

# Back from the Bluez

## Module I

### **Overview of Depression**

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# What is Depression?

Many people experiencing the symptoms of depression might begin to wonder if there is something really wrong with them. One typical fear is that they might be going crazy. Unfortunately, the reactions and comments from other people such as, “Just get yourself together!” are not very helpful.

Although you might feel alone in your struggle against depressive moods, the reality is that many people experience these moods from time to time, or even regularly. In fact, it is estimated that 1 in every 4 persons experience significantly depressed mood at some time in their life.

Depression can affect any kind of person at any stage of their life. You may be an introvert or an extrovert, socially active or shy, youthful or elderly, male or female, wealthy or poor. Whatever your distinction, you can become depressed. That means that any person you know is fair game. So remember, you are not alone.

**Depression** is a word used in everyday language to describe a number of feelings, including sadness, frustration, disappointment and sometimes lethargy. However, in clinical practice, the term "Depression" or "Major Depression" differs from these everyday 'down' periods in three main ways:

- Major Depression is more intense
- Major Depression lasts longer (two weeks or more)
- Major Depression significantly interferes with effective day-to-day functioning



In this information package, the word **depression** is referring to Major Depression or clinical depression.

## Depression as a Syndrome

A syndrome is a collection of events, behaviours, or feelings that often, but not always, go together. The depression syndrome is a collection of feelings and behaviours that have been found to characterise depressed people as a group. You may find that you experience all or some of these feelings and behaviours. There are many individual differences to the number of symptoms and the extent to which different symptoms are experienced. These symptoms are described in this next section.

## Mood

Depression is considered to be a disorder of mood. Individuals who are depressed, describe low mood that has persisted for longer than two weeks. In mild forms of depression, individuals may not feel bad all day but still describe a dismal outlook and a sense of gloom. Their mood may lift with a positive experience, but fall again with even a minor disappointment. In severe depression, a low mood could persist throughout the day, failing to lift even when pleasant things occur. The low mood may fluctuate during the day – it may be worse in the morning and relatively better in the afternoon. This is called ‘diurnal variation,’ which often accompanies a more severe type of depression.

In addition to sadness, other moods common to depression are:

- anxiety
- guilt
- worthlessness and inadequacy

## Thinking

Individuals who are depressed think in certain ways. They tend to see themselves in a negative light. Often their self-esteem and self-confidence become very low. They dwell on how bad they feel, how the world is terrible, and on how hopeless everything is.

## Physical

Some people experience physical symptoms of depression.

- Sleep patterns could change. Some people may experience difficulty falling asleep. Some may wake during the night and find it difficult to go back to sleep, or wake up early in the morning. Others may find themselves sleeping more and have difficulty staying awake
- Appetite may decline and weight loss occur, or some people may find themselves eating more than usual and thus gain weight
- Sexual interest may decline
- Energy levels may fall, as does motivation to carry out everyday activities. Depressed individuals may stop doing the things they used to enjoy because they feel unmotivated or lethargic



## Interacting with Other People

Many depressed people express concern about their personal relationships. They may become unhappy and dissatisfied with their family, and other close, relationships. They may feel shy and anxious when they are with other people, especially in a group. They may feel lonely and isolated, yet at the same time, are unwilling or unable to reach out to others, even when they have the opportunities for doing so.

## What about you?

What symptoms of depression do you experience?

Turn to the next page for the Depression Symptoms Worksheet and write them down. To help you identify your symptoms of depression, ask yourself:

“How does my life change when I’m depressed?”

“What have I noticed about what I do or don’t do when I’m depressed?”

“How does my view of myself, others, and the future change when I’m depressed?”

“What do other people notice about me when I’m depressed?”

# Depressive Symptoms Worksheet

Depressive symptoms can be grouped into 3 possible categories. Some symptoms are of the physiological type, which are those that have something to do with physical sensations or your physical body, for example: insomnia, poor appetite, or low energy levels. Some symptoms are of the cognitive (thoughts) and affective (emotions) type, such as: thoughts of suicide, hopelessness, feeling sad, and crying. The third category of symptoms is to do with how you act and behave, for example: staying in bed, not going out, avoiding people.

What do **YOU** experience, when you are depressed?

## Somatic/Physiological

## Cognitive/Affective

## Behavioural

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
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# What causes Depression?

It is important to understand that depression is not caused by one thing, but probably by a combination of factors interacting with one another. These factors can be grouped into two broad categories – *biology* and *psychology*. Many biological and psychological factors interact in depression, although precisely which specific factors interact may differ from person to person.

## Biological Factors

The biological factors that might have some effect on depression include: genes, hormones, and brain chemicals.

### Genetic Factors

Depression often runs in families, which suggests that individuals may inherit genes that make them vulnerable to developing depression. However, one may inherit an increased vulnerability to the illness, but not necessarily the illness itself. Although many people may inherit the vulnerability, a great many of them may never suffer a depressive illness.

### Hormones

Research has found that there are some hormonal changes that occur in depression. The brain goes through some changes before and during a depressive episode, and certain parts of the brain are affected. This might result in an over- or under-production of some hormones, which may account for some of the symptoms of depression. Medication treatment can be effective in treating these conditions.



### Brain Chemicals (Neurotransmitters)

Nerve cells in the brain communicate to each other by specific chemical substances called neurotransmitters. It is believed that during depression, there is reduced activity of one or more of these neurotransmitter systems, and this disturbs certain areas of the brain that regulate functions such as sleep, appetite, sexual drive, and perhaps mood. The reduced level of neurotransmitters results in reduced communication between the nerve cells and accounts for the typical symptoms of depression. Many antidepressant drugs increase the neurotransmitters in the brain.

## Psychological Factors

### Thinking

Many thinking patterns are associated with depression. These thinking patterns include:

- overstressing the negative
- taking the responsibility for bad events but not for good events
- having inflexible rules about how one should behave
- thinking that you know what others are thinking and that they are thinking badly of you

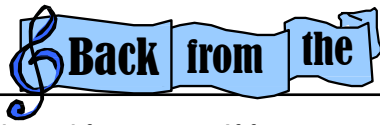
### Loss

Sometimes people experience events where loss occurs, and this can bring on depression. The experience of loss may include the loss of a loved one through bereavement or separation, loss of a job, loss of a friendship or relationship, loss of a promotion, loss of face, loss of support, etc.

### Sense of Failure

Some people may stake their happiness on achieving particular goals, such as getting 'As' on their exams, getting a particular job, earning a certain amount of profit from a business venture, or





finding a life partner. If for some reason they are not able to achieve those goals, they might believe that they have failed somehow, and it is this sense of failure that can sometimes bring on, or increase, depression.

### Stress

An accumulation of stressful life events can also bring on depression. Stressful events include situations such as unemployment, financial worries, serious difficulties with spouses, parents or children, physical illness, and major changes in life circumstances.

## **Conclusion**

While we cannot do much about the genes we have inherited, there are a number of things we can do to overcome depression, or to prevent us from becoming depressed. Your doctor may have suggested medication, especially in a severe depression. While taking medication can be of assistance in overcoming depression, there are other things you can do that will help overcome and prevent depression. The next few pages present information about some options for the psychological treatment of depression.

# Psychotherapy for Depression

Depression can be treated with medical treatments such as antidepressant medication or electroconvulsive therapy, and psychotherapy. Please see your medical doctor or psychiatrist for more information about medical treatments as this will not be discussed in this information package.

We're now going to talk briefly about two psychological therapies that have been proven to be effective most of the time. You might have come across words such as "best practice" "evidence-based practice," "evidence-based treatment" or "evidence-supported therapy." These words refer to a particular type of treatment or therapy that has been evaluated and has proven to be effective. For the treatment of depression, the evidence-supported therapies include cognitive therapy and behaviour therapy.

## Cognitive Therapy

The aim of cognitive therapy is to help individuals realise that they can influence their mood by identifying and changing their thoughts and beliefs. When people are depressed, they often think very negative thoughts about themselves, their lives, and their future. This further worsens their mood. Cognitive therapy focuses on discovering and challenging unhelpful assumptions and beliefs, and developing helpful and balanced thoughts. Cognitive therapy is also structured, time-limited, and focused on the 'here-and-now.' This form of treatment for depression has been proven to be effective when individuals are able to acquire the skills that are being taught in therapy.

## Behaviour Therapy

Depressed people tend to feel lethargic and unmotivated. They often stay at home and avoid going out and interacting with people. As such, they may miss out on opportunities that help lift their mood. Behaviour therapy aims to identify and change aspects of behaviour that may perpetuate or worsen the depression. Some behavioural strategies include: goal setting, activity scheduling, social skills training, and structured problem solving.

## In Summary ...

These two therapies have been shown to be effective most of the time. Often, a combination of these therapies are offered for people who experience depression. This information package focuses on providing information on the cognitive and behavioural aspects of depression, which includes suggested strategies for how you could better manage your mood.

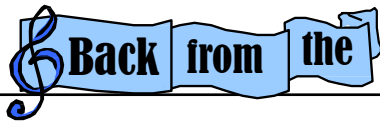
## Module Summary

- About 20% of the population experience major depression, which is a disorder of mood
- The symptoms of depression include low mood, a tendency to think very negative thoughts, low energy, lack of motivation, a tendency to sleep more, and an avoidance of social activities
- Depression is not caused by one thing, but the interaction of biological and psychological factors
- Biological factors include genes (family history), hormones, and neurotransmitters, and psychological factors include thinking styles, issues concerning loss, and stressful life events
- There are a number of treatments for depression – medical treatments and psychological treatments
- The more common and effective psychological treatments include cognitive therapy and behaviour therapy, or a combination of both

### Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss the behavioural aspects of depression that might maintain or perpetuate low mood. We will also discuss strategies and ways of overcoming these difficulties.





