



Long-Term Conditions Programme

Mood & motivation

SESSION 2 – MOOD & MOTIVATION

Mood changes

Research shows that mood changes are very common following a health event, when living with pain or related health conditions

Many people experience stress or anxiety or can become fearful or restless in response to a long-term health condition. This is a normal and understandable response.

Anxiety and fear can stop people from engaging in healthy behaviours which promote wellbeing such as becoming more active, or connecting socially.

Symptoms of anxiety

Anxiety can be triggered when we are dealing with difficult situations and managing your health and ongoing symptoms presents many challenges.

Most commonly anxiety is experienced in response to changes in heart rate or breathing faster, often alongside worry. Common symptoms include:



Behaviours

You may find yourself avoiding situations you associate with anxiety preferring to 'hide away'. You may find yourself seeking reassurance more from others and doing things that make you feel 'safe'.



Thoughts

Anxiety often presents with negative thought processes such as 'Something bad is going to happen'. You may think there is something really wrong with you or that you'll make a fool of yourself.



Physical

You may experience restlessness, a racing heartbeat, perspiration, nausea, shakiness, rapid breathing, dizziness and more frequent visits to the toilet.



Emotions

You may feel worry, dread, fear, panic or embarrassment more easily and often.



Anxiety and long-term health conditions

Changes in heart rate (beat) and breathing are common when you have anxiety, especially if you have issues relating to heart health. These physical changes can be stressful and frustrating. Sometimes they can lead to feeling fearful or panicky and can trigger something called the fight or flight response. This is explained in more detail in the sections regarding understanding stress.

After a period of ill health, you are also more likely to focus on body sensations, and anxious thoughts relating to your health. Focusing on body sensation can cause you to develop a heightened awareness of any body changes, including perfectly natural changes such as your heart rate increasing when you are more active. These anxious thoughts can develop into unhelpful cycles which increase anxiety and can even lead to panic attacks.

It is also very easy to mistake anxiety or panic symptoms as signs of serious ill health, such as thinking you are having a cardiac event making you feel even more anxious and locking you into unhelpful cycles.

**"Tell yourself firmly,
I am going to be okay."**

How can I tell if I'm experiencing panic?

- ♦ Intense fear and anxiety that usually comes on fairly suddenly but goes down after a short time
- ♦ Strong thoughts that something bad is about to happen, accompanied with physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, perspiration, shakiness and light headedness.

The 4 Corners model can help you to understand the mind – body – mood connection and how anxiety can become a vicious cycle. Practicing breathing techniques, managing your stressful thoughts and relaxation can help with managing anxiety and breaking any unhelpful patterns.

Unhelpful response



Helpful thoughts to combat my anxiety

Getting caught up in unhelpful thinking patterns can increase anxiety. It may be useful to try some helpful thoughts. Here are a few suggestions you could try. Write down any of your own that you find helpful in the box below.

- ♦ **This difficult time will pass**
- ♦ **Even though I feel anxious I can cope**
- ♦ **Anxiety symptoms are unpleasant but not dangerous**
- ♦ **Nothing awful is going to happen**
- ♦ **I’m going to be okay.**



Managing low mood and motivation

People experiencing issues related to joint pain often describe having times when they feel low or down.

Everyone experiences low mood at times in their life. Low mood may be mild and only last a short time, with little impact on your life, or it may be more severe and hold you back from getting on with your life. People with joint pain often describe having times when they feel low or down. Sometimes those periods of low mood can become prolonged.

Your mood may be affected by frustrations about not being able to get on with daily activities, particularly if you are less motivated because of the difference between your expectations and what is achievable.

