

Framework for understanding my depression

Understanding how and why depression is affecting you is the best way to plan the most effective strategies for tackling it.

Use this worksheet to summarise what you know about your own depression so that you can:

- evaluate the relevance of the strategies you may already have tried
- plan further targeted strategies

1. Daily functioning

How is depression affecting *you*? Can you identify the most significant moods, thought patterns, daily habits and impacts on your functioning and general relationships and interactions with others?

Summarise your learning from the 'Am I depressed?' and the 'How my depression works' sections:

2. Triggers

What triggers have you been able to identify which may have set off a downward spiral in your life?

(eg. a traumatic event or loss, such as a bereavement or relationship break up; major change in circumstances; experiences of failure or fear of failure; illness or other period of inactivity)

Remember that because depression works in a self-reinforcing downward spiral even quite small triggers may be relevant

Summarise what you have learnt about your triggers from the Why me, why now? section:



3. Vulnerability factors

What are the possible biological, psychological and social factors which may have made you personally vulnerable to depression?

Summarise what you have learnt about your vulnerability factors from the Why me, why now? section.

You may also find the Different Perspectives section helpful if you feel that a sense of meaningless or lack of clarity about your values is relevant to your depression

4. Useful immediate strategies

What strategies have you already tried and how helpful have they been? What other strategies might help you take immediate steps to tackle your depression?

Use the Self-help first steps and then the Healthier daily routines sections to identify the most immediately effective strategies for turning the depression spiral around, and choose which are most relevant in addressing the way in which depression is affecting you:

The Tackle Depression section lists strategies in order of immediacy. If you are moderately or severely affected by your depression, or if you are having any suicidal thoughts, then your most immediate strategy should be to use the Get Support section to identify appropriate sources of help



5. Longer-term strategies

What longer-term strategies have you tried in the past and how helpful have they been? What other longer-term strategies do you think you might consider?

Use the Changing attitudes and Living well sections to identify strategies and skills for longer-term protection against depression and how to live a happier life. Choose which strategies are most relevant in addressing the triggers and vulnerabilities you have identified as pertinent to your depression:

Longer-term strategies such as identifying and challenging depressed thinking habits, learning self compassion, and healing the effect of difficult life experiences are easier to do with the help of a trained professional like a counsellor. Taking antidepressant medication under a doctor's care is another longer-term strategy which can address biological vulnerability and raise mood sufficiently to address other longer-term challenges

Evaluate:

Of the strategies identified in the last two sections of this worksheet, which would be the most effective thing for me to do next?

Commit:

In order to make a start with this next strategy, my first step is: _____

I will do this on: (date) _____

Next steps

Use this framework to review your list of depression-beating strategies using the 'Finding what works for you' section.

Goal to work towards

When you have successfully tackled your depression using some of these strategies then you may be able to use this framework to write down your own story. See the Take Action section for how to share your story on Students Against Depression.org and help others.