## About The Modules

### BACKGROUND

This module was created in the early 2000s by Clinical Psychologists at the Centre for Clinical Interventions, under the supervision of the Centre's Founding Director, Paula Nathan.

The concepts and strategies in these modules have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT for depression and anxiety is based on the approach that depression and anxiety are the result of problematic cognitions (thoughts) and behaviours.

### REFERENCES

These are some of the professional references used to create the modules in this information package.

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### “BACK FROM THE BLUEZ”

This module forms part of:

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# Back from the Bluez

## Module 2

### **Behavioural Strategies for Managing Depression**

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# Behavioural Activation: Fun & Achievement

The symptoms of depression can bring about some drastic changes in a depressed person's life, daily routines, and their behaviour. Often it is these changes that makes the depression worse and prevents the depressed person from getting better.

For example, a lack of motivation or a lack of energy can result in a depressed person cutting back on their activities, neglecting their daily tasks and responsibilities, and leaving decision-making to others. Have you noticed these changes in yourself when you are depressed?

When your activity level decreases, you may become even less motivated and more lethargic. When you stop doing the things you used to love, you miss out on experiencing pleasant feelings and positive experiences. Your depression could get worse and this becomes a vicious cycle.



Similarly, when one begins neglecting a few tasks and responsibilities at work or at home, the list may begin to pile up. As such, when a depressed person thinks about the things they have to do, they may feel overwhelmed by the pile of things they have put off doing. This may result in them feeling guilty or thinking that they are ineffective or even, a failure. This will also worsen the depression.

## Increasing Your Activity Level

One way to combat depression is to simply increase your activity level, especially in pleasurable activities – having fun – and tackling your list of tasks and responsibilities, but doing it in a realistic and achievable way, so that you set yourself up to succeed. Becoming more active has a number of advantages:

**Activity helps you to feel better.** At the very least, when you start engaging in some kind of activity, it gives your mind something else to think about – a different focus. Doing things, even a little at a time, can help give you a sense that you are moving forward, taking control of your life again, and doing something – experiencing a sense of **ACHIEVEMENT**. You may even find **PLEASURE** and enjoyment in the activities you do.

**Activity helps you to feel less tired.** Usually, when you are physically tired, you need rest. However, when you are depressed, the opposite is true. Sleeping more and sitting around doing nothing will only cause you to feel more lethargic and tired. Also, doing nothing leaves room for your mind to ruminate on depressive thoughts, which will make you feel even more depressed.



**Activity can help you think more clearly.** Once you get started, you may find that you take a different perspective on particular problems in your life. Also, because your mind takes a different focus as a result of the activity, your thoughts may become clearer.

This is one of the ways of turning the vicious cycle of depression around, by using behavioural strategies – engaging in pleasurable activities and tackling small tasks.

## Fun & Achievement

It makes good sense to do fun and pleasurable things to make yourself feel better, but these are not the only sorts of activities that will help generate positive feelings. Being depressed isn't just about feeling sad – there are a lot of other feelings involved as well, such as hopelessness, guilt, and despair. So, it also makes sense to do things that result in other positive feelings, such as achievement and a sense of purpose. When you are

planning things to do for yourself, it is important to remember to include a mixture of activities, adding those that have the potential to give you other positive feelings. An example of this is paying off money on your credit card, doing the ironing, or doing the shopping. Doing these things can help you feel more in control of your life (e.g., paying off your debts) and give you satisfaction that you have started doing something (e.g., catching up on household chores). Doing tasks that give you a sense of achievement or mastery will help you feel like you are starting to get back on top of things again. Some activities may combine the two. For example, making your bed may give you a sense of pleasure at having a neat, tidy bed, but it may also give you a sense of achievement at having done something to improve your home environment. This sense of achievement is just as important as getting pleasure out of something, and may indeed prompt you to do more.

## Start Simple

Even though there are a number of advantages in increasing your activity level, it may not be easy to get started. Often, this is because when you are depressed, you think negative thoughts such as “I won’t enjoy doing this,” or “It’s too hard,” or “I’ll probably fail at this too.” These thoughts may stop you from getting started. Often the big mistake people make is trying to do too much too soon.



When you are depressed, things that you usually don’t even have to think about doing (when you are not depressed) can seem to require a huge amount of effort. The idea is to start with small easy steps and begin with things that you can do. Think of it in terms of training for a sports event.

If you hadn’t been doing any running for 6 months, would you try and run a marathon without doing any training? Of course not! You would go on a training programme that starts out within your present capabilities, and then slowly build up your fitness and endurance. Similarly, when you are depressed, it is unreasonable to expect yourself to be able to jump out of bed and clean the house before going out to meet a friend for a late lunch. If you set your goals too high, you might end up not doing them, become disappointed in yourself, and feel worse than ever. Instead, plan to do things that are achievable at your current level of functioning. Start with small steps and slowly build yourself up to the large tasks that seem unmanageable right now. For example, aim to get out of bed for 10 minutes, then slowly build up the amount of time you are out of bed for. Don’t try to clean the whole kitchen – just aim to do the dishes. If this is too much, just stack all the dirty dishes in a pile. Aim to get one bench top clean, or just wash 5 plates. Any task can be broken down into smaller and smaller steps until you find something achievable.

Sometimes it is easier to aim to do a task for a set period of time rather than trying to achieve a set amount. Read a book for 5 minutes rather than reading a whole chapter. Say you will spend 10 minutes weeding the garden rather than aiming to weed a certain area. In this way, it will be easier for you to achieve your goal. In the beginning, the important thing is not what you do or how much you do, but simply the fact that you are **DOING**. Remember that action is the first step, not motivation, and you’ll soon find yourself feeling better!

On the next page is a Fun Activities Catalogue. There are 365 activities listed in this catalogue. Choose two or three from the list to do in the coming week. Remember to include one or two achievement-type tasks to your schedule as well. Use the worksheet on page 7 to plan ahead which activity you will do, when you will do it (date), and then rate your depression, pleasant feelings, and sense of achievement **BEFORE** and **AFTER** the activity. Take this as an experiment to evaluate your mood before and after doing an activity. See if this helps in lifting your mood.

On page 8 is a Weekly Activity Schedule. You could use this worksheet to plan your schedule for a week. Try including a few tasks you need to tackle or some errands that you need to run, and remember to add in some fun activities as well.



# Fun Activities Catalogue

The following is a list of activities that might be fun and pleasurable for you. Feel free to add your own fun activities to the list.

1. Going to a quiz or trivia night
2. Spending time in nature
3. Watching the clouds drift by
4. Debating
5. Painting my nails
6. Going ice skating, roller skating/blading
7. Scheduling a day with nothing to do
8. Giving positive feedback about something (e.g. writing a letter or email about good service)
9. Feeding the birds
10. Spending an evening with good friends
11. Making jams or preserves
12. Going out to dinner
13. Buying gifts
14. Having a political discussion
15. Repairing things around the house
16. Washing my car
17. Watching TV, videos
18. Sending a loved one a card in the mail
19. Baking something to share with others (e.g. family, neighbours, friends, work colleagues)
20. Taking a sauna, spa or a steam bath
21. Having a video call with someone who lives far away
22. Organising my wardrobe
23. Playing musical instruments
24. Going to the ballet or opera
25. Lighting scented candles, oils or incense
26. Spending time alone
27. Exercising
28. Putting up a framed picture or artwork
29. Flirting
30. Entertaining
31. Riding a motorbike
32. Wine tasting
33. Going to the planetarium or observatory
34. Birdwatching
35. Doing something spontaneously
36. Going on a picnic
37. Having a warm drink
38. Massaging hand cream into my hands
39. Fantasising about the future
40. Laughing
41. Flying a plane
42. Playing tennis or badminton
43. Jogging, walking
44. Going to home opens
45. Researching a topic of interest
46. Going to the beach
47. Redecorating
48. Volunteering for a cause I support
49. Smelling a flower
50. Opening the curtains and blinds to let light in
51. Going to the zoo or aquarium
52. Doing jigsaw puzzles
53. Donating old clothes or items to charity
54. Lying in the sun
55. Learning a magic trick
56. Talking on the phone
57. Listening to a podcast or radio show
58. Walking around my city and noticing architecture of buildings
59. Doing arts and crafts
60. Going on a ghost tour
61. Sketching, painting
62. Mowing the lawn
63. Going horseback riding
64. Doing the dishes
65. Sitting outside and listening to birds sing
66. Going to a free public lecture
67. Travelling to national parks
68. Going to a fair or fete
69. Playing cards
70. Putting moisturising cream on my face / body
71. Volunteering at an animal shelter
72. Re-watching a favourite movie
73. Gardening
74. Going camping
75. Playing volleyball
76. Going bike riding
77. Entering a competition
78. Doing crossword puzzles
79. Patting or cuddling my pet
80. Cooking a special meal
81. Soaking in the bathtub
82. Having a treatment at a day spa (e.g. facial)
83. Putting extra effort in to my appearance
84. Playing golf
85. Doing a favour for someone
86. Building a bird house or feeder

