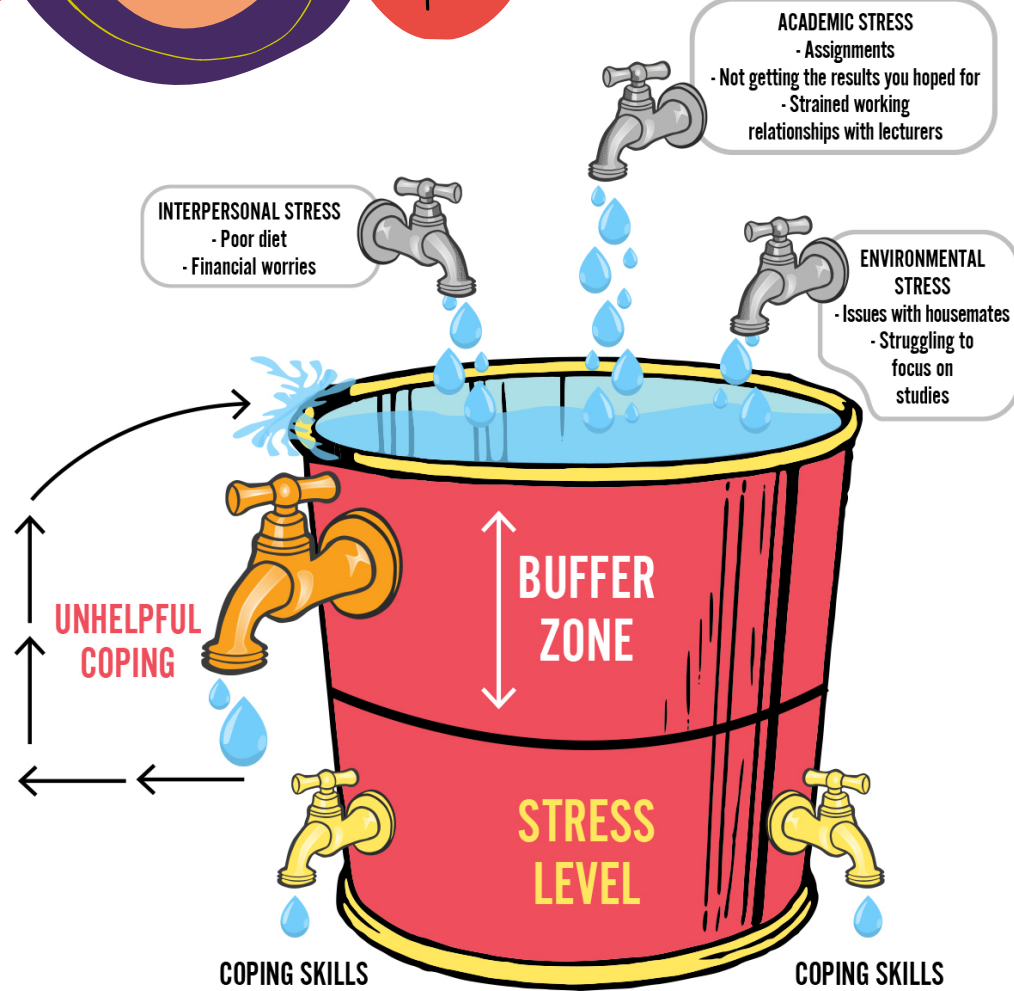
Managing academic responsibilities, extra-curricular interests, employment, and a social life can seem overwhelming at times. Finding ways to reduce responsibilities on some occasions may be a healthy way to manage stressful circumstances. What else do you do to relieve stress, anxiety, or low mood? Do you go for a walk or a run, watch a movie or YouTube, read a book or magazine? Often people will turn to a friend or family member, sometimes to express their difficulties, perhaps to ask for assistance, or for a distraction



