

A SELECTION OF THE MANY
POSITIVE COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM
PROFESSIONALS

“I imagine this small book will make a big difference to many people”

Peter Ford – Counselling Psychologist

“I think overall this is an excellent booklet ... The explanations for both depression and it’s format in CBT are very clear and comprehensive”

Dr Simon Lovegrove – General Practitioner

“... it says more in a few pages than many self-help books achieve in chapters. Not only is the book clear and easy to understand but it offers a different practical perspective than the traditional CBT literature. Many people have paid £1000 in therapy for what has been achieved in just a few pages”

Laurie Seiler – CBT therapist and author of ‘Cool Connections with CBT’

“This was very interesting and I felt I was being taken on an exploratory trip ... I was also taken by the collaborative tone of the whole booklet and found it to be free-flowing, cohesive and inviting. I suspect that a client who approaches it with curiosity and an open mind will find it very helpful as an introduction to CBT”

Donal Fitzgerald – CBT Therapist

“Excellent, user-friendly and easy to read. The little book format also makes it really easy to carry around.”

Dr Patrick Hopkinson – General Practitioner

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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THINK ABOUT YOUR THINKING
TO STOP DEPRESSION

A FAST SIMPLE SYSTEM TO
RELIEVE DISTRESS

Dr Nicola Ridgeway, ClinPsyD
Dr James Manning, ClinPsyD

Published by The West Suffolk CBT Service Limited
Registered office: Angel Corner, 8 Angel Hill,
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 1UZ

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A fast simple system to relieve distress

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A product of the West Suffolk CBT Service Limited
Angel Corner, 8 Angel Hill,
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 1UZ
United Kingdom

Enquiries 01284 723948

This edition printed 2008
Copyright © 2008 West Suffolk CBT Service Ltd.

Published in association with

foulsham publishers

The Oriel, Thames Valley Court, 183-187 Bath Road,
Slough, Berkshire, SL1 4AA, England
Web Site: www.foulsham.com

ISBN – 978-0-572-03500-6

Printed 2008, Lavenham press, United Kingdom

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Edited by Jenny Roberts
Design and layout by Mathew Buch

PREFACE

Working clinically with individuals with depression, we searched long and hard for one really good book to lend to individuals with depression. What we found after handing out many mainstream self-help books was that over and over again most of them were either returned to us unread or with only small parts read. This occurred *despite* the valuable content of the books and the excellent qualifications of the authors.

Our clients told us that they did not have the energy or concentration to read the books. Some clients reported that the books were so large or heavy that they actually found the prospect of reading them depressing.

Reading when we are feeling depressed can often feel like a highly stressful process. This book has been written differently from others you may have

read before. It has been especially constructed:

- to help you absorb information when your concentration is poor
- to be kept with you wherever you go, to remind yourself of helpful information wherever and whenever you need it

Our experience indicates that this book can be very effective when it is used to accompany therapy, and is most beneficial when individuals are experiencing mild to moderate depression.

We, the authors, love books, and appreciate that for some people self-help material alone is very beneficial. However, we also believe that self-help literature is greatly enhanced by consultations with a trained practitioner. If you believe that you are experiencing depression, we suggest that where possible you consult a suitably qualified professional for advice and treatment.

Finally, we hope that you will find the ideas within this book useful and that you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed creating it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to our friends and colleagues Ann, Julia, Karen, Nicola, Christine, James, Mary, Jackie, Tom Moriarty, Steven B, Susanna Freeborn and all other who made invaluable contributions to our work either directly or indirectly. We would also like to thank Bilbo, James Crick and Douglas Bibbey for their energy and enthusiasm, and Jenny Roberts who agreed to edit this work with very short notice.

Additionally we would like to thank all the professionals who reviewed this book and made important contributions to its content, direction or initial planning. Thank you to Dr Rebecca Poz, Laurie Seiler, Prof Graham Turpin, Donal Fitzgerald, Dr Lee Brosan, Dr Patrick Hopkinson, Dr Simon Lovegrove, Peter Ford, Dr Emma Berry, Barry Belasco and many others.

Although not referenced, a final thank you to the academics in psychology who provided all the ideas behind the content of this book.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to our many clients with depression. Without your input this book would never have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

This book has been written to help you break unhelpful patterns of thinking that lead to depression.

The book is divided into 18 sessions, each of which, on average, will take no more than five minutes to read. Each session begins with a summary of its essential theme. This is then explored, in dialogue, between a Cognitive Behaviour Therapist and a client. Reflection boxes are scattered throughout the book to draw your attention to ideas of particular importance.