87. Clearing my email inbox
88. Planting a terrarium
89. Playing lawn games (e.g. bowls, croquet, bocce)
90. Going to a party
91. Getting out of debt/paying debts
92. Seeing and/or showing photos
93. Going on a city tour
94. Going to an agricultural show
95. Flipping through old photo albums
96. Upcycling or creatively reusing old items
97. Going sailing
98. Stretching muscles
99. Maintaining a musical instrument (e.g. restringing guitar)
100. Playing soccer
101. Buying clothes
102. Going to the botanic gardens
103. Going to a scenic spot and enjoying the view
104. Going to the speedway
105. Snuggling up with a soft blanket
106. Listening to an audiobook
107. Going to see live stand-up comedy
108. Writing down a list of things I am grateful for
109. Maintaining an aquarium
110. Playing Frisbee
111. Teaching a special skill to someone else (e.g. knitting, woodworking, painting, language)
112. Playing chess (with a friend or at a local club)
113. Going to a games arcade
114. Jumping on a trampoline
115. Sending a text message to a friend
116. Going fishing
117. Doodling
118. Putting a vase of fresh flowers in my house
119. Participating in a protest I support
120. Going to a movie
121. Surfing, bodyboarding or stand up paddle boarding
122. Baking home-made bread
123. Walking barefoot on soft grass
124. Watching a movie marathon
125. Skipping/ jumping rope
126. Being physically intimate with someone I want to be close to
127. Going to karaoke
128. Wearing an outfit that makes me feel good
129. Cooking some meals to freeze for later
130. Hobbies (stamp collecting, model building, etc.)
131. Talking to an older relative and asking them questions about their life
132. Looking at pictures of beautiful scenery
133. Having family get-togethers
134. Listening to music
135. Learning a new language
136. Taking a free online class
137. Working
138. Washing my hair
139. Singing around the house
140. Going swimming
141. De-cluttering
142. Going rock climbing
143. Whittling
144. Going on a ride at a theme park or fair
145. Arranging flowers
146. Going to the gym
147. Working on my car or bicycle
148. Juggling or learning to juggle
149. Contacting an old school friend
150. Calligraphy
151. Sleeping
152. Driving
153. Going crabbing
154. Playing with my pets
155. Abseiling
156. Going kayaking, canoeing or white-water rafting
157. Listening to the radio
158. Doing Sudoku
159. Planting vegetables or flowers
160. Walks on the riverfront/foreshore
161. Shooting pool or playing billiards
162. Getting an indoor plant
163. Surfing the internet
164. Doing embroidery, cross stitching
165. Browsing a hardware store
166. Donating blood
167. Buying books
168. Meditating
169. Training my pet to do a new trick
170. Planning a day's activities
171. Waking up early, and getting ready at a leisurely pace
172. Going to a Bingo night
173. Playing ping pong / table tennis
174. Buying an ice-cream from an ice-cream truck
175. Going on a hot air balloon ride
176. Sightseeing
177. Organising my work space
178. Dangling my feet off a jetty
179. Writing (e.g. poems, articles, blog, books)
180. Dancing in the dark



181. Listening to classical music
182. Photography
183. Watching funny videos on YouTube
184. Doing something religious or spiritual (e.g. going to church, praying)
185. Seeing a movie at the drive-in or outdoor cinema
186. Making my bed with fresh sheets
187. Lifting weights
188. Early morning coffee and newspaper
189. Planning a themed party (e.g. costume, murder mystery)
190. Wearing comfortable clothes
191. Shining my shoes
192. Acting
193. Meeting new people
194. Doing 5 minutes of calm deep breathing
195. Buying new stationary
196. Turning off electronic devices for an hour (e.g. computer, phone, TV)
197. Buying music (MP3s, CDs, records)
198. Relaxing
199. Going to a footy game (or rugby, soccer, basketball, etc.)
200. Going skiing
201. Doing woodworking
202. Planning a nice surprise for someone else
203. Playing video games
204. Holding a garage sale
205. Saying "I love you"
206. Making a playlist of upbeat songs
207. Colouring in
208. Playing laser tag or paintball
209. Joining a community choir
210. Doing a nagging task (e.g. making a phone call, scheduling an appointment, replying to an email)
211. Taking a ferry ride
212. Shaping a bonsai plant
213. Watching planes take off/ land at the airport
214. Planning my career
215. Reading non-fiction
216. Writing a song or composing music
217. Taking my dog to the park
218. Borrowing books from the library
219. Having a barbecue
220. Sewing
221. Dancing
222. Having lunch with a friend
223. Talking to or introducing myself to my neighbours
224. Holding hands
225. Having an indoor picnic
226. Reading classic literature
227. Going on a date
228. Taking children places
229. Going whale watching
230. Putting on perfume or cologne
231. Digging my toes in the sand
232. Hitting golf balls at a driving range
233. Reading magazines or newspapers
234. Calling a friend
235. Sending a handwritten letter
236. Going snorkelling
237. Going hiking, bush walking
238. Reading fiction
239. Pampering myself at home (e.g. putting on a face mask)
240. Watching my children play
241. Going to a community or school play
242. Making jewellery
243. Reading poetry
244. Going to the hills
245. Getting/giving a massage
246. Shooting hoops at the local basketball courts
247. Flying kites
248. Savouring a piece of fresh fruit
249. Playing hockey
250. Eating outside during my lunch break
251. Floating on a pool lounge
252. Making a pot of tea
253. Using special items (e.g. fine china, silver cutlery, jewellery, clothes, souvenir mugs)
254. Doing a DIY project (e.g. making homemade soap, making a mosaic)
255. Taking care of my plants
256. Telling a joke
257. Going to a public place and people watching
258. Discussing books
259. Going window shopping
260. Watching boxing, wrestling
261. Giving someone a genuine compliment
262. Practising yoga, Pilates
263. Walking around the block
264. Shaving
265. Genuinely listening to others
266. Participating in a clean-up (e.g. picking up litter at the beach or park)
267. Eating fish and chips at the beach
268. Rearranging the furniture in my house
269. Doing water aerobics
270. Blowing bubbles
271. Buying new furniture

273. Making a 'To-Do' list of tasks
274. Travelling abroad, interstate or within the state
275. Having quiet evenings
276. Geocaching
277. Singing in the shower
278. Browsing at a second hand book shop
279. Test driving an expensive car
280. Refurbishing furniture
281. Exchanging emails, chatting on the internet
282. Knitting/crocheting/quilting
283. Napping in a hammock
284. Skipping stones on the water
285. Doing ballet, jazz/tap dancing
286. Archery
287. Going on a Segway tour
288. Visiting a grandparent
289. Making a gift for someone
290. Having discussions with friends
291. Trying a new recipe
292. Playing cricket
293. Signing up for a fun run
294. Scrapbooking
295. Accepting an invitation
296. Cooking an international cuisine
297. Solving riddles
298. Scuba diving
299. Watching home videos
300. Building a sand castle
301. Planning a holiday
302. Sitting at the beach or river and watching the movement of the water
303. Watching fireworks
304. Making home-made pizza
305. Cheering for a sports team
306. Origami
307. Doing something nostalgic (e.g. eating a childhood treat, listening to music from a certain time in my life)
308. Joining a club (e.g. film, book, sewing, etc.)
309. Lighting candles
310. Going bowling
311. Going to museums, art galleries
312. Reading comics
313. Having coffee at a cafe
314. Trying new hairstyles
315. Taking a road trip
316. Watching a fireplace or campfire
317. Whistling
318. Playing darts
319. Going to a flea market
320. Working from home
272. Going to a free art exhibition
321. Buying a meal from a food truck or hawkers market and eating outdoors
322. Operating a remote control car / plane
323. Playing board games (e.g. Scrabble, Monopoly)
324. Savouring a piece of chocolate
325. Hunting for a bargain at an op shop, garage sale or auction
326. Buying, selling stocks and shares
327. Going to plays and concerts
328. Buying fresh food at the market
329. Beachcombing
330. Dining out at a restaurant or café
331. Harvesting home grown produce
332. Exploring with a metal detector
333. Giving someone a hug
334. Taking a holiday
335. Going to the hairdresser or barber
336. Swimming with dolphins
337. Picking flowers
338. Sandboarding
339. Going to the beauty salon
340. Buying myself something nice
341. Playing squash
342. Watching a sunset or sunrise
343. Star gazing
344. Watching a funny TV show or movie
345. Making pottery, or taking a pottery class
346. Playing mini golf
347. Recycling old items
348. Going to a water park
349. Practising karate, judo
350. Boxing a punching bag
351. Cleaning
352. Driving a Go Kart
353. Daydreaming
354. Learning about my family tree
355. Picking berries at a farm
356. Watching kids play sport
357. Setting up a budget
358. Writing a positive comment on a website /blog
359. Getting a manicure or pedicure
360. Collecting things (coins, shells, etc.)
361. Eating something nourishing (e.g. chicken soup)
362. Babysitting for someone
363. Taking a class (e.g. cooking, improvisation, acting, art)
364. Combing or brushing my hair
365. Writing diary/journal entries

Others:



## Behavioural Activation Worksheet

# FUN & ACHIEVEMENT

One way of combating depression is to prescribe some fun for yourself. By engaging in some simple, pleasant activities, you can improve your mood and your energy level. However, because you're feeling depressed right now, you might not experience the same level of pleasure doing an activity as when you were not depressed. But don't stop after one or two activities. Keep going and you'll find that your mood will begin to lift. Try it and see!

You may also want to engage in some simple tasks or responsibilities that you have neglected for some time. Often, accomplishing tasks can improve your motivation and give you a sense of achievement. Start with tasks that are simple and achievable. BUT remember that it is important to **BALANCE** both responsibilities and pleasurable activities. Try not to go overboard on one and leave out the other.