The Stress Bucket Model

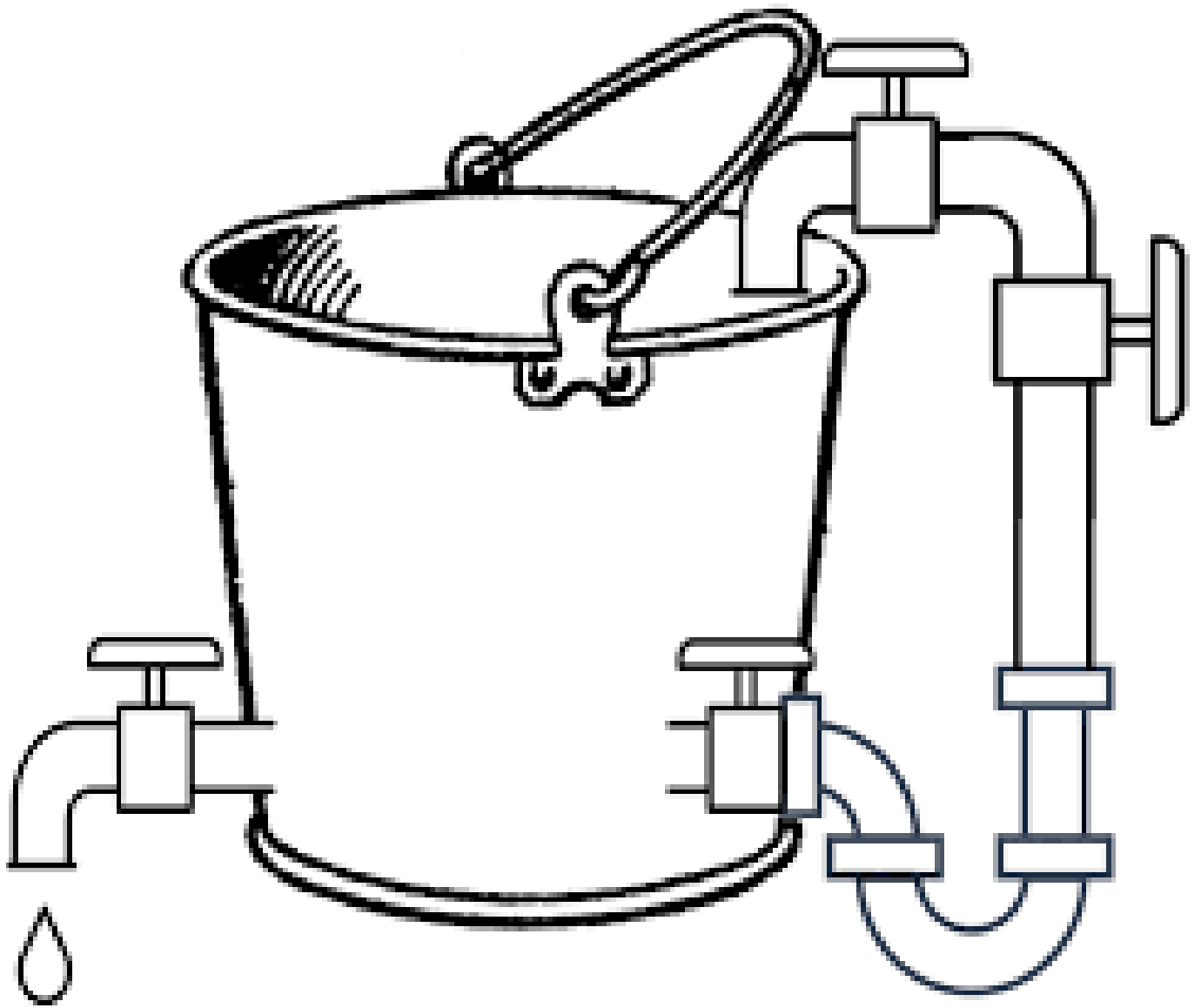
As we worry over a long period about things like exams, money or relationships, stress can start to build up and feel overwhelming. The 'stress bucket' theory relates to our stress filling up and gradually overflowing.

