

Managing low mood

for secondary aged students



Aims and goals:

- To understand low mood
- To learn strategies to better manage low mood
- To understand our values
- To increase valued activities that boost my mood
- To learn how to problem solve things that can get in the way of increasing my mood

Introduction to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT)

This workbook can help young people learn to take care of their own mental health using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), which will help children to break unhelpful thought patterns that may be making them feel more anxious or sad.

CBT is a type of talking therapy that has been proven to help people of all ages to focus on how thoughts and emotions can affect our behaviour.

Throughout the book there are exercises (where you see the pencil diagram) for you to complete.

If you feel at anytime that you need further support, please see the numbers at the back of this workbook or contact your GP or school nurse.

If you are having any thoughts of hurting yourself please tell a safe adult immediately.



What is low mood?

Low mood can impact how you feel, how you think and things that you do.

Stressful or difficult situations can trigger it or sometimes there can be no obvious trigger. We all feel sad at times, but usually the feeling passes.

With low mood, these feelings of sadness can go on for a long time and it's hard to see a way to feel happy again.

Feeling low at times in response to difficulties in life is normal however if the low mood feels persistent and starts to make day to day activities significantly more difficult, it could be a sign of depression.

Anyone can get low mood and low mood affects everyone differently.



How low mood can present in young people



Colour in or circle any symptoms of low mood that you experience. There are some empty bubbles for you to write in any others that are not on here.

Feeling unmotivated

Losing touch with friends

Low energy levels

Trouble concentrating in school

Experiencing suicidal thoughts

Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness

Struggling with self care eg. showering, brushing teeth

Feeling restless



Changes with
appetite or
eating habits

Losing interest
in previously
enjoyable activities

Struggling
with going to
school

Spending a
lot of free time
in bed

Avoiding social
situations

changes in sleep
(sleeping too much
or not enough)

feeling irritable,
moody, argumentative
or angry

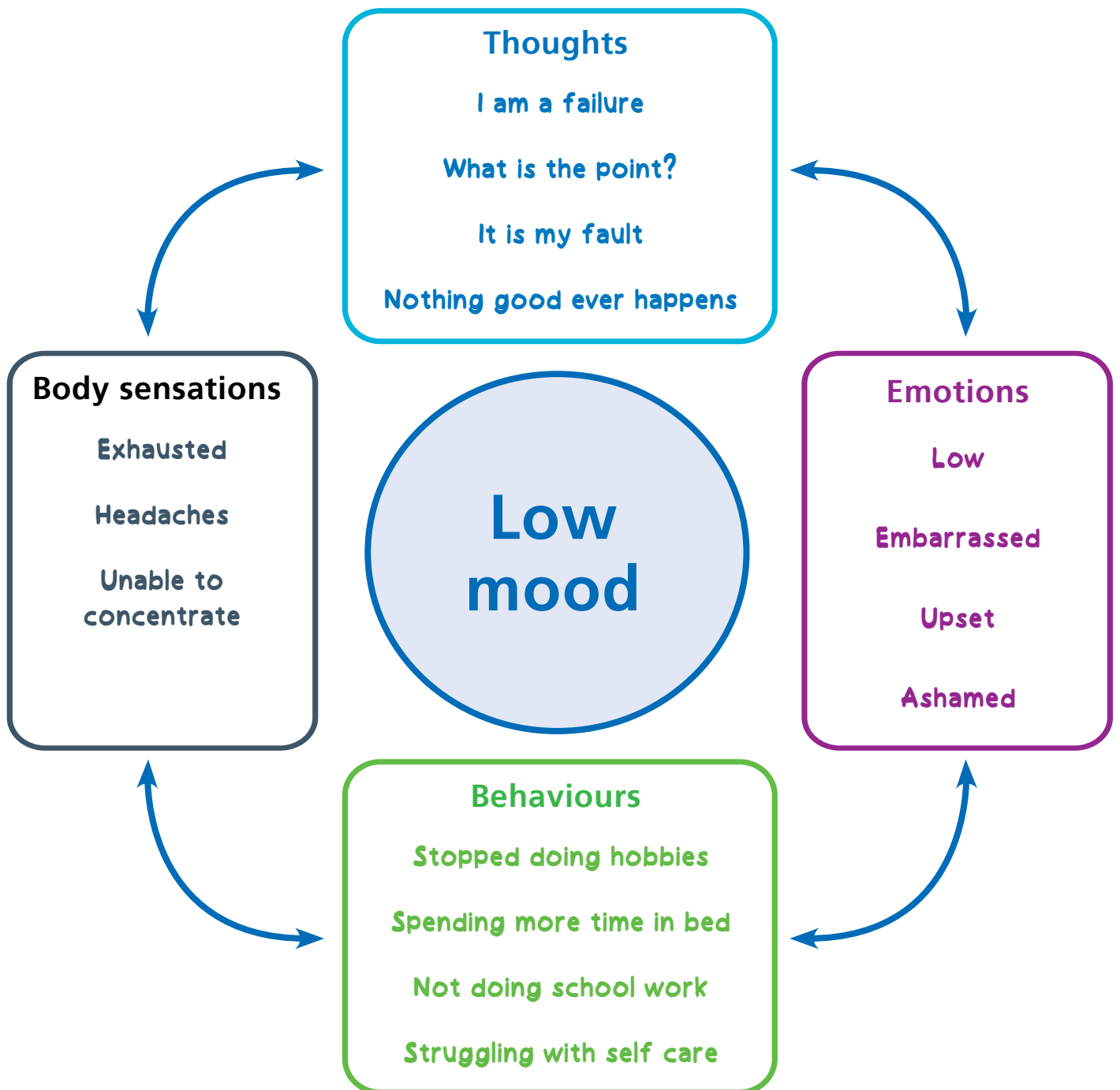
Losing interest
in school work /
home work