Use the following rating scale to rate your depression, pleasant feelings, and sense of achievement **BEFORE** and **AFTER** the activity.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Absolutely None	Minimal	Slight	Mild	Moderate	Much	Higher	Very High	Extreme

	Depression	Pleasure	Achievement
<b>Activity &amp; Date:</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	Before: _____	_____	_____
	After: _____	_____	_____
<b>Activity &amp; Date:</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	Before: _____	_____	_____
	After: _____	_____	_____
<b>Activity &amp; Date:</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	Before: _____	_____	_____
	After: _____	_____	_____
<b>Activity &amp; Date:</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 60px; margin-top: 5px;"></div>	Before: _____	_____	_____
	After: _____	_____	_____

**What did you notice about yourself?**

# Weekly Activity Schedule



Use the schedule below to plan your activities for the coming week. Make sure you balance fun and pleasurable activities with your daily responsibilities and duties.

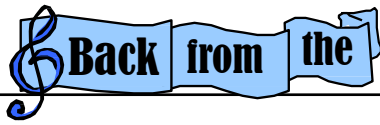
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8 to 9am							
9 to 10							
10 to 11							
11 to 12pm							
12 to 1							
1 to 2							
2 to 3							
3 to 4							
4 to 5							
5 to 6							
6 to 7							
7 to 8							
8 to 10							
10 to 12 am							

## Module Summary

- When people are depressed, they may experience a loss of motivation and energy that often stops them from engaging in activities that might lift their mood
- This decrease in activity levels may perpetuate depressed mood as people may become even less motivated and more lethargic
- Daily tasks and responsibilities might be neglected as well, and when a depressed person thinks of the things they have to do, they may feel overwhelmed by the long list
- Add a few pleasant and fun activities to your weekly schedule to help you lift your mood
- You might also want to start tackling your list of things to do by starting with small or simple tasks, to give you a sense that you have achieved something
- When you increase your activity level, this will help you feel better and less tired, and help you think more clearly

### Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss how your thoughts affect the way you feel, and what role thoughts play in maintaining depression.



## About The Modules

### BACKGROUND

This module was created in the early 2000s by Clinical Psychologists at the Centre for Clinical Interventions, under the supervision of the Centre's Founding Director, Paula Nathan.

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### “BACK FROM THE BLUEZ”

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# Back from the Bluez

## Module 3

### **The Thinking-Feeling Connection**

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# The Thinking-Feeling Connection

People often believe that the feelings and emotions they experience are determined by external events, situations, and the behaviour of others. For example, we may hear ourselves say, “My boss made me so nervous,” “My partner made me so angry,” “This trip down south made me feel so relaxed,” or “I’m depressed because I didn’t get the job I wanted.” What is the assumption underlying these statements? That someone or something other than ourselves was directly determining the feelings we experienced.

We come to these conclusions automatically without asking ourselves if this assumption is true. However, if we stop to analyse the process that links an external situation to our emotional responses, we will find that there is a step in between.

## How Our Thoughts Influence Our Feelings

What really makes us feel and respond the way we do, is often not the situation or the words and actions of another person, but how we perceive that situation or that person’s actions. It is how we see something or someone and what we think about it or them that really influences how we feel. It is our thoughts and beliefs about an event that significantly influences our emotions and actions.



Here’s an example. Suppose you went to a party and your host introduces you to Mike. As you talk to him, you notice that he does not look directly at you but often looks around the room. How would you feel if you thought, “Boy, this guy is so rude! He won’t even look at me while I’m talking with him! How nasty!” What if you thought, “Mike must think that I’m really unattractive and uninteresting. I must be a really boring person. Nobody wants to talk to me!” What about if you were to think, “Mike’s probably waiting for a friend to come. Maybe he’s getting a bit anxious.” You probably realised that you felt three different emotions as a result of those three different thoughts. Often, we are not aware of our thoughts and beliefs because they are so automatic and happen quickly. But they are there, and they affect the way we feel.

## What am I Feeling?

It is often difficult to know exactly what we are feeling, and sometimes it can also be difficult to put it into words. The list below contains words that describe feelings, and this might be a useful starting point in you being able to understand the connection between your thinking and your feelings.

### Words that Describe Feelings

Tense	Enraged	Frightened	Cheerful
Annoyed	Happy	Panicky	Euphoric
Unhappy	Exhilarated	Frustrated	Mad
Calm	Keyed up	Scared	Uneasy
Anxious	Irritated	Flat	Sad
Depressed	Joyful	Tired	Discouraged
Angry	Excited	Nervous	Jealous

This is only a limited list but it should give you an idea of the kinds of words we could use to describe our feelings.

## Automatic Thoughts

Just as we are not always conscious of the way we walk or how we drive a car, we are often not aware of our thinking. Some of our thinking is so habitual that it is automatic, and just like driving, when things are automatic, we might not be conscious of them. All of the time, our brains are turning over thoughts and ideas. However, we are not consciously aware of most of them because it happens relatively fast and we are not accustomed to slowing them down. Our automatic thoughts, however, play an important role in our emotional well-being.

There are three kinds of automatic thoughts:

**Neutral thoughts**, e.g. "I think I will buy some bread today."

**Positive thoughts**, e.g. "This is something I can do really well."

**Negative thoughts**, e.g. "I often find it hard to concentrate – I must be really stupid."

Automatic thoughts often reflect worries and concerns, however they can be about anything at all, anything we have ever seen, heard or learned. In addition, it can be anything we know about from any source at all. Obviously, though, negative automatic thoughts are the ones that can cause us emotional distress. People who are depressed tend to think negative thoughts about themselves, the world about them, and their future, and it is these thoughts that can be changed to lift your depression.



## Feelings are not Thoughts

When we first try to distinguish thoughts from feelings, it can be easy to confuse them. We might be used to talking about thoughts and feelings as being part of the same experience, but it is more helpful to separate them and remember that feelings are not thoughts. For example, you might hear a person saying "I *think* I'm anxious," but they're probably *thinking* "Everyone will laugh at me," and *feel* anxious. More commonly, you might hear someone saying something like "I *feel* that my partner doesn't appreciate the gift I bought for him," when they are actually *thinking* "My partner doesn't appreciate the gift I bought for him," and *feel* hurt.

Try the exercise on the following page and see if you can identify the possible feelings and thoughts in each of the scenarios. Remember to try and make the distinction between thoughts and feelings.

# Making the Connection

## Part One

Read the following scenarios and identify the feelings that may result from the self-statements.

### Scenario I

You've had a rather long and tiring day at work where you were helping a colleague move boxes of stationery and office equipment. You arrive home to find the front door ajar and two sets of muddy footprints (your son's and his dog's) on your cream-coloured carpet leading from the front door all the way to the back door.

#### A) You say to yourself:

"What! N@!^#\*M!! I've had such a tiring day at work and now I come home to this!!!! What have I done to deserve this! We just had the carpet cleaned last week! That naughty boy! All he cares about is himself! That inconsiderate, selfish brat! I'm gonna ground him for 2 years!!!!"

#### Possible Feelings:

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#### B) You say to yourself:

"I've told him a thousand times not to bring the dog into the house and he never listens to me. My kids don't obey even the simplest instructions. I must be the worst mother in the world. If I can't even get this right, I must be a terrible failure."

#### Possible Feelings:

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### Scenario II

One evening, your parents ask you to go over to their house for dinner. As you arrive, you noticed that it was all dark and there were no lights on. You knock on the door and ring the doorbell but no one comes to answer the door. You turn the doorknob and find that the door is unlocked. You step in and find that the house is in total darkness. Suddenly, you hear a chorus of voices shouting, "Surprise!" The lights come on and you see a group of your friends and relatives singing "Happy Birthday" to you.

#### A) You say to yourself:

"Wow! I didn't even remember that it was my birthday! What a really nice surprise! Hey, even uncle James and aunt Bertha came and they live in the country! Everyone must think I'm pretty important to throw me this party!"

#### Possible Feelings:

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## Part Two

Read the following scenarios and now fill in the self-statements that lead to the feelings experienced.

### Scenario I

You arrive home to find a note from your flatmate telling you that they have moved out. You look around and find that everything that belongs to them is gone. Moreover, their share of the rent has not been paid.

#### A) You say to yourself:

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#### Possible Feelings:

Angry

#### B) You say to yourself:

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#### Possible Feelings:

Hurt

### Scenario II

You just finished cooking dinner for you and your partner. Your partner calls to say that he/she will not be home for dinner as he/she has to work late.

#### A) You say to yourself:

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#### Possible Feelings:

Disappointed

#### B) You say to yourself:

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#### Possible Feelings:

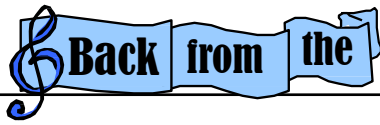
Concerned

## Module Summary

- People often think that the feelings they experience are caused by external events, situations, and the actions of others, but it is what we think about these things that really determines how we feel
- Specifically, it is our thoughts and beliefs about the situation or person that makes us feel and respond the way we do
- Thoughts come automatically to us and we are often not conscious of how or what we are thinking
- There are 3 kinds of automatic thoughts: neutral, positive, and negative
- If we feel distressed, it is often because we are thinking particularly negative thoughts that contribute to us feeling distressed
- If we want to improve how we feel, we need to begin by becoming more aware of what we are thinking and changing our thoughts

### Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss how to become more aware of our thoughts and how to identify the thoughts that cause us to feel distressed or depressed.



