

Depression Exercise Book

Gentle steps toward light, hope & healing

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A Message of Hope

Depression is one of the most common — and most treatable — mental health conditions. It is not a personal failing, a sign of weakness, or a life sentence.

This workbook offers compassionate, evidence-based exercises drawn from Behavioural Activation, CBT, Mindfulness, and Positive Psychology.

Work through the exercises at whatever pace feels manageable. Even completing one page is an act of courage and self-care.

If you are experiencing thoughts of self-harm, please reach out:

- Crisis line (US): 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call or text 988
- International Association for Suicide Prevention: <https://www.iasp.info>

You deserve support. You deserve to feel better.

— Dr Arjumand Raza

Chapter 1: Understanding Depression

What Is Depression?

Depression is more than sadness. It is a whole-body experience involving persistent low mood, loss of interest, fatigue, cognitive changes, and disruption to sleep, appetite, and daily functioning.

COMMON SYMPTOMS:

- Persistent sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed (anhedonia)
- Fatigue and low energy
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Changes in sleep (too much or too little)
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Withdrawal from others

Depression I recognise in myself:

My Depression Profile

Understanding your unique pattern helps target treatment effectively.

My depression tends to be worst at (time of day / season):

Activities I have stopped doing since feeling depressed:

Relationships that have been affected:

What I miss most about how I used to feel:

One small thing that still brings even a tiny spark of feeling:

Chapter 2: Behavioural Activation

The Depression-Inactivity Cycle

Depression leads to withdrawal → withdrawal deepens depression.

Behavioural Activation breaks this cycle by scheduling meaningful activity even when you don't feel like it. Mood FOLLOWS action — not the other way around.

Activities that used to bring me pleasure or a sense of achievement:

From the list above, one I can attempt this week (even 5 minutes):

Barrier I might face and how I'll work around it:

Weekly Activity Planner

Plan 1-2 small activities per day. Rate your mood before and after (0-10).

MON: Activity: _____ Before: __ After: __

TUE: Activity: _____ Before: __ After: __

WED: Activity: _____ Before: __ After: __

THU: Activity: _____ Before: __ After: __

FRI: Activity: _____ Before: __ After: __

SAT: Activity: _____ Before: __ After: __

SUN: Activity: _____ Before: __ After: __

What did I notice? Did mood change after activity?

Pleasure & Mastery Log

Each day log one PLEASURE activity (enjoyment) and one MASTERY activity (sense of achievement, however small).

PLEASURE activities this week:

MASTERY activities this week:

How did completing these affect my mood and self-worth?

Chapter 3: Challenging Depressive Thoughts

Negative Automatic Thoughts

Depression fills the mind with harsh, distorted thoughts.

Common patterns include: 'I'm worthless', 'Nothing will ever change',

'I am a burden to everyone around me.'

A depressive thought I've had this week:

Type of distortion (e.g., personalisation, mind-reading, catastrophising):

Evidence FOR this thought:

Evidence AGAINST this thought:

A more balanced, compassionate perspective:

The Compassionate Friend Exercise

Imagine a dear friend came to you with the same self-critical thought.

What would you say to them?

My harsh inner voice says:

What I would kindly say to a friend in the same situation:

Can I offer myself the same compassion? What would that look like?

Gratitude & Small Wins

Depression filters out positives. This exercise counteracts that.

It is NOT about toxic positivity — it is about balance.

3 things I can be even mildly grateful for today:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

One small thing I did today (however tiny) that counts as an achievement:

One kind thing I did — for myself or someone else:

Chapter 4: Self-Care & Lifestyle

Sleep Hygiene Plan

Depression disrupts sleep. Consistent sleep hygiene is a powerful intervention.

My current sleep pattern (bedtime / wake time):

Sleep challenges I experience:

MY SLEEP HYGIENE COMMITMENTS:

- Set a consistent bedtime: _____ and wake time: _____
- No screens 1 hour before bed.
- Keep bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.
- Avoid caffeine after 2pm.
- Short relaxation routine before sleep:

Nourishment & Movement

Even gentle movement releases endorphins and fights depressive symptoms.

Movement I can manage this week (circle): Walk Stretch Dance Swim Other

Duration: _____ Frequency: _____

How I feel BEFORE movement: _____

How I feel AFTER movement: _____

Nourishing foods I will try to include this week:

One meal I will take time to prepare and enjoy:

Social Connection Plan

Isolation deepens depression. Connection — even brief — lifts mood.

People in my life who are supportive:

One person I will reach out to this week:

What I will say or ask for (e.g., company for a walk, a chat):

How I can let people know how I am really feeling:

Chapter 5: Hope & Recovery

My Recovery Vision

Recovery does not mean perfection — it means building a life worth living.

When I am feeling better, what will be different in my life?

What does a 'good enough' day look like for me?

What is one thing I am looking forward to — now or in the future?

My reason to keep going today:

Letter to My Future Self

Write a letter to the version of yourself who has come through this difficult time.

What do you want them to know? What are you proud of them for?

My Support Plan

Professional support I have (or will seek):

Crisis numbers saved in my phone:

• US: 988 • UK: 116 123 (Samaritans) • International: see [iasp.info](https://www.iasp.info)

Personal supporters I can call:

Warning signs that I need extra support:

Three things that help most when I'm very low:

1. 2. 3.

Professional Support Available

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