When this happens, it is very important that we empty the bucket, or at the very least reduce the amount of stress inside it.



Exercise:

1. Using the stress bucket overleaf, write down at the top of the bucket all the things that are causing you stress in your life now. These are the risk factors for your bucket to fill up.
2. Now write down all the coping strategies that you have beside the taps of the bucket. These can be things like walking the dog, having a cup of tea, or attending a society. These are your coping strategies and can be used to release some of the contents of the bucket so that it does not spill over.
3. Sometimes, some coping strategies are not as good as others and have hoses attached to them so that these only temporarily empty the bucket and then cause added stress. These are things like smoking and overeating. These need to be replaced by other coping strategies ideally. Write down all your coping strategies that are like this inside the hose.
4. Resilience is all about having a good balance of coping strategies to risk factors so that the bucket does not overflow. Once you have worked out why you feel a certain way it is much easier to intervene to make positive changes. These can be through using the tap and avoiding the hose to empty some of the bucket but can also be through stopping the thoughts and saying NO! to them.
5. Having broken down the stress into different parts, it will now be easier to manage. You can address the different aspects and use all the things at the tap that you have identified to do this well. Fill in your own bucket over the page and discuss its contents with others.



Setting Goals

Change can be exciting but it can also be scary and frightening especially if you have been feeling low for a long time.

Lets think of what is motivating you to change and what might be holding you back.

Pros of staying
the same

Pros of changing

Cons of staying
the same

Cons of changing

Setting goals can be motivating when changing. When setting goals research shows that the most effective way of doing this is through SMART goals. S.M.A.R.T. stands for: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-Bound. Use the space below to set yourself a goal.

What is Depression Anyways?

Depression is more than just feeling sad. It is a cluster of symptoms that occur fairly consistently for an extended period of time (e.g., more than two weeks) that cannot be explained by something else (e.g., substance abuse, a medical condition, or death of someone close). If you are depressed, your mood will be very low most of the day and/or you will have a significant loss of interest or pleasure in your usual activities. Some people have difficulty concentrating and/or may feel indecisive. Fatigue, low energy and lack of motivation are common when depressed. Significant weight loss or gain, trouble falling or staying asleep, or oversleeping, may occur. Noticeable agitation or slowness in thoughts or movements may also occur. Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, or guilt may be present. In some cases, people with depression have recurring thoughts of death or suicide.

This workbook is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which is the most widely used therapy for low mood. CBT can help you make sense of overwhelming problems by breaking them down into smaller parts. CBT works by identifying and addressing how a person's thoughts, behaviors and body responses interact to create anxiety. The following sections of this workbook will teach you more about CBT and some tips and tricks for managing your low mood.

YOU ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO SEE A HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL IF YOU SUSPECT YOU MAY BE DEPRESSED.

Recognising my Low Mood



Recognising how low mood affects your body, thoughts, feelings and actions is an important part of helping you learn to manage your anxiety.



- How do I feel in my body when I am feeling low?



- What are my thoughts like when I am feeling low?