The vicious cycle of low mood

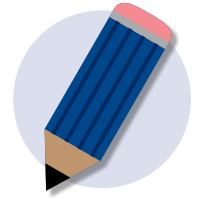
These feelings and thoughts are normal when experiencing low mood

Low mood can cause significant changes in our daily life and typically impacts on four main areas: Our thoughts, emotions, physical feelings, and behaviours.

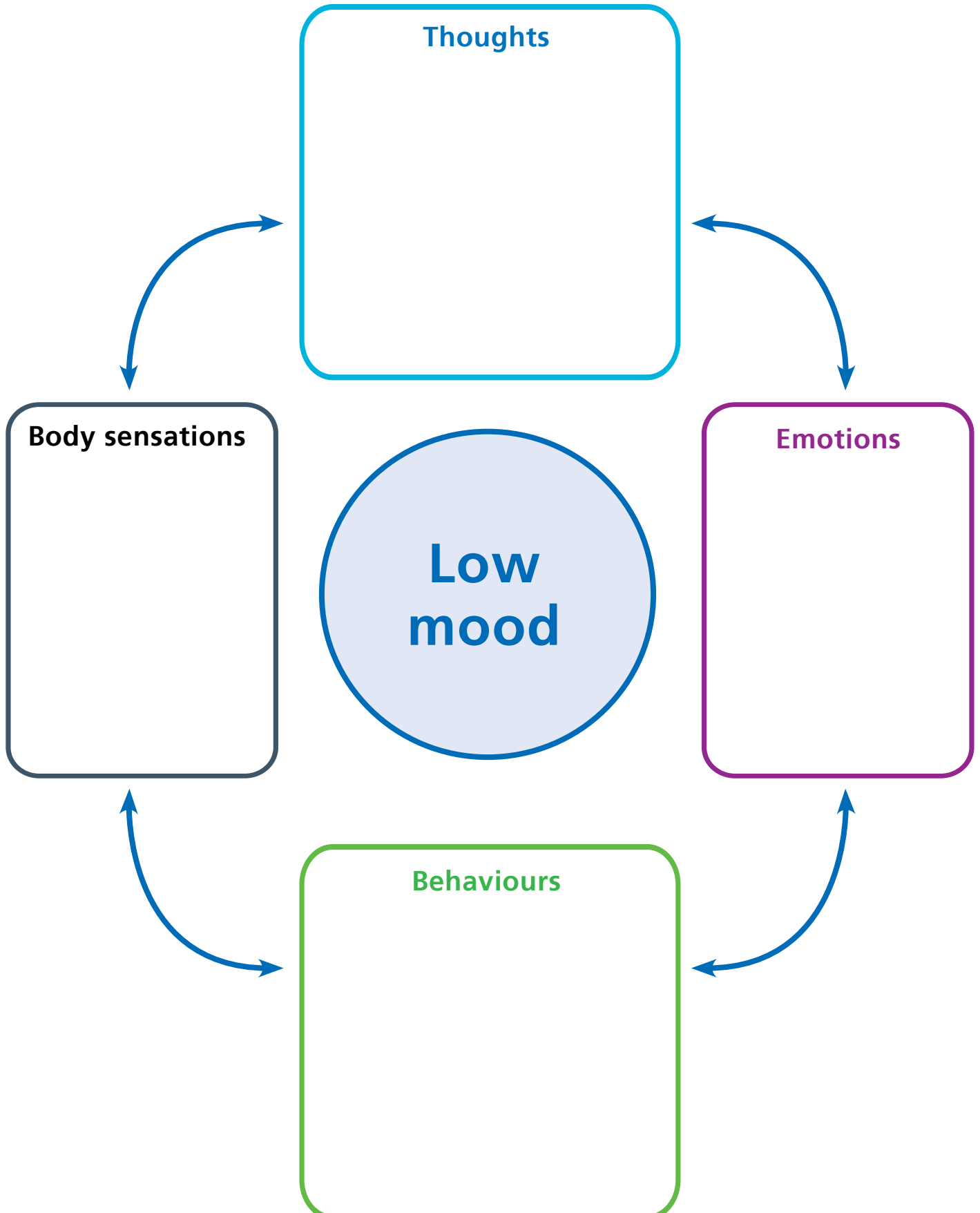
When each of these areas then start to feed into one other, this can maintain our low mood and makes it harder to break out of the cycle we are trapped in. This is what we call a vicious cycle of low mood. Here is an example:



