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Managing Depression with CBT

FOR
DUMMIES®

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- Identify and correct negative thought patterns
- Combat your depression and rebalance your life



Brian Thomson

Matt Broadway-Horner

Cognitive behavioural therapists

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***Managing
Depression with CBT***
FOR
DUMMIES®

**by Brian Thomson and
Matt Broadway-Horner**

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Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Understanding Depression and How It Develops</i>	7
Chapter 1: Introducing Moods and Depression	9
Chapter 2: Introducing the Basic Principles of CBT	29
<i>Part II: Putting What You Discover into Action ...</i>	45
Chapter 3: Thinking about Thinking	47
Chapter 4: Changing Your Thinking to Change Your Life	61
Chapter 5: Facing Your Feelings to Tackle Depression	75
Chapter 6: Changing Your Attitudes to Combat Depression.....	97
Chapter 7: Raising Self-Esteem to Increase Your Motivation	113
Chapter 8: Developing Abilities that Challenge Depression	125
Chapter 9: Being Mindful, not Mind-full: Developing Your Awareness.....	143
<i>Part III: Maintaining Momentum</i>	155
Chapter 10: Discovering the New, Healthy You	157
Chapter 11: Reducing the Risk of Relapse.....	163
<i>Part IV: The Part of Tens</i>	169
Chapter 12: Ten Tips for Tackling Depression	171
Chapter 13: Ten Tips to Challenge Distorted Thinking	177
<i>Appendix</i>	183
<i>Index</i>	191

Table of Contents

.....

<i>Introduction</i>	1
About This Book	2
Conventions Used in This Book.....	2
Foolish Assumptions	3
How This Book Is Organised	3
Part I: Understanding Depression and How It Develops.....	3
Part II: Putting What You Discover into Action	3
Part III: Maintaining Momentum	4
Part IV: The Part of Tens.....	4
Icons Used in This Book.....	4
Where to Go from Here	5
<i>Part 1: Understanding Depression and How It Develops</i>	7
Chapter 1: Introducing Moods and Depression	9
Recognising the Differences: Sadness, Misery and Depression.....	9
Meeting sadness and misery	10
Experiencing depression	11
Making Sense of Your Symptoms.....	14
Prolonging a low mood	15
Changing weight.....	15
Suffering disturbed sleep.....	15
Lacking pleasure or enjoyment.....	16
Feeling tired all the time	17
Enduring aches and pains	17
Being unable to concentrate	18
Wanting not to be around people.....	18
Stopping the world (I want to get off): Suicidal thoughts	19

Thinking About Your Own Depression	19
Discovering how your experience fits with the theory	20
Hot cognitions.....	20
Core beliefs	22
Assessing what's keeping you stuck.....	23
A CBT model of depression.....	24
Measuring up.....	26
Balancing your lifestyle: What's missing.....	27

Chapter 2: Introducing the Basic Principles of CBT . . . 29

Becoming Your Own Therapist.....	30
Separating Depression into Three Domains.....	31
Defining problems and setting goals.....	33
Understanding the thought–feeling connection.....	34
Investigating the feeling–behaviour connection.....	38
Stopping the Depressive Spiral.....	42

Part II: Putting What You Discover into Action 45

Chapter 3: Thinking about Thinking 47

Uncovering Your Underlying Thought Processes	48
Ouch! Encountering hot cognitions.....	48
Monitoring thoughts and how they make you feel....	49
Identifying the triggers.....	50
Unearthing your underlying rules	51
Assigning blame and making misjudgements	52
Recognising Thinking Errors	52
Thinking negatively	53
Predicting the future negatively.....	53
Labelling negatively	54
Mind-reading the worst	55
Discounting the positive.....	55
Thinking exaggeratedly.....	56
Emotional reasoning	56
All-or-nothing thinking.....	57
Catastrophising	57
Over-generalising.....	58
Should and musts	58
Low frustration tolerance.....	59
Weighing up the evidence	60