## About The Modules

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# Back from the Bluez

## Module 4

### **The ABC Analysis**

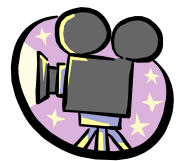
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# The ABC Analysis

We've talked about the way our thoughts affect how we feel. If we are feeling happy and excited, chances are, we have been thinking positive thoughts and about positive things. On the other hand, if we are feeling anxious, depressed, and upset, it is likely that we have been thinking negative thoughts. We call these unhelpful thoughts (simply because they lead to unpleasant feelings or unhelpful actions!). All of us, at times, think things that make us feel sad or anxious, and that is a normal part of life. However, if you often feel distressed or anxious, you might need to examine your thinking to improve how you feel.

If unhelpful thoughts lead to distressing emotions, then it might be quite reasonable to say that the most effective thing to do is to change those unhelpful thoughts to helpful ones! So, how can you do that? To start influencing the way you feel, you need to learn to be aware of, and "capture," those unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, with the ultimate aim of changing them. To do that, let's start with doing an ABC analysis.

The ABC analysis begins with identifying the '**A**' which stands for '**Activating Event**.' Simply write down an event or a situation in which you experienced a strong negative emotion, such as, depression. Record the situation the same way a video camera might record it – just the facts. This means that you do not include your thoughts about why the situation occurred, who was responsible, and how you felt about it. Just describe the event simple, without any 'frills.'

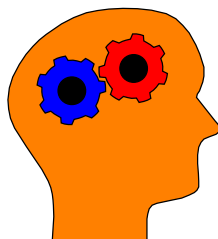


The next step is to identify the '**C**' which stands for '**Consequences**,' and this includes both your feelings and your actions/behaviour. Write down the words that best describe your feelings. Choose the feeling that best represents the emotion you actually felt at the time and underline it. Then rate the intensity of this emotion from 0 to 100. The higher the number, the more intense the emotion. You might also want to note any actions that you carried out, for example, drawing all the curtains, putting on the answering machine, and going to bed.



Now, bearing in mind the situation and the feelings you experienced, identify the '**B**,' which represents your '**Beliefs**' or thoughts, expectations, perceptions, and attitudes. Ask yourself "What was I thinking of when the event occurred?" "What was going through my mind at the time?" Write down all of these thoughts in a list. When you have completed this task, read through each statement and then underline the thought that is most associated with the primary emotion you felt during the '**A**'. We'll now call it your hot thought. Now rate how much you believe this thought on a scale from 0 to 100.

**A. Activating Event  
(Situation)**



**B. Beliefs (thoughts)**

**C. Consequences (Feelings & Actions)**

Let's look at an example. Imagine walking into a party and feeling anxious. To do an ABC analysis, you might ask yourself, "How am I making myself anxious? What am I thinking?" You might identify a thought such as, "I don't want to be here." If you only had this thought, you'd probably not experience a strong emotion but only feel mildly anxious. If you do experience a strong emotional response to this thought, it probably indicates that there are other thoughts underlying this thought. Therefore, the thought, "I don't want to be here" is only an initial thought, and you would need to discover what other unhelpful thoughts were present to invoke such a strong emotional response.

## How to Uncover Your Unhelpful Thoughts

By asking yourself a number of questions, you can uncover any other unhelpful thoughts underlying an initial thought. Let's use the example of being at the party to identify the unhelpful thoughts underlying the initial thought "I don't want to be here." The following is a description of the thoughts that might be going through your head as you uncover other unhelpful thoughts. The questions in bold are your unhelpful thought discovery questions.



"I don't want to be here".

**"I don't want to be here because...?"**

"...people will look at me and know that I am depressed"

**"...and that is bad because...?"**

"Well, they will think something is wrong with me"

**"...and what is bad about that..?"**

"....They will think I'm crazy!"

**"...and what does that say about me?"**

".....that I must be crazy."



Your task is to become an expert at identifying your unhelpful thoughts. Sometimes, one or two thoughts might not represent the other unhelpful ones you might have had. As such, to get to those other thoughts, you might need to ask some of the following questions, called Thought Discovery Questions:

"What is bad about that?"

"What is it that I see happening in this situation?"

"What am I concluding about myself or others in this situation?"

"... and that is bad because ..."

"... and what does this say about me ...?"

It is best to be as specific as you can, even if some of your unhelpful thoughts sound stupid or embarrassing when you think about them. Discovering your unhelpful thoughts, no matter how silly they sound, is important in learning how to better manage your mood.

After you have done this, we will tackle the issue of where we go from here. At this point, it is important that you understand how to identify your feelings and thoughts surrounding a particular situation, especially one in which you experienced unhelpful, negative emotions. When a person experiences unhelpful emotions, they might get a stronger physical reaction in their body, such as a tightness in the chest when anxious, an increase in blood pressure when angry, or a sense of heaviness when depressed. Emotions such as depression, guilt, fear, rage, and anxiety might also lead to avoidance and unhelpful behaviours towards yourself and others, get in the way of effective problem solving, and contribute to long term difficulties such as hypertension, heart disease, interpersonal problems, and psychological problems. Doing the ABC analysis is taking the first step toward learning to better manage your mood and helping yourself feel better.

On the next page is a Thought Diary for you to start doing an ABC analysis and recording your unhelpful thoughts. Here's an example of an ABC analysis recorded on a Thought Diary:

## Thought Diary (example)

### A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

*When my partner came home this evening, she said 'hi' but didn't give me a kiss like she usually does.*

### C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Underline the one that is most associated with the activating event.
3. Rate the intensity of those feelings (0 to 100).

*Hurt*

*Afraid* (90)

4. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

*Chest feels very tight and sore*

### B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Find the most distressing (hot) thought and underline it.
3. Rate how much you believe this thought between 0 to 100.

*"She must be tired of me moping around and feeling depressed."*

Thought discovery question: "... and what does this mean?"

*"She probably doesn't care about me anymore. Maybe she doesn't even love me anymore."* (90)

# Thought Diary

## A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

## B Beliefs

1. List all the self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?", "What was I saying to myself?", "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Find the most distressing ("hot") thought and underline it.
3. Rate how much you believe this thought between 0 and 100.

## C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Underline the one that is most associated with the activating event.
3. Rate the intensity of this feeling between 0 and 100.
4. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

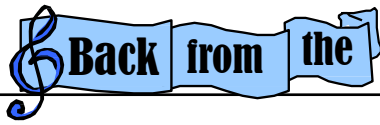


## Module Summary

- What really makes us feel the way we do, is not the situation or the words and actions of another person, but our thoughts and beliefs in response to that situation or person
- When a person experiences a negative or distressing emotion, this is usually because they have been thinking negative thoughts
- These negative thoughts are also called unhelpful thoughts because they lead to unpleasant feelings or unhelpful actions
- To begin to influence and change the way you feel, you need to be aware of your unhelpful thoughts
- Using a Thought Diary, identify the 'A' - activating event, 'B' - beliefs, thoughts, or expectations that went through your mind at the time of the event, and 'C' - consequences, which are your emotional and behavioural responses

### Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss specific trends or patterns to unhelpful thoughts that maintain unhelpful feelings and behaviours.



## About The Modules

### BACKGROUND

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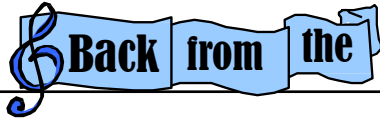
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# Back from the Bluez

## Module 5

### **Unhelpful Thinking Styles**

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# Unhelpful Thinking Styles

When a person experiences an unhelpful emotion (eg, depression or anxiety), it is usually preceded by a number of unhelpful self-statements and thoughts. Often there is a pattern to such thoughts and we call these, "unhelpful thinking styles". One of the things we have noticed is that people use unhelpful thinking styles as an automatic habit. It is something that happens out of our awareness. However, when a person consistently and constantly uses some of these styles of thinking, they can often cause themselves a great deal of emotional distress.

We are now going to describe a range of unhelpful thinking styles. A summary of all the styles are provided on this page, with further details on each style provided on subsequent pages. It might be a little too much to read everything at once, so perhaps you might want to read through this page and then choose one or two to read in detail. Can you identify any thinking patterns and styles that you often use?

## Mental Filter

This thinking style involves a "filtering in" and "filtering out" process – a sort of "tunnel vision", "focusing on only one part of a situation and ignoring the rest. Usually this means looking at the negative parts of a situation and forgetting the positive parts, and the whole picture is coloured by what may be a single negative detail.

## Jumping to Conclusions

We jump to conclusions when we assume that we know what someone else is thinking (mind reading) and when we make predictions about what is going to happen in the future (predictive thinking).

## Personalisation

This involves blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong or could go wrong, even when you may only be partly responsible or not responsible at all. You might be taking 100% responsibility for the occurrence of external events.

## Catastrophising

Catastrophising occurs when we "blow things out of proportion", and we view the situation as terrible, awful, dreadful, and horrible, even though the reality is that the problem itself is quite small.

## Black & White Thinking

This thinking style involves seeing only one extreme or the other. You are either wrong or right, good or bad and so on. There are no in-betweens or shades of gray.

## Shoulding and Musting

Sometimes by saying "I should..." or "I must..." you can put unreasonable demands or pressure on yourself and others. Although these statements are not always unhelpful (eg "I should not get drunk and drive home"), they can sometimes create unrealistic expectations.

## Overgeneralisation

When we overgeneralise, we take one instance in the past or present, and impose it on all current or future situations. If we say "You always..." or "Everyone...", or "I never..." then we are probably overgeneralising.

## Labelling

We label ourselves and others when we make global statements based on behaviour in specific situations. We might use this label even though there are many more examples that aren't consistent with that label.