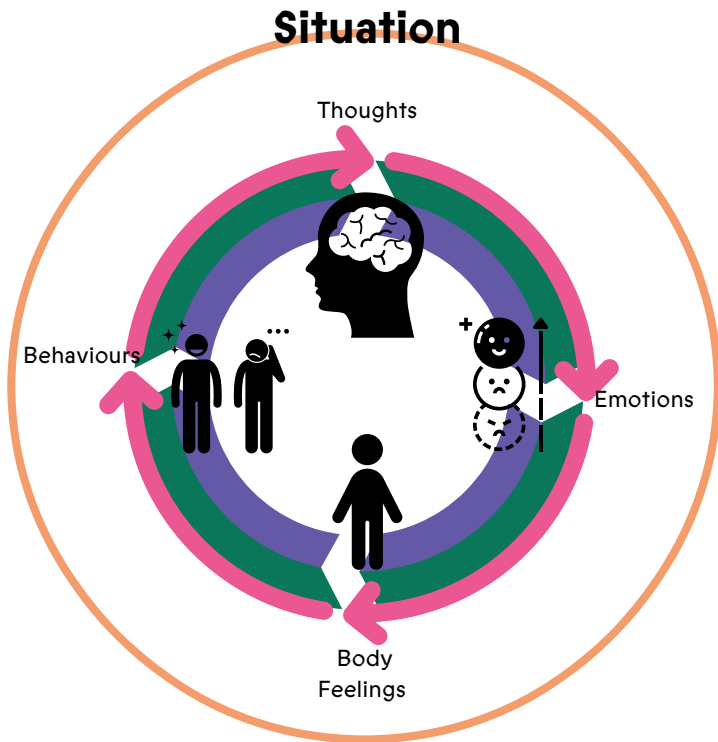
- What behaviours do I notice when I am feeling low?
(Think of things you do as well as things that you don't do)



- What emotions do I experience when I am feeling low?

CBT and Low Mood

The aim of CBT is to help people understand their current ways of thinking and behaving, and equipping them with the tools to change their unhelpful thoughts and behaviours.



This diagram shows how our thoughts, emotions, body feelings and behaviour all influence each other. In fact, they are so closely intertwined that it is often hard to be aware of them all. Consequently, we feel them all in a moment, as one experience. This shows us how adjustments to our physical state, actions, and how we talk to ourselves in our heads all impact greatly on how we feel. If we change all three, then our emotional state will change too.

Use the table below to help you think about ways your low mood impacts your thoughts behaviours, emotions and bodily feelings specifically in different situations.

Situation	Thought	Body Feeling	Behaviour	Emotion



Thoughts

Over time we tend to develop automatic thought patterns – both conscious and unconscious -that typically have a considerable impact on our mood and functioning. When we bring our thoughts into awareness we can look at them and determine if they are accurate, inaccurate, helpful or harmful.

When we notice a negative shift in our mood, this is a good time to bring our thoughts into awareness and determine whether they are accurate. We can modify inaccurate thoughts which can positively influence our mood.

Common Thinking Errors

- All-or-nothing thinking
- Catastrophizing
- Predicting the future
- Overgeneralization
- Mindreading

Recording Thoughts

Think of a time when you felt happy and try to remember specifically what you were thinking.
List as many thoughts as you can remember.

I thought:

Circle the thought that influenced your mood the most.
Was this thought (circle all that apply):

Accurate Inaccurate Helpful Neutral Harmful

Think of a time when you felt sad or depressed and try to remember what you were thinking.
List as many thoughts as you can remember.

I thought:

Circle the thought that influenced your mood the most.
Was this thought (circle all that apply):


Accurate Inaccurate Helpful Neutral Harmful


Behaviours

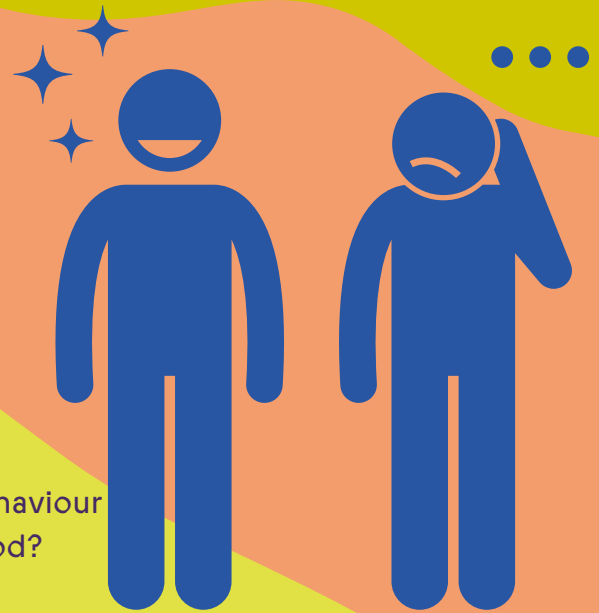
When we are feeling good, enthused or excited about life, we behave in a way that is reflective of those feelings. The same is true when we feel sad, lonely or insecure.