Chapter 4: Changing Your Thinking to Change Your Life	61
Breaking Bad Thinking Habits	62
Putting Your Unhelpful Thoughts on Trial	62
Witnessing your thinking errors	62
Finding a rational alternative thought	67
Evaluating the alternative.....	70
Going Deeper to Discover Causes.....	70
Chapter 5: Facing Your Feelings to Tackle Depression	75
Introducing Negative Emotions.....	75
Discerning helpful negative emotions.....	76
Identifying unhelpful negative emotions	76
Seeing the value in some negative emotions	77
Seeing the Thought–Feeling and Feeling–Behaviour Connections	77
Changing your attitude	79
Persevering for improvement	80
Managing Your Emotions.....	80
Recognising your sensitivities by describing emotions.....	80
Noticing, describing and tolerating your own emotions.....	81
Developing emotional responsibility	91
Changing your relationship with emotions and intrusive thoughts.....	91
Beating brooding and worrying	92
Recognising the child within: Ego states.....	93
Searching for self-resilience and self-comfort.....	94
Hearing what the child ego state is saying or feeling.....	94
Listening to your parental ego state	94
Getting into the adult ego state	94
Chapter 6: Changing Your Attitudes to Combat Depression	97
Making and Maintaining Positive Changes	98
Balancing your life	98
Keeping track of the evidence.....	99
Accentuating the Positive: Skills to Combat Depression	100
Recognising opportunities	101
Taking an interest in life	102

Living for today	103
Becoming more friendly.....	104
Enjoying the good things in life	105
Relaxing when you deserve it	106
Developing humour	107
Helping out other people.....	108
Eliminating the Negative: Steering Clear of Dark Thoughts.....	109
Improving your attitude to age	109
Resisting the demand for perfection.....	110
Combating boredom.....	111
Being your own best friend	112

Chapter 7: Raising Self-Esteem to Increase Your Motivation 113

Identifying the Issues of Low Self-Esteem	114
Discovering Your True Self-Worth.....	116
Giving yourself credit	116
Avoiding errors when challenging low self-esteem... ..	117
Feeling superior	117
Believing that you're special.....	117
Trying to control people	117
Seeking approval	117
Behaving defensively	118
Thinking that you're inferior.....	118
Being Kind to Yourself.....	118
Using unconditional self-acceptance to accept yourself	119
Moving from global statements to specific ones.....	121
Talking to yourself positively.....	121
Using the prejudice model.....	122
Taking one step at a time towards being content ...	123

Chapter 8: Developing Abilities that Challenge Depression 125

Developing Compassion for Yourself.....	125
Attaining acceptance mode	126
Acknowledging the positives	128
Rediscovering Your Resilience	130
Discovering the Power of Assertiveness.....	135
Defining assertiveness	135
Assertiveness: Beating the barriers	137
Recognising your rights	138
Trying out some tricks of the trade.....	140

Negative assertion..... 140
 Broken record..... 140
 Employing the 'I'..... 141
 Response delay..... 141
 Being comfortable with communicating..... 142

**Chapter 9: Being Mindful, not Mind-full:
 Developing Your Awareness 143**

Discovering the World of Mindfulness..... 144
 Joining mindfulness with CBT..... 145
 Meeting meditation and mindfulness..... 145
 Carrying Out Activities Mindfully 146
 Becoming more aware..... 147
 Practising mindful meditation..... 149
 Body scan exercise..... 149
 Observing with and without judging..... 150
 Bath-time exercise..... 152
 Opposite action exercise..... 153
 Letting Go of Your Demands 153

Part III: Maintaining Momentum..... 155

Chapter 10: Discovering the New, Healthy You. 157

Enjoying Your Progress..... 158
 Making mistakes to meet your goals..... 158
 Pursuing the positives 159
 Rediscovering Relationships 160

Chapter 11: Reducing the Risk of Relapse 163

Discovering the Danger Zones 163
 Planning for Prevention 165
 Rallying the Troops for Support 167