My cycle of low mood



Fill this one in to help you see your low mood cycle.
Use the prompts from the diagram on the previous page to help you.



What causes low mood?

Relationships

Exam stress

School

Social media

Bullying

Difficult life events

Adolescent brain, puberty and hormones

Problems with our physical health

Loss

Difficulties with friendships or family

What are some common causes of low mood in young people?

Suicidal ideation
Mental Health Crisis Response Team
01744 415 640
24 hours a day
seven days a week

Adjusting to change

Day to day stress



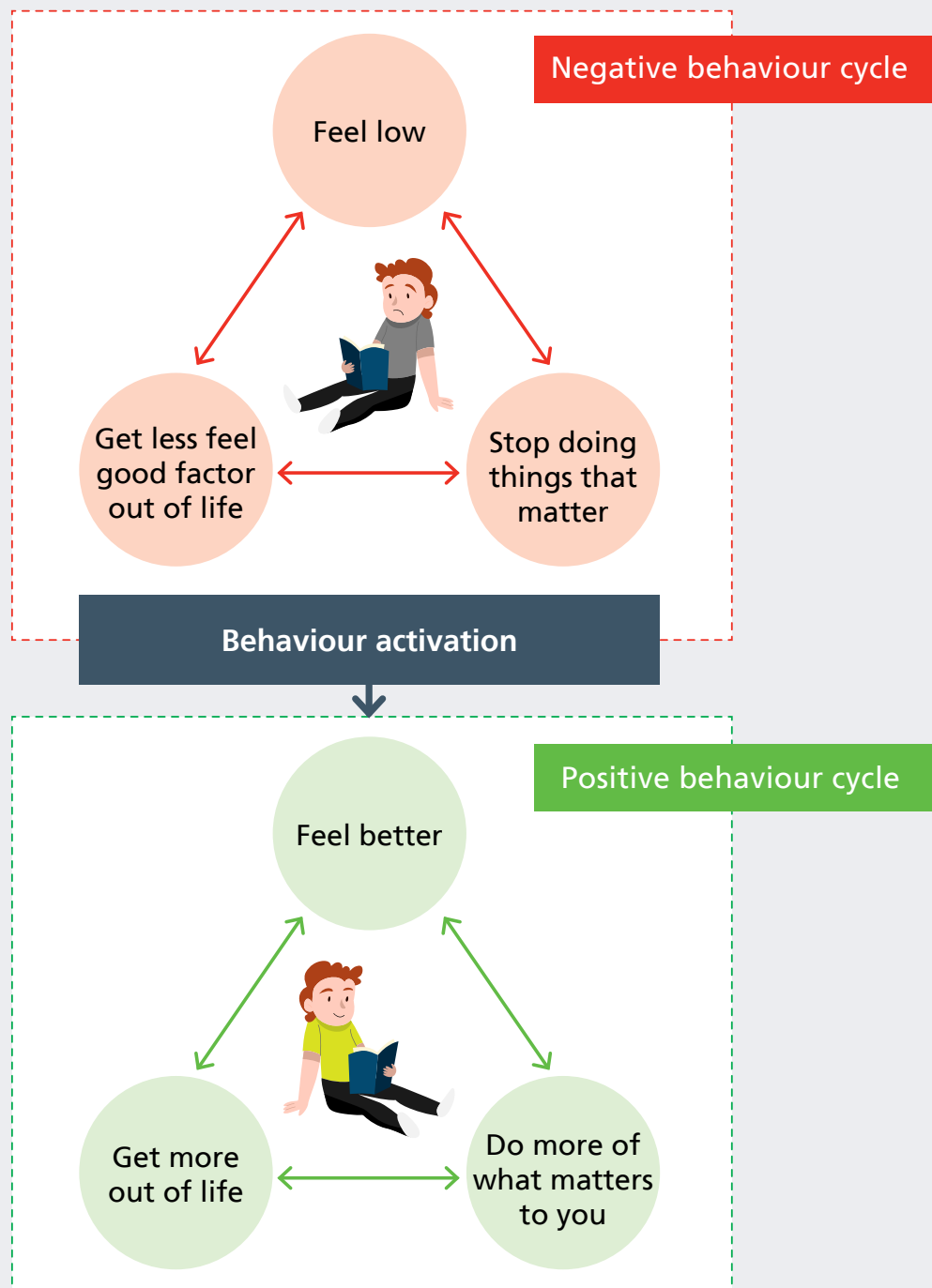
Breaking the vicious cycle

With low mood motivation, energy and enjoyment are lower and it can be more difficult to engage in the things we used to love doing.

However, the less we do, the worse we tend to feel. Doing more of the things we enjoy helps us to feel better and get more out of life.

People sometimes wait until they feel better before doing more, but it's important to do more in order to feel better.

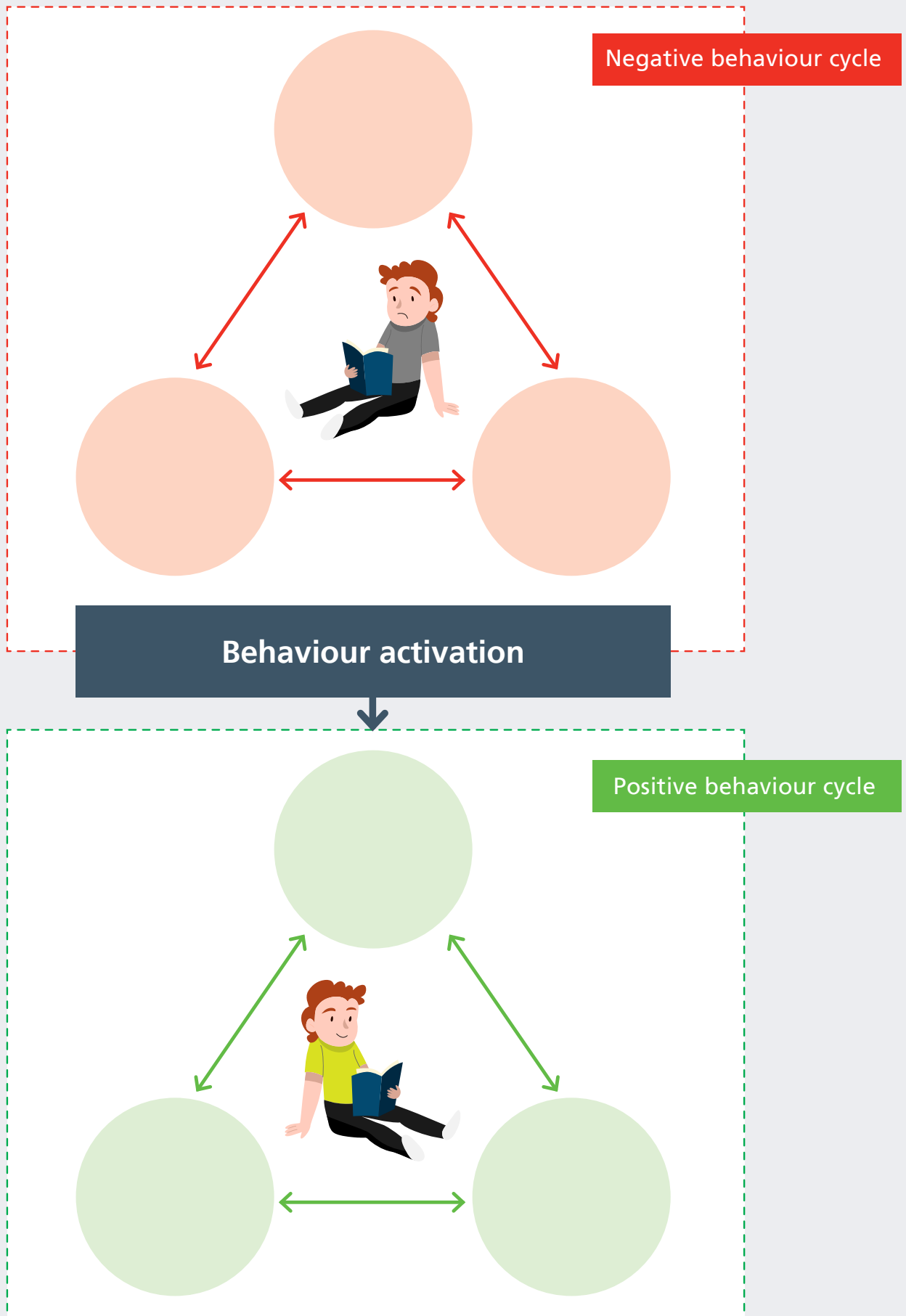
Doing different things > leads to > thinking and feeling differently.