When people are depressed they often want to stay in bed and avoid the day. When we feel low we need to work harder to get up and get motivated. The following behaviours are often seen in people with low mood and/or depression:

- Reduced social activity or work
- Reduced activity level
- Poor self-care
- Changes in sleep, diet and exercise

 Can you think of a time when your behaviour impacted your mood?

 Can you think of a time when your mood influenced your behaviour?



Physical States

Our physical state is often reflective of our mood. Think of a time when you felt happy or elated about something that just happened.

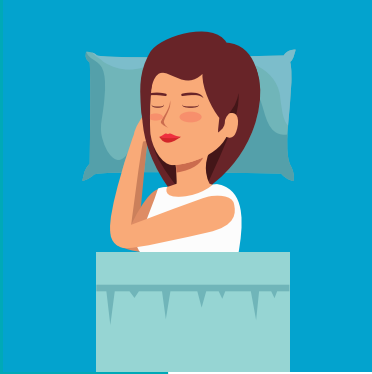
We tend to feel energized when we are happy, and ailments may seem to disappear, even if momentarily. The opposite is often true when we feel sad or depressed.

 Think about a time when something good happened and you were happy! How did you feel physically?

 Think about a time when you felt sad or depressed. How did you feel physically?

THE BASICS

Diet, exercise and sleep
are the foundation to
improving your mood!



How much sleep are you getting? Do you have trouble falling asleep? Are you waking often during the night?



What are you eating? Are you eating too little or too much? Are you enjoying food the way you would normally?



Are you exercising? Are you getting too much or too little exercise? Is your current level of exercise typical for you?

Which part(s) of the basics are off track for you? What small specific change can you make TODAY? Remember, to be effective the change has to be realistic and you must be willing to commit to it.



Activities

When we experience low mood, it is common to withdraw from activities we would otherwise enjoy. People often spend more time alone, stay in bed longer or increase time playing video games or watching tv. People may avoid friends and activities for many different reasons, but as we have discovered, this withdrawal and isolation can become part of a negative downward spiral that leads to, and maintains, depression. The longer this goes on, the greater the impact in multiple aspects of our lives. It can be difficult to even remember what we used to enjoy. When your mood is on track, when you're feeling good: what do you enjoy? Do you enjoy the outdoors? Do you enjoy the gym? Do you normally like to go out to eat with friends? Record some below:

Pleasant Activities

Free

reading a book	lunch alone	lunch with a friend	window shopping	watching TV
walking	FaceTiming a Friend	going for a walk	riding a bike	doodling
singing	listening to music	running	journalling	hiking
playing an instrument	yoga at home	cleaning	dancing	playing cards

Involve some expense

going to the cinema	knitting	baking	going out for a meal	
photography	going for coffee	buying a new book	bowling	
	cooking	cooking with a friend	skating	Netflix

My Own Ideas



Plan Your Days One Day At A Time

You have come up with a list of pleasant activities and even made a plan for dates and times. Let's take a look at the activity schedule that follows. This is just an example....yours will be specific to YOU!

Time	Schedule
8:30-9:30am	wake up, shower, eat breakfast
9:30-10:30am	Go to University
10:30-11:30am	Class
11:30-1:30pm	Long Lunch!
1:30-3:30pm	Lab
3:30pm - 4:30pm	Break
4:30pm - 6:30pm	Go to the library
6:30pm - 7:30pm	Go home
7:30pm - 8:30pm	Dinner
8:30pm - 10.30pm	Relax, get ready for tomorrow
10:30pm	Sleep

Notes

Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat



Daily Schedule

Time	Schedule

Notes

A large yellow rectangular area intended for writing notes.

need further support?



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