Part IV: The Part of Tens 169

Chapter 12: Ten Tips for Tackling Depression. 171

Enjoying Physical Exercise 171
 Being Kind to Yourself..... 172
 Taking Pride in Your Appearance..... 172
 Maintaining Your Surroundings..... 172
 Keeping in Touch..... 173
 Noticing the Pleasurable Small Stuff..... 173

Defining Your Problem Accurately.....	174
Enjoying the Journey.....	175
Doing Something New	175
Making Someone Else Happy.....	176

Chapter 13: Ten Tips to Challenge Distorted Thinking 177

Avoid Catastrophising.....	177
Think in Grey, Not Black and White	178
Correct Generalisations	179
Resist Mind-Reading	179
Switch Off Your Mental Filter	180
Reason Rationally	180
Don't Personalise Events	180
Look Ahead to Combat Awfulising.....	181
Stop Comparing and Despairing	181
Consider Future Possibilities	182

***Appendix*..... 183**

Form 1: Your Daily Thought Record (DTR)	183
Form 2: Your Balanced Lifestyle Sheet	185
Form 3: Your Pleasure–Achievement Chart	187
Form 4: Your Ideas for Living Form	187
Form 5: Your Positive Data Log.....	189

***Index*..... 191**

Introduction

Depression is one of the most common health problems that people experience, and it can decimate lives. Research shows that one in five people suffer from depression at some time, and yet it's still one of the most misunderstood conditions, often confused with sadness, misery or unhappiness.

This book guides you towards a better understanding of depression and helps you to recognise and address the symptoms by using an approach called cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). The great thing about CBT is that it uses tried and tested methods to help you understand how you became depressed – and what is keeping you depressed – and empowers you not only to help yourself overcome it and start living a fulfilling life again, but to help other people too.

One patient told us that she'd suffered from depression all her life, and that she thought it was genetically based because both her parents had suffered from depression throughout their lives. However, she agreed to try CBT and within the first few weeks she had begun to understand her depression better and to feel empowered to take charge of her life. By the time she completed her treatment, she felt confident in dealing with whatever life threw at her without sinking into depression. At the end of her treatment, she sent us a lovely thank-you card, in which she said:

'If only someone had explained these things to me when I was young, my life would have been so different. I used to think that it was the things that happened in my life that made me depressed, but you've taught me that it's more about how you respond to what happens, and this has given me the power to keep my depression at bay.'

Similarly, CBT can work for you, helping you to understand and overcome your own depression. And with all the practical information gathered together between its covers, *Managing Depression with CBT For Dummies* is just the tool you need to get started and use CBT yourself.

About This Book

When you're suffering from depression, you often feel isolated and as if nothing can improve your situation. But think of this book as an encouraging friend who's on your side. Within it, I help you to become your own therapist, leading you to understand what causes depression, what keeps you depressed, and what effects depression has on your life and the people around you. I then give you lots of tips for taking back control of your life and for improving your mood.

To do so, I describe CBT and the many practical ways in which it can help. More specifically, I examine:

- ✔ The basic CBT model of how depression affects your thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- ✔ The scientific bases for how CBT can help
- ✔ Ways to identify the specific problems that depression is causing in your life
- ✔ How to identify and achieve realistic goals
- ✔ How to discover what causes you to become depressed
- ✔ How to overcome depression
- ✔ How to prevent depression recurring in the future

Conventions Used in This Book

My aim is to make this book extremely easy to find your way around, and to help out I use a number of conventions:

- ✔ *Italics* indicate new words and medical terms. Although I stick to language that avoids jargon and technical terms as much as possible, some new concepts occasionally arise that require explanation. I highlight these with italics and explain the term prior to discussing how to use it.
- ✔ **Boldfaced font** is used to highlight key concepts or action steps to take in lists.
- ✔ `Monofont` indicates a website address.