Practical exercises and additional information, about each session, can be gained via our manual “Think about your thinking – Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Programme for Depression.”

SESSION 1

THE PARADOX OF ACCEPTANCE



ACCEPTING YOUR FEELINGS IS ESSENTIAL
TO STOP DETERIORATION IN YOUR MOOD.

CLIENT: But that makes absolutely no sense to me at all. Why would I want to accept that I'm feeling this way, when all I really want is for these feelings to go away?

THERAPIST: Well, just ask yourself, has trying to get rid of your feelings worked so far?

CLIENT: I guess not!

THERAPIST: I'll explain what I mean.

All emotions have a function, even those that don't feel nice (such as guilt, shame, disgust, and sadness) and we have evolved to have *all* of our feelings. What impact would there be on society if nobody ever processed painful feelings? Feeling low is often connected to a process of loss, whether this is a physical loss, or a loss of something that had the potential to happen. What would life be like if nobody experienced loss? Indeed, what would life be like if nobody experienced guilt when they had actually done something wrong? Where would the motivation for people to make positive changes come from?

The majority of us experience low mood for valid reasons. However, for many of us the triggers are not immediately clear. I'll explain more thoroughly why this occurs in future sessions. What I'm inviting you to consider right now though is that whatever route we take to find the triggers for our moods, we will ultimately find a good and logical reason for why we have been feeling the way we have.

CLIENT: Erm? I wish it were that easy!

THERAPIST: OK. Let me put it another way. What I'm inviting you to do is quite simply to leap ahead to that point where you have found the trigger for your low mood state and

welcome your low mood. I say this because if we don't welcome our low mood, it's likely that we will receive multiple low mood messages that arrive with increasing strength, until the message is eventually heard. This will ultimately make us feel worse.

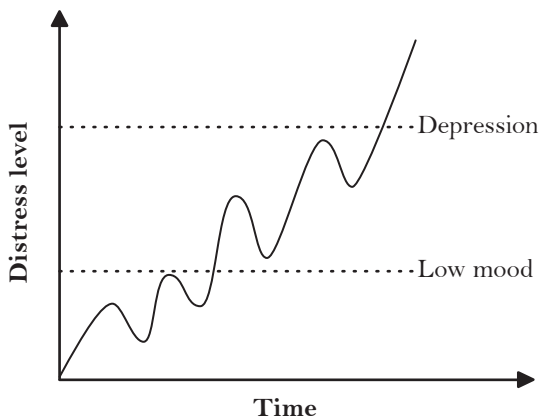


Figure 1. The effect of suppressing or rejecting painful feelings

CLIENT: So why does this happen?

THERAPIST: Because feelings are basic survival mechanisms that are very intent on getting their message through to us. Their purpose is to help us survive, so if we reject them they may subside in the short term, but will return later with increased strength. Basically, our feelings do this because they are trying to keep us safe, whether that is from physical threat – for example, being physically harmed – or from psychological threat – for example, being rejected or isolated from our familiar social group.

CLIENT: I mean no disrespect by this, but what you're saying makes absolutely

no sense to me at all! You're saying that my feelings are trying to help me and I need to accept them, but I feel like they're trying to harm me!

THERAPIST: OK! I understand that ... and, to be honest, if it made sense most people would already have found out about acceptance and they would be trying it, wouldn't they? So, given the number of people in our society who have depression, how many of these individuals are telling themselves that it's OK to feel the way that they do?

CLIENT: Not many, I suppose.

THERAPIST: That's right! So part of our solution lies here. When we

accept our feelings, we consciously let our brains know that we have received the low mood message. This removes the necessity for the brain to continue sending low mood messages with increasing strength, and reduces the risk of our mood deteriorating. So what could you do to see if this works for you?

CLIENT: I suppose I could try your idea.

THERAPIST: Good for you!

REFLECTION

If we interpret something in our environment as harmful or dangerous in some way, then we come to the realisation that there is potential for pain. This can occur within both our:

- External environment (e.g. an event or the action of another individual);
- Internal environment (i.e. feelings, thoughts, physical sensations).

We naturally like to avoid pain or stop pain from continuing. So let's use the example of feeling low. There is nothing pleasurable about feeling low. So if we acknowledge and label our low feeling for what it is, it immediately stops the brain from (a) trying to work out why the low feeling is there and (b) trying to stop the low feeling from being there.