Breaking my vicious cycle

Look at your own cycle. Have you noticed anything that you have stopped?



Monitoring our current activity levels

Try this!

The first step in breaking the low mood cycle is to monitor the activities that you are currently doing. This will allow us to notice patterns in our behaviours and where we are stuck in the cycle.

Alongside our activity levels we also monitor our mood so that we can try to identify any positive or negative links between what we are doing and how we feel, and if you have felt any sense of achievement, enjoyment or closeness in the activities that you have recorded:

A Achievement: Things that bring a sense of accomplishment.

E Enjoyment: When you feel that you are having a good time

C Closeness: Feeling connected with someone (whether that's virtually or in person)

I Importance: How important an activity is for you

Tips for monitoring your activity:

- Try to keep your diary somewhere that you will see it often such as your bedroom wall or desk
- Some people prefer to log their activity in their phones or a notepad if you are out and can't take your diary
- Setting a reminder can help with remembering to fill in the diary
- Try to log your activity as soon as it happens so you don't forget.

Whilst completing the activity log try to find one positive from your day, no matter how small this is!

For example, it might be you had a laugh with friends at lunch or did well on a test.



What have I learnt from monitoring my activity levels?



Well done for taking the time in completing the activity log.

The first step is sometimes the hardest but by getting to this part of the workbook you've done most of the hard work. Well done, keep going!

Reflect on this using the prompt questions below:

- What do you notice about your week?
- Have you noticed any patterns?
- Has anything increased your mood?
- Has anything worsened your mood?
- What do you notice about the ACES: any moments in the week that have given you a sense of achievement, closeness or enjoyment?
- What activities were important to you?

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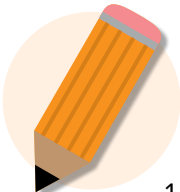
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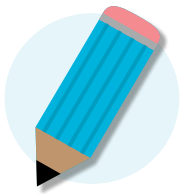
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My valued activities

Once we notice patterns in our mood we can begin to change the negative cycle. The next step is to recognise your values and what things matter to you in your life.

Once we identify what matters to us, we can then plan time to do these things and get more out of life.

About me	What matters to me?	Who matters to me?
The things I enjoy doing or find fun	What I enjoy learning about or what I want to do in the future	Family who are important to me:
Things I do to take care of myself	Things I do everyday which help me feel happy	Friends who are important to me
The things I do which help me relax or feel better	Things I feel strongly about that matter to me	Anyone else who is important to me

It can be difficult to reflect on your values, take your time, be kind to yourself. You can do this! If you do get stuck:

- Consider asking friends or family for some support
- Looking through the example activities to give you inspiration



Examples of activities

Below are some examples of activities that you may want to include in your lists.