Throughout the chapter I include areas shaded in grey, called *sidebars*. These paragraphs contain information that's interesting and adds more depth but isn't vital; you can skip them if you prefer, safe in the knowledge that you're not missing anything essential.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, I assume that you (or someone you know) has been suffering from depression. You want to understand quickly how depression works and discover how CBT can help you to overcome that depression.

I certainly don't assume that you have any existing medical knowledge or experience at all. You just want practical information, easily available, and to be rid of depression permanently.

How This Book Is Organised

I arrange this book into four parts.

Part I: Understanding Depression and How It Develops

An old adage goes: know your enemy! I describe in Chapter 1 how depression works, how and why it often arises, and I distinguish normal feelings such as sadness and misery from the more serious experience of depression. In Chapter 2, I introduce you to the tool you're going to use to defeat your depression (CBT) and explain the ways in which it helps.

Part II: Putting What You Discover into Action

This part covers attacking the symptoms of depression different ways. Chapter 3 focuses on how you think – whether your thinking is positive or negative – because understanding this allows you to change to more healthy, positive methods of thinking (the subject of Chapter 4). I take a look at emotions

and feelings in Chapter 5, supplying practical tips for managing your depressive symptoms. The third front in your battle against depression is changing behaviour, as I discuss in Chapter 6. Part of this change is to improve your self-esteem (Chapter 7) and become more assertive (Chapter 8). Chapter 9 is a bit different and introduces you to a very effective way to help in your recovery: the ancient (and yet also entirely contemporary) art of mindfulness.

Part III: Maintaining Momentum

The subject of this part is moving on from depression. Chapter 10 encourages you to rediscover and enjoy your healthy, happy life. Chapter 11 describes how to prevent a relapse, including practical hints for spotting and dealing with the danger signs and situations.

Part IV: The Part of Tens

This regular *For Dummies* section presents some succinct advice and tips for tackling depression in Chapter 12, and reveals negative ways of thinking that can hold you back while recovering from depression in Chapter 13.

I follow the Part of Tens with an appendix, in which I provide several forms for you to complete to increase your self-knowledge.

Icons Used in This Book

Throughout this book, you'll find icons in the margins that will help you quickly identify different types of information and assist you in finding what you're looking for more easily.



The text next to this icon contains particularly useful information or hints to save you time.



This information is important and worth bearing in mind while tackling depression.



Many misconceptions and just plain errors surround depression, and I use this icon to show where I kick such myths into the long grass.



I include loads of examples to demonstrate and clarify the new ideas and models that I present. You can easily identify them via this icon. The stories don't involve real people but are illustrations using composites of the many people I've worked with over many years as a therapist.



I want this book to be as practical as possible, and so beside this icon I supply little exercises for you to try out. They're all proven activities that help people get over depression.

Where to Go from Here

Although you can certainly get loads of useful information by reading from Chapter 1 through to the end, I designed this book so that you can dip in and out as you like, reading bits that interest you at a particular moment. If you want immediate tips and hints to help you as quickly as possible, go directly to Chapters 12 and 13. Or if lack of self-esteem is a problem for you, turn straight to Chapter 7. To help you locate relevant material easily elsewhere in the book, I employ cross-references as well as a comprehensive index.