## Emotional Reasoning

This thinking style involves basing your view of situations or yourself on the way you are feeling. For example, the only evidence that something bad is going to happen is that you feel like something bad is going to happen.

## Magnification and Minimisation

In this thinking style, you magnify the positive attributes of other people and minimise your own positive attributes. It's as though you're explaining away your own positive characteristics or achievements as though they're not important.

Note: Some of these styles might sound similar to one another. They are not meant to be distinct categories but to help you see if there is a kind of pattern to your thoughts. Just choose a few that might be most relevant to you.

# Unhelpful Thinking Styles: More Details

## I. Mental Filter (Selective Abstraction)

This is a "filtering in" and "filtering out" process. You can think of a mental filter as a sort of "tunnel vision" - focusing on only one part of a situation and ignoring the rest. Usually this means looking at the negative parts of a situation and forgetting the positive parts.

Here is an example:

Maybe you are out with your partner having a romantic dinner, and at the end of dinner you have a disagreement about whether to leave a tip or not. Perhaps you stew on this disagreement in the car all the way home. What do you think the effect of this thinking style will have on the way you feel?

Notice that in this example you are dwelling on a single detail out of the many details that occurred during the entire night. Notice that the detail you are dwelling on happens to be negative. You have excluded other details of the whole picture, which means that you are not remembering all the other positive experiences of the night. If you focus on this negative bit, then it is likely that you'll keep experiencing the negative feelings that go along with it.

This process also happens with the way we remember things. All the memories of our life experiences are stored in our brains. Have you ever thought of what would happen if we remembered everything all at once? We'd be pretty overwhelmed! It is natural that mental filtering occurs when we try to remember things. However, research has shown that when a person is depressed, they often remember events that are associated with negative unhelpful feelings. If they keep dwelling on these memories, how do you think they would feel?

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

## 2. Jumping to Conclusions

Most of us would have heard the phrase “You’re jumping to conclusions!” meaning that a conclusion is being made without really knowing if there is any evidence to support it. Although we might like to think that if we “have a hunch” about something it is usually right, there are times when we are not right. There are times that we keep jumping to the wrong conclusion, or the conclusions are usually negative. When we do this consistently then we can cause ourselves quite a bit of distress. There are two ways in which we often jump to conclusions – mind reading and predictive thinking.

### **Mind Reading**

As the name suggests, this is where we jump to conclusions because we assume that we know what someone else is thinking, or we know the rationale behind someone else's behaviours. This happens to be a very common style of thinking.

Have you ever had this experience? You are talking to someone, and during the conversation they look at their watch? Perhaps you’ve thought, “They must think I’m a really boring person”, or “they don’t want to be here with me.” If you jumped to these conclusions without looking closely at all the evidence, such as the fact that the person is expecting an important phone call soon, do you think you’d end up feeling happy or distressed? Let’s try another example: Your boss asks to see you. You instantly assume you know why she wants the meeting, “She’s going to tell me that I’m not good enough for this job” or , “she’s upset with the way I am doing things.” If you believed your interpretation, which has been based on your mind reading, would you be happy or anxious?

Often these conclusions are a reflection of how we think about ourselves, eg, “I think I’m boring”, “I think I’m not good enough”, “I always do things wrong”. Often we jump to the conclusion that because we think poorly of ourselves, then others must too.

### **Predictive Thinking**

We can also jump to conclusions when we start making predictions about what is going to happen on some future occasion. This is a very common way to increase anxiety and stress. These are often predictions where you overestimate the negative emotions or experiences you are going to encounter. Think through this example with us. Someone has asked you to give a talk to a group of people, you might think “I’m going to get in there and forget what I’m supposed to say, stumble over my words, and completely stuff up the presentation, and this will be terrible”. You believe this despite the fact that you have delivered many successful presentations in the past. How might you feel if you believe this?

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

### 3. Personalisation

Can you think of some occasions when something hasn't gone quite as you wanted, or the way you expected, and you've blamed yourself totally for what's happened? The toast burns at breakfast, and you blame yourself not the toaster, your child plays a wrong note at a concert, and you blame yourself for not making him practice harder. Without realising it, you relate external negative events to something you have or have not done.

When you personalise something, you take total responsibility for external events occurring, and ignoring other important factors. As a consequence you end up blaming yourself for everything that goes wrong or that could go wrong - even when you may only be partly responsible, or not responsible at all. If you were to consistently say to yourself, "This is my fault", "I'm to blame" – how do you think you'd start to feel? Carrying 100% of the responsibility is a rather large burden to bear, and one that's likely to leave you feeling discouraged or overwhelmed.

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

#### 4. Catastrophising

When someone says “you’re blowing things out of proportion”, or “you’re making a mountain out of a molehill”, chances are the person is catastrophising. This style of automatic thinking often begins with the following phrases; “What if !!!” or “Oh no ...”

Let's try some examples.

"Oh my God I have a chest pain ..... I might be having a heart attack"

"What if I disagree with my partner on this ..... I will lose an important relationship"

"I felt depressed this morning, "What if I stay depressed?"

All of these examples get at the essence of this unhelpful thinking style – that the person views the situation as terrible, awful, dreadful and horrible. Notice the appearance of other unhelpful thinking styles – a bit of predictive thinking and a bit of jumping to conclusions.

Let's look at this final example. Have you ever submitted a project, perhaps at work, and then realised that you’d made a small error? You might think “I can’t believe I made that mistake. This is going to be a poor submission, I’m going to lose the account and probably lose my job. I’ll probably never find work in this city again!” What do you think it would be like for someone with this style of thinking? Even though the reality is that the problem itself is quite small, when we catastrophise, things can get very big very quickly, and we can work ourselves up to a point where it all seems beyond our control.

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?



## 5. Black & White Thinking

When it comes to sports, you might have heard some people say “There are no second places, there is only one winner and the rest are losers” as if being the second best in the world is nothing to be proud of. Or think of the student who doesn’t get straight A’s, and thinks that they are a failure. Perhaps you’ve said something similar to yourself, “If my partner and I don’t always agree, then we have a bad relationship”, or “If I’m not the best at what I do, then I’m worthless”.

We call this all-or-nothing thinking, or black-and-white thinking because you tend to see only one extreme or the other. With this thinking, you are right or wrong, you are good or bad - there are no in-betweens, no shades of grey, and no middle ground.

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

## 6. 'Shoulding' and 'Musting'

It is quite common in everyday language to hear people use “I should”, and “I must” statements. It is not necessarily unhelpful to think, “I should get my work in on time”, it only becomes unhelpful when you use “should” and “must” statements to put unreasonable demands or pressure on yourself.

We might say “I should always get things right”, or “I must never get upset with my partner”, or “I should always cook exquisite meals.” How do you think someone would feel after making these kinds of statements over and over again? Chances are, they’ll feel guilty or disappointed in themselves.

We may also use these types of statements when we are talking about other people “She should know better than that”, “People should always keep their promises”, “People shouldn’t get angry at others”. You might have guessed that these kinds of statements leave us feeling frustrated or angry and disappointed in others.

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

## 7. Overgeneralisation

The key element in this unhelpful thinking style is to take one instance in the past or present, and to impose this on all current or future situations.

Perhaps you've said to yourself in the past "This is just so typical!" telling yourself that this is "how things always are", or "everyone's like that", or "things never turn out well for me", when, in fact, there are only a few examples to go by. Making broad, generalised and global conclusions on the basis of only a little evidence can leave us thinking that things are really uncontrollable, inevitable and out of our hands. A sense of helplessness often accompanies such overgeneralisations. If you think about personal relationships, you might notice a few overgeneralisations. Have you ever said, or heard, something like, "You never do anything romantic for me", or "I always have to take out the garbage", or "Everyone keeps having a go at me", or "Every night I come home, those kids have always left a mess!"

Notice that these unhelpful thinking styles often include words like, "all", "never", "always" and "every", when, in most cases, the "always" and "never" are not as solid as we might think they are. How do you think people would feel if they used this thinking style? They may feel frustrated, discouraged, depressed, or annoyed, amongst other things.

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

## 8. Labelling

You can probably think of times when you've bumped something off the table, or dropped a glass while washing the dishes and perhaps thought to yourself, "I'm such an idiot!" Or perhaps a friend doesn't call you to say they can't make it to your birthday party and you think, "They are so inconsiderate". It's a little like overgeneralising about people. When we make global statements about ourselves or other people, which are based on behaviour in specific situations, then we are labelling. The problem is, that by defining a person by one specific behaviour - and - usually one that we consider negative, we ignore the other positive characteristics and actions. When you step back from the situation and take a closer look, you might realise that breaking a glass doesn't mean that you're an "idiot", and the fact that you are competent in your job, or can communicate effectively with your family, might suggest otherwise. Similarly, your friend may have acted kind and considerate at other times, but something may have prevented them from calling.

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

## 9. Emotional Reasoning

This is a style of unhelpful thinking where you base your view of situations, yourself, or others on the way you are feeling. Have you ever felt anxious about something and thought to yourself, "I know this isn't going to work out well" and everything turned out just fine? If you have, it's likely that you were using emotional reasoning. In this case, we tend to take our emotions as being evidence for the truth. For example, you might be walking down the street and think "I feel anxious, I know something dangerous is going to happen", or "I feel so depressed, this must be the worst place to work in". It's like we're saying to ourselves "I feel, therefore it is" - rather than looking at what real evidence there may be. There might be no other evidence to suggest that something dangerous might happen, or that it is the worst place to work in. The only evidence you have is how you feel.

Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

## 10. Magnification and Minimisation

This is the binocular effect on thinking. Often it means that you enlarge (magnify) the positive attributes of other people and shrink (minimise) your own attributes, just like looking at the world through either end of the same pair of binoculars. Disqualifying your own attributes for achievement has negative effects. Think of the times in your own life where you might have said, or heard others say, “Oh, that doesn’t count, I was just lucky”, or “They don’t really mean it, they were just being polite”. In this way you might water down positive experiences, and even transform them into negative ones. It’s as though you’re being so humble you’re putting yourself down.

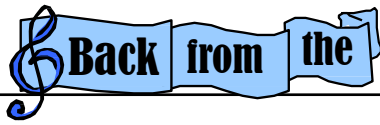
Can you think of a situation where you used this thinking style?	What were the thoughts that went through your mind?	What feelings did you experience consequent to your thinking?

## Module Summary

- Often, there is a trend or a pattern to negative and unhelpful thoughts and this can be considered as unhelpful thinking styles
- These thinking styles are unhelpful because they often focus on the negative or inaccurate part of reality
- The following are summary descriptions of the **10 Unhelpful Thinking Styles** contained in this module:
  1. **Mental Filter:** A "filtering in" and "filtering out" process. A sort of "tunnel vision," focusing on only one part of a situation and ignoring the rest. Usually this means looking at the negative parts of a situation and forgetting the positive parts – not seeing the whole picture.
  2. **Jumping to Conclusions:** Assuming that we know what someone else is thinking (mind reading) and making predictions about what is going to happen in the future (predictive thinking).
  3. **Personalisation:** Blaming yourself; taking 100% responsibility for the occurrence of external events.
  4. **Catastrophising:** Blowing things out of proportion.
  5. **Black & White Thinking:** Seeing only one extreme or the other – no in-betweens or shades of gray.
  6. **Shoulding and Musting:** Making unreasonable demands or pressure on self or others.
  7. **Overgeneralisation:** Taking one instance in the past or present, and imposing it on all current or future situations.
  8. **Labelling:** Making global statements about ourselves or others based on behaviour in specific situations.
  9. **Emotional Reasoning:** Basing your view of situations or yourself on the way you are feeling.
  10. **Magnification and Minimisation:** Magnifying the positive attributes of other people and minimising your own attributes.

### Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss how to change our unhelpful thoughts and beliefs so that we can feel better and less distressed.



## About The Modules

### BACKGROUND

This module was created in the early 2000s by Clinical Psychologists at the Centre for Clinical Interventions, under the supervision of the Centre's Founding Director, Paula Nathan.

The concepts and strategies in these modules have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT for depression and anxiety is based on the approach that depression and anxiety are the result of problematic cognitions (thoughts) and behaviours.

### REFERENCES

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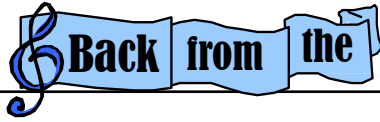
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### “BACK FROM THE BLUEZ”

This module forms part of:

Nathan, P., Rees, C., Lim, L., & Correia, H. (2003). *Back from the Bluez*. Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions





# Back from the Bluez

## Module 6

### **Detective Work and Disputation**

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# Moving on to D: Challenging Our Unhelpful Thoughts

Previously, we established that it is our thoughts that influence our feelings, emotions, and behaviours – the thoughts and feelings connection. We also discussed and identified some unhelpful thinking patterns and styles that we frequently use. Often, a depressed person will think negative thoughts that are characterised by these unhelpful thinking patterns, which lead them to feel depressed, miserable, and distressed. This, in turn, maintains and perpetuates the depression.

The key to changing the way we feel is found in challenging and changing our unhelpful thoughts and beliefs. This begins with you taking a good hard look at them. Imagine that you are a detective and a lawyer, and your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs are to be investigated or on trial.

To assess whether or not your thoughts and beliefs are valid, you need to gather and examine evidence. As such, we liken this process to that of being a detective. Therefore, “D” stands for “Detective Work” where you look for evidence that does or does not support your thoughts and beliefs. Like all good detectives, we need to find out the facts, and gather the evidence. Here are some helpful questions:

- What is the evidence (or proof) that my thoughts/beliefs are true?
- Is there any evidence that disproves my thoughts/beliefs?
- How do I know that my thoughts/beliefs are true?
- Are there facts that I’m ignoring or I’ve overlooked?
- What other explanations could there possibly be?
- How realistic are my thoughts, beliefs, and expectations?



D also stands for “Disputation.” Remember, you are also like a lawyer, asking questions that challenge your thoughts, beliefs and expectations, ultimately testing and challenging whether or not they stand true, and whether they help or hinder you. Here are some other helpful questions to ask yourself:

- What other ways are there of viewing the situation?
- How might someone else view the situation?
- If I were not depressed, how might I view the situation differently?
- Realistically, what is the likelihood of that happening?
- Is it helpful for me to think this way?

Detective work and disputation is about trying to be objective about our thoughts. It is about analysing them, assessing, and evaluating them to see if they are indeed valid and true, as opposed to accepting these thoughts and believing them without question.

In Module 4, an example of a Thought Diary was provided for you. We will continue with that example to work through the next steps of the Thought Diary, incorporating what has been discussed in this module (detective work and disputation) and the previous module (unhelpful thinking styles). In the example provided below, a section on Unhelpful Thinking Styles has been added, while sections A, B, and C of the thought diary remain the same as the example provided in Module 4.

# Thought Diary

(example)

## A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

*When my partner came home this evening, she said 'hi' but didn't give me a kiss like she usually does.*

## B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Mark the most distressing (hot) thought with an asterisk (\*).
3. Rate how much you believe this thought between 0 to 100.

*"She must be tired of me moping around and feeling depressed."*

**Thought discovery question: "... and what does this mean?"**

*"She probably doesn't care about me anymore. Maybe she doesn't even love me anymore." (90)*

## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using? (Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ignoring positives)

*Jumping to conclusions - mind reading*  
*Mental filter*



The next step requires you to begin doing some Detective Work and Disputation. The example of the Thought Diary continues below.

## D Detective Work & Disputation (Example)

Now refer to the hot thought and ask yourself: “What is the factual evidence for and against my hot thought?”

### My HOT Thought:

*She probably doesn't care for me anymore. Maybe she doesn't even love me anymore.*

#### Factual Evidence for my HOT thought

*She told me to go and see a psychologist to do something about my depression.*

#### Factual Evidence against my HOT thought

*She has been telling me that she understands my struggles and will support me through this period.*

*She made a special dinner for me last night.*

### Disputation Questions:

#### What other ways are there of viewing the situation?

*She might have had a difficult day at work and was just feeling tired and distracted.*

*She might have wanted to put the groceries away quickly.*

*She might have wanted to go to the toilet quickly.*

#### If I were not feeling this way, how might I view the situation differently?

*I might remember that she shows her affection to me in many ways.*

*I might remember that she stuck by me when we went through a rough patch.*

On the next page is a Thought Diary that incorporates all the steps up to this point. If you have completed Module 4, you might have filled out a Thought Diary. Continue with Detective Work and Disputation to challenge the unhelpful thoughts and beliefs from your thought diary. If you have not previously filled out a thought diary, this might be a good time to do one (see Module 4 for more details on how to start an ABC analysis).

# Thought Diary

## A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

## C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Mark the one that is most associated with the activating event with an asterisk (\*).
3. Rate the intensity of this feeling from 0 to 100.

4. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

## B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Mark the most distressing (hot) thought with an asterisk (\*).
3. Rate how much you believe this thought from 0 to 100.

## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using?

(Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ignoring positives)

## D Detective Work & Disputation

**Detective Work:** Now refer to the hot thought, and ask yourself, “What is the factual evidence for and against my hot thought?”

<b>My HOT Thought:</b>	
<b>Factual Evidence For My HOT Thought</b>	<b>Factual Evidence Against My HOT Thought</b>

- What other ways are there of viewing the situation?
- If I were not feeling this way, how would I view the situation?
- Realistically, what is the likelihood of that happening?
- How might someone else view the situation?
- Does it really help me to think this way?
- Think of some helpful self-statements

# Module Summary

- Detective work is about trying to be objective about our thoughts. It is evaluating if we are tuning out valuable information that may help us feel better
- Detective work requires you to gather evidence for and against your unhelpful thoughts and beliefs, particularly your hot thought for every activating event
- Disputation is about asking yourself questions that will help you look for other information around you so that you can make an informed decision about your thoughts instead of just accepting them
- Here are some typical detective work and disputation questions:
  - What experiences do I have that show that this thought/belief is not completely true all of the time?
  - What is the evidence for/against my automatic thoughts?
  - Are there other ways of viewing the situation?
  - How might someone else view the situation?
  - If I were giving advice to a friend, what would I say?
  - Are there any strengths or positives in me or in the situation that I am overlooking?

## Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss how you can develop balanced thoughts to replace any unhelpful thoughts, and ultimately improve your mood.

## About The Modules

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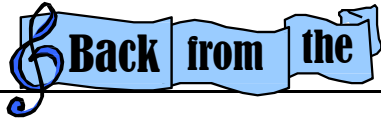
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# Back from the Bluez

## Module 7

### **The End Result**

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## E: The End Result

We've spent some time examining the link between thinking and feelings, and discussed how to identify your unhelpful thoughts and thinking styles. In the previous module, we talked about looking for evidence that might prove or disprove your unhelpful beliefs as well as considering other alternative ways of viewing the situation. Now let's look at how you can change the way you are thinking in order to improve how you are feeling.