- Going to the cinema
- Exercising
- Going to the gym
- Swimming
- Going out with friends
- Going bowling
- Texting friends
- Cooking
- Baking
- Going for a walk
- Playing an instrument
- Listening to music
- Reading a book
- Going shopping
- Crafts
- Drawing
- Taking photos
- Mindfulness colouring
- Watching your favourite TV/film
- Having a bath
- Playing computer games
- Gardening
- Going camping
- Dancing
- Going on a bike ride
- Writing
- Acting
- Spending time with family
- Spending time with pets
- Eating your favourite food
- Playing tennis
- Singing
- Playing football
- Skating
- Playing cards
- Part time job
- Sewing
- Karate
- Going to the beach
- Choir
- Cleaning
- Going to a comedy club
- Going to the theatre
- Go for a coffee
- Pottery painting
- Board games
- Rock climbing
- Make bracelets
- Crochet
- Play rugby
- Gymnastics
- Scouts
- Volunteering
- Do makeup
- Build Lego
- Play instruments
- Spend time on social media
- Inspire someone
- Learn something new
- Go to the park
- Make a meal plan
- Go to the youth zone
- Holiday clubs
- Re-arranging your room
- Make a hot chocolate
- Start a new hobby
- Start a scrap book
- Random act of kindness

Activity scheduling

Now we have spent time monitoring our activity levels and considering what activities are meaningful for us, it is time to start to plan our activities in advance for the week ahead.

We work on planning our activities in advance with the focus being on 'sticking to the plan and not the mood'.

When feeling low we are likely to act accordingly and may find ourselves cancelling plans or staying in bed if we wake up feeling low.

Instead, we focus on what we have planned for our weekly diary and try our best to stick to the activities planned.



Turning something I enjoy in to an activity

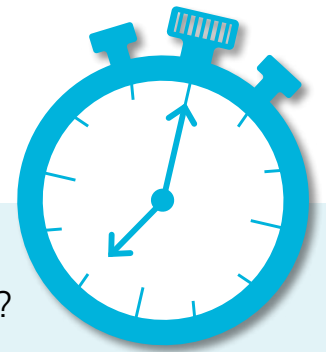
I enjoy: Baking

Valued activities:

- Looking for recipes
- Searching the cupboards and / or buying ingredients from the shops
- Baking a cake
- Sharing this with friends and family



Our tips for activity scheduling



Be as specific as possible

What day? What time? Where will you do the activity?
Who with? How long for?



It is important to start off small and work on slowly increasing your activity over time. It is great to have a long term goal, but it is important to be realistic with what we are able to do currently.

When our activity levels have been low for some time, it would be too much to fill our week full of lots of activities.

Start off with a few activities which you feel could be manageable for you and work on slowly building this each week.

It can be really hard when your first start with activity scheduling.

If it feels too overwhelming to get started with an activity, try to tell yourself you will give it a go for 5 minutes.

People often find that when they have started it is easier to continue with it, but if not you have still done well to give it a go!



Try to maintain a balance between different types of activities.

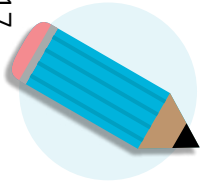
Some people find that they have been working so hard to stay on top of the things they need to do such as school, homework, chores etc. that they have had very little enjoyment in their week

Set reminders

It can be helpful to set reminders whilst you are getting into the habit of following your diary. Don't be afraid to use visual reminders and colour code your diary if this could work for you!



Schedule activities at a time you think you are most likely to succeed.



My activity schedule

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

Consider

- What will you do?
- Where will you do it?
- What time will you do it?
- Who with?
- How long will this activity happen for?

What we've learnt so far

Key Messages

We've identified valued activities that boost my mood

We've started to understand why we can feel low in mood and how we can get stuck in a vicious cycle.

We've identified what is important to you by exploring your values

Don't be too hard on yourself if you haven't been able to complete the activities.

Be kind to yourself and give yourself the time to look back through the previous pages.

Ask for help if you need support, remember you are not alone.



Throughout this workbook and in life you may come across barriers to changing your low mood or things that have stopped you from completing enjoyable activities.

We are now going to look at how to problem solve these barriers so you can get the most out of life.

**You need
8 to 10 hours
sleep every
night!**

Sleep

Everyone has times in their life when they don't sleep well.

Most young people need 8 to 10 hours sleep per night but this varies from person to person.



Why is sleep important?