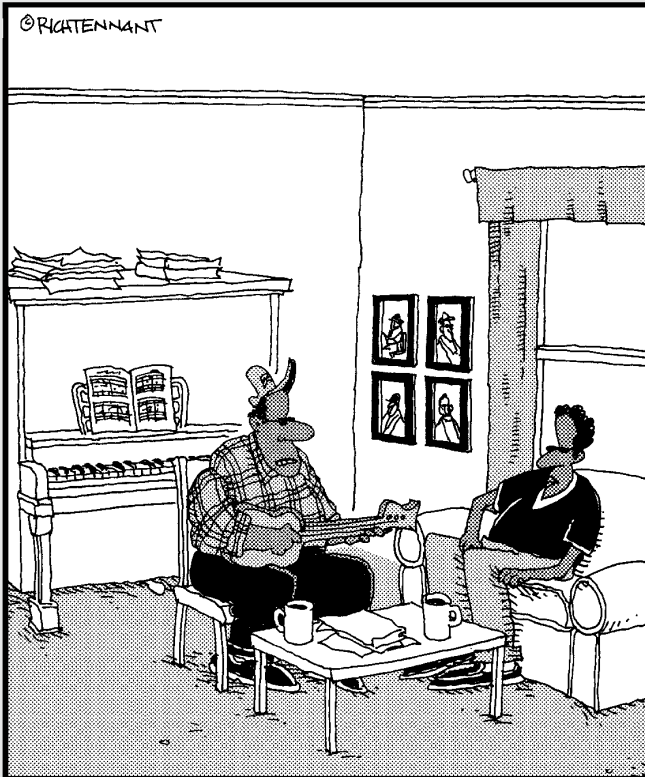
Remember, though, that if you want your life to be different, you have to start doing things differently. Just understanding or knowing the theory doesn't in itself overcome your depression. Therefore pay attention to, and complete, the recommended activities and act on what you discover. And be sure that my best wishes go with you.

Part I

Understanding Depression and How It Develops

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



“The blues I can handle. Usually I can express it with a simple 12-bar guitar lick. Depression, on the other hand, takes a 3-act opera.”

In this part...

You discover all about moods – including the differences between sadness, misery and depression – as well as the symptoms of depression. I also introduce you to cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and you begin the journey of becoming your own therapist. You find out all you need to know to use the most scientific form of therapy available to overcome your depression.

Chapter 1

Introducing Moods and Depression

In This Chapter

- ▶ Defining depression
 - ▶ Describing the symptoms
 - ▶ Understanding how your depression affects you
-

To tackle depression, you have to know a little about the condition. In particular, you have to understand how it differs from normal emotions and moods such as sadness and misery.

In this chapter, I describe the main symptoms of depression and help you relate them to your own experience. I include a number of examples to illustrate different aspects of depression in the hope that they help you when you're thinking about your own situation. I also provide an overview of this book as whole, including cross-references to where you can find further relevant material in other chapters. So if something particularly strikes you while reading, just turn straight to the chapter to get more information.

Recognising the Differences: Sadness, Misery and Depression

The overall human experience doesn't vary that much. Throughout life, everyone has all sorts of experiences and has to face difficult situations; everybody has moments of contentment and periods of trouble. The differences for people

often reside in their response to those events. Whereas feeling sad when things go wrong for you is entirely natural, that feeling persisting for months, driving you to avoid your friends, isn't normal.

Understanding that feelings of sadness and even misery are completely different from depression is crucial, which is where this section comes in.



Expecting to live a life in which sadness and misery don't occur is not only unrealistic but also unhealthy. Accepting that negative life events are bound to happen and developing healthy coping strategies is an important life skill and makes you appreciate life's blessings all the more.

Meeting sadness and misery

Sadness is a part of the normal range of human experience: a melancholy, sorrowful or heavy-hearted feeling that everyone's familiar with. It comes about when you experience life events that awaken an emotional response within you.

When healthy people experience setbacks, their mood naturally plummets. They may even spend a short time thinking very negatively about themselves, other people and the world in general. But within a short period of time they start to get their head around what happened. They start to comfort themselves and reassure themselves that everything's going to be all right and that they're okay.

At this point, they seek comfort and reassurance from other people. This support helps to confirm their more healthy thoughts and reactions. With assistance from friends, they begin to address the situation and move beyond the problems. Soon their mood is back to normal.

As the following example indicates, sadness is an entirely appropriate temporary response to events in life.



Tina discovers that her husband's been having an affair and is leaving her for another woman. She's devastated, and her mood falls to the floor. Initially she asks herself 'What's wrong with me?' Thoughts and images of being lonely, miserable and unloved fill her head, and she worries that she's unattractive and unlovable.