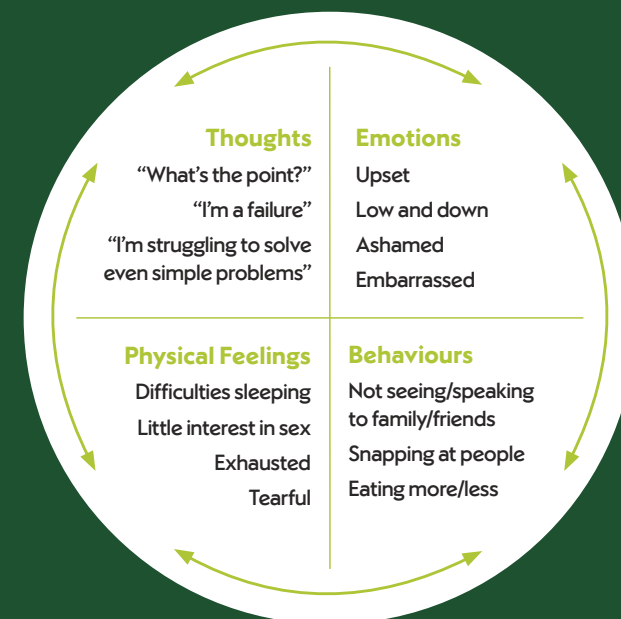
Mood, motivation and joint pain

Low mood and depression are common among people experiencing long term health conditions, recovering from health events or experiencing chronic pain.

Low mood can affect how you look after yourself and increase the risk of further ill health. If you are feeling depressed, you may be less motivated to follow healthy daily routines. You may skip important medication, avoid exercise and continue unhealthy behaviours such as smoking or drinking alcohol. Learning to manage your low mood is therefore an important part of your programme. Most commonly low mood is associated with a reduction in activities and also unhelpful thoughts.

The 4 Corners Of Me: Unhelpful Cycle

When I'm experiencing low mood



What keeps your mood low?

The way you think about yourself, how you spend your time and how you feel physically can all be affected by low mood. Changes in these areas can then lead to your mood worsening, creating a vicious circle. Events can sometimes build up and snowball to feel overwhelming. Look at the example above to see how this happens.

Activities to boost your mood

When people are feeling low, they often stop doing the things they used to do. This is especially the case when recovery feels overwhelming.

At first, doing less of certain things may help you feel better. You may feel relief around not picking up the phone to a friend or may feel better about not completing household tasks. Doing less of certain activities is a normal 'self-defence' type coping response, especially if you are already feeling exhausted and overwhelmed. Over time however you may find yourself doing less and less of these activities. In the long term, stopping doing certain activities, and withdrawing from social interaction can have a negative effect on your mood.

When you are living with a long-term health condition, it can be really difficult to do certain activities and daily routines can seem overwhelming. So, it can be helpful to start off with doing just a little at a time. Planning activities can help you start to do things you may have stopped.

There are different types of activity that we do in our lives. It is important to find a balance of doing these types of activities, by setting small, realistic and manageable activity goals. Sometimes it can take several weeks of gradually increasing a balance of activities before you notice an improvement in your mood. Keep going – remember these things take time and practice.

EXAMPLES	
Body Care	Healthy breakfast – Early night
Achievements	Paid bills – Phoned the bank
Connections	Phoned my friend – Romantic dinner
Enjoyment	Watched a movie – Took some photos
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	
Sunday	

How thoughts change your mood

Your mood may be affected by frustrations about not being able to engage in your daily activities the way you would like to.

Unhelpful thoughts

When you are living with health difficulties, chronic pain, or are unable to do your usual activities thinking patterns can change and you may begin to have unhelpful thoughts. Unhelpful thoughts tend to be negative (about the self or the future) such as 'I'm useless' or 'I'll never get better', and they undermine rather than build self-confidence and demotivate rather than motivate. Look out for unhelpful thoughts that might be keeping you in that vicious circle. These can seem to pop into your head automatically so you have to work hard to notice them. You might recognise some of these styles of thinking when you feel low.

Look out for these unhelpful thoughts and ask yourself:

- Am I being fair to myself?
- What's the evidence that this is true?
- What's the evidence that it may not be entirely true?
- What would a friend say if I said that out loud?
- What would I say to my friend if they said that?
- Is there a more balanced way of thinking about this?

Taking stock

It may be helpful to keep a diary of events, feelings and thoughts. Use the approaches described to gain more balanced thoughts and look out for unhelpful thinking styles. We've given you an example below:

EVENT

Example

A neighbour ignored me

FEELING OR EMOTION

Example

Low and depressed

THOUGHTS IN YOUR MIND

Example

She doesn't like me – nobody does

UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLE

Example

Jumping to conclusions

MORE HELPFUL THOUGHTS

Example

She's probably got something on her mind
She's usually friendly

Unhelpful thinking styles