Sleep is an essential part of your physical and mental wellbeing. It allows you to concentrate better and to store things you have learnt that day, improving the efficacy of your studying.

Being well rested also improves your mood, keeps your immune system strong and means you have the energy you need to exercise and enjoy your extra-curricular activities.

How to get the best night's sleep possible.



Routine

Going to bed at the same time and waking up at the same time every day, even at the weekend; is a good way to ensure you get a good night's sleep as it allows your body to create a routine.

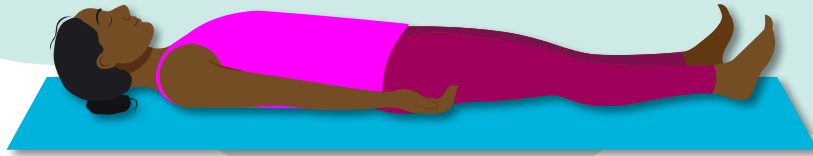
Notebook

You may find keeping a notebook by your bed helpful so that you can jot down any ideas, worries or thoughts you might have during the night and look back at them in the morning, so your mind can have a chance to rest.



Mindfulness

Practising some mindfulness or relaxation before bed, avoiding screens and social media for at least two hours before bed and not exercising immediately before hand are all good ways to help you sleep better. You could even try having a bath to help you relax.



Bedroom Environment

Don't work in your bed, try to keep it only for sleeping, this will help your brain associate that getting into bed means it is time to sleep. Make your bedroom as calming a place as possible with no bright lights and a comfortable temperature.



Caffeine

Caffeinated drinks such as coffee, tea or fizzy drinks, nicotine (from cigarettes/vapes) and alcohol can all stop you from getting to sleep or can mean your sleep pattern is interrupted and you do not wake up well rested the following day.

Exercise

Exercise can help you fall asleep faster and sleep more soundly, as long as it's done at the right time. Try to finish exercising at least three hours before bed or work out earlier in the day!



These changes may take time to improve your sleep, try each tip consistently for 2 to 3 weeks to see a difference.



The power of food

A healthy and balanced diet is important to keep your body healthy and your mind active.

Eating a range of healthy foods will help you to concentrate, be more productive, have more energy and improve your mood.

Now can you think of what food and drinks help you.



Feel better



Give you energy



Help you sleep



Problem solving

The way that we think about a situation can also impact on our mood. Over thinking can contribute to low mood so learning how to problem solve can be helpful with avoiding this.

It can become really overwhelming when we have a lot to do and don't know where to start, particularly when we are already feeling low. This is why we use a step by step approach to solving problems

What is the problem?

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Can you think of 4 things that you could do to deal with this problem? (no matter how helpful or silly!)

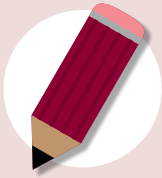
Now that we have some options, we need to work out which is the best solution

Solutions	Good things	Bad things

Which solution will you choose?

Think about which has more good than bad, which seems the easiest and which you think will solve the problem the best.

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Keeping well

Everyone is different, so it's important to think about what helps you stay healthy and well.

Fill in the boxes below to remind you of what you learnt in future.

You have worked hard to make changes to get where you are.

What have I learned about how to keep myself healthy?

What do I need to keep doing?

What times ahead might be difficult for me?

What are the early warning signs I'm struggling or that my low mood is back?

Useful websites and numbers



Do you need urgent help with your mental health?



Call **111** and select a mental health option

HOPELINE247
0800 068 41 41

Are you, or is a young person you know, not coping with life?

For confidential suicide prevention advice contact **HOPELINE247**.

Call: **0800 068 41 41**
Text: **07860 039 961**

www.papyrus-uk.org

THE MIX
Essential support for under 25s

Essential support for under 25s. Get advice about relationships, drugs, mental health, money and jobs.

0808 808 4994

4pm to 11pm Monday to Friday

One to one chat and message, visit www.themix.org.uk

 **LISTENING EAR**
someone to talk to

A charity to help those who've been bereaved, suffered loss or experienced separation.

0151 488 6648

www.listening-ear.co.uk

kooth

www.kooth.com

SAMARITANS

116 123

YOUNGMINDS
fighting for young people's mental health

www.youngminds.org.uk

childline

0800 1111

Additional info

We have other workbooks available. Please ask your local mental health support team.

We really appreciate your feedback to help us improve our service for you. Please fill out a short survey once you have completed this workbook.