By this time, if you have been using the Thought Diary, you would have described an **A**ctivating Event, identified your automatic and unhelpful **B**eliefs and thoughts (including the Hot Thought) that have contributed to your experiencing distressing emotions (**C**onsequences), and recognized a few unhelpful thinking styles you might have used. You would have also used the **D**etective Work and **D**isputation section to challenge your hot thought. Now, take a good look at the evidence you have listed and the answers to the other challenging questions. Is there enough evidence to believe that your hot thought is true all of the time? Are there other alternative explanations?

At this point, ask yourself, "How can I revise my hot thought to take into account all the evidence I have listed?" Then, write out an alternative explanation. This becomes your new, balanced thought. A balanced and helpful thought or belief is one that takes into consideration all the evidence, objective information, and alternative viewpoints. This is the fifth step of the ABC analysis – the **E**nd Result, where you replace your original, unhelpful thought with this new, balanced, and helpful belief.

After you have written down your new, balanced thought or belief, ask yourself, "How do I feel now?" Look at the most intense emotion you identified in section **C**, and re-rate how intense that emotion feels for you now. Often, you will find that it is not as extreme and distressing.

Finally, read through the Detective Work and Disputation section again, and re-rate how much you believe the hot thought now.

This final step of replacing your unhelpful (hot) thoughts with balanced thoughts is very important. Challenging your beliefs and evidence testing is the process of change, but the final step is where you **MAKE** the change. You'll probably find that this process becomes easier after some practice. So keep it up. Over the next two pages, an example of the full Thought Diary (steps A to E) is provided, followed by one that is blank, for your use. Keep practicing and remember that you can be your own expert at managing your moods!



# Thought Diary

(Example)

## A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

*When my partner came home this evening, she said 'hi' but didn't give me a kiss like she usually does.*

## C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Mark the one that is most associated with the activating event with an asterisk (\*).
3. Rate the intensity of those feelings (0 to 100).

*Hurt*

*Afraid (90)*

4. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions you carried out.

*Chest feels very tight and sore*

## B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Mark the most distressing (hot) thought with an asterisk(\*).
3. Rate how much you believe this thought from 0 to 100.

*"She must be tired of me moping around and feeling depressed."*

**Thought discovery question: "... and what does this mean?"**

*"She probably doesn't care about me anymore. Maybe she doesn't even love me anymore." (90)*

## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using? (Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ignoring positives)

*Jumping to conclusions - mind reading*

*Mental filter (and therefore I might be looking at only one part of the whole picture)*

## D Detective Work & Disputation (Example)

Now refer to the hot thought and ask yourself: "What is the factual evidence for and against my hot thought?"

<b>My HOT Thought:</b> <i>She probably doesn't care for me anymore. Maybe she doesn't even love me anymore.</i>	
<b>Factual Evidence for my HOT thought</b>  <i>She told me to go and see a psychologist to do something about my depression.</i>	<b>Factual Evidence against my HOT thought</b>  <i>She has been telling me that she understands my struggles and will support me through this period.</i>  <i>She made a special dinner for me last night.</i>

### Disputation Questions:

#### What other ways are there of viewing the situation?

*She might have had a difficult day at work and was just feeling tired and distracted.*  
*She might have wanted to put the groceries away quickly.*  
*She might have wanted to go to the toilet quickly.*

#### If I were not feeling this way, how might I view the situation differently?

*I might remember that she shows her affection to me in many ways.*  
*I might remember that she stuck by me when we went through a rough patch.*

## E End Result

**Balanced Thoughts:** After looking at all the evidence for and against your hot thought, and having considered the disputation questions, replace the hot thought with helpful, balanced thought/s.

*I have no evidence to conclude that she doesn't love me anymore because she didn't kiss me tonight. Maybe she had a really difficult day and was just tired and distracted. She's been such a support to me since we've been together and she shows her affection to me in many other ways.*

**Re-rate Emotion:** Now, re-rate the emotion you marked with an asterisk (\*) in C, from 1 to 100.

40

**Re-rate Hot Thought:** Read through Detective Work & Disputation. Now re-rate how much you believe the hot thought, from 0 to 100.

30

# Thought Diary

## A Activating Event

This may include an actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or physical trigger.

## B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Mark the most distressing (hot) thought with an asterisk (\*).
3. Rate how much you believe this thought from 0 to 100.

## C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Mark the one that is most associated with the activating event with an asterisk (\*).
3. Rate the intensity of this feeling from 0 to 100.

4. Jot down any physical sensations you experienced or actions carried out.

## Unhelpful Thinking Styles

Do you recognise any unhelpful thinking styles you might have been using?

(Mental filter, jumping to conclusions, personalisation, catastrophising, black & white thinking, shoulding & musting, overgeneralisation, labelling, emotional reasoning, disqualifying/ignoring positives)

## D Detective Work & Disputation

**Detective Work:** Now refer to the hot thought, and ask yourself, “What is the factual evidence for and against my hot thought?”

**My HOT Thought:**

**Factual Evidence For My HOT Thought**

**Factual Evidence Against My HOT Thought**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What other ways are there of viewing the situation?</li> <li>• If I were not feeling this way, how would I view the situation?</li> <li>• Realistically, what is the likelihood of that happening?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How might someone else view the situation?</li> <li>• Does it really help me to think this way?</li> <li>• Think of some helpful self-statements</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

## E End Result

**Balanced Thoughts:** After looking at all the evidence for and against your hot thought, and having considered the disputation questions, replace the hot thought with helpful, balanced thought/s.

**Re-rate Emotion:** Now, re-rate the emotion you marked with an asterisk (\*) in C, from 1 to 100.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Re-rate Hot Thought:** Read through Detective Work & Disputation. Now re-rate how much you believe the hot thought, from 0 to 100.

\_\_\_\_\_

# Finally... F for Following Through

Often, many people say they can understand the new helpful thought or belief in their minds, but find it difficult to “feel” it or believe it. They understand that the new belief is balanced and helpful, but at the same time, are not all that convinced. This is probably because the balanced thought or belief may have been newly ‘activated’ into the knowledge system, but has yet to be integrated into the person’s belief system.

This will take time and a bit of practice because you have probably established a habit of thinking in an unhelpful way, especially when you are depressed. Now is the time to uproot the old habits and establish a new pattern of balanced and helpful thinking. This process requires that you re-train yourself to think in a helpful way and continue to practice it until it becomes an unconscious skill. It’s all about repetition, repetition, repetition. One day, it will feel right and you might not even realise it. Remember how we learned to tie our shoelaces? We keep practicing until we are not even conscious of the way we bring the laces together and how we tie the bow. Learning to think in helpful ways goes through the same process.

## Thought Cards

You might want to write out your healthy beliefs on small cards and carry them in your pockets or handbags so that you can refer to them regularly and in situations where you may become upset or distressed. Remember that it takes a little time for a new habit to be established. Be persistent in practicing your new helpful beliefs so that they will be integrated into your belief system. Use the Thought Diary whenever you feel upset or distressed, and work through the process of identifying, challenging, and changing your unhelpful beliefs. When you become familiar with this process, you can become better at managing your moods.



## Turning Your Thoughts into Actions

Another important way of integrating the helpful and balanced thoughts into your belief system is to **ACT ON THEM!** This means applying the balanced thoughts to your life and translating them into action. Ask yourself, **“How can I change what I do to reinforce my balanced thoughts?”** In the example that we’ve been using over the last few modules, the balanced thoughts are: *“I have no evidence to conclude that she doesn’t love me anymore because she didn’t kiss me tonight. Maybe she had a really difficult day and was just tired and distracted. She’s been such a support to me since we’ve been together and she shows her affection to me in many other ways.”* What do you think this person could do to reinforce their balanced thoughts? Sometimes, taking a look at the consequences (the “C”) might give you some ideas. For example, they could get up and demonstrate their affection for their partner, or ask her how she was feeling, or offer to help with whatever she was doing. If you have completed a thought diary, you can probably already think of some ideas for yourself.

Following through is especially important if you often avoid doing certain things or avoid certain situations. Avoidance of actions or situations can maintain and perpetuate depression. Remember our discussion about behavioural activation? If you have been depressed, and have avoided social activities, you probably would miss out on experiencing pleasant feelings, and this in turn, perpetuates your depressed mood. So don’t avoid potentially pleasurable activities, go ahead and do them!

We’ve worked through a substantial portion of how you can change your thinking to combat depression. Now, just keep going. Follow through. Keep reviewing and practicing those helpful and balanced thoughts AND act on them!



# Reviewing the ABCs and the DEFs

We've spent quite a while on looking at all the different components of how thoughts influence feelings, and how you can start changing your thoughts to change your feelings. It might be useful to review this process now, and summarise all the new steps that you've learnt. Below is an outline of the general steps you need to take in order to replace unhelpful thoughts with more balanced thoughts.

## STEP 1: Recognise the activating event and the consequences ("A" & "C")

The very first step in being able to manage your feelings is to initially recognise when you are experiencing a strong feeling and to be able to name the feeling. It also means recognising what kinds of situations activate the whole thinking-feeling process and what kinds of consequences result.

- Activating events are an objective "snapshot" of the situation, with facts only – not beliefs or feelings.
- Activating events include situations and events, but also memories and thinking about something.
- Consequences include emotions especially (there could be more than one), as well as physical sensations and behaviours.
- In the thought diary, mark the strongest emotion with an asterisk (\*), then rate the intensity between 0-100.

## STEP 2: Identify the thoughts and beliefs ("B")

Now that you know what you are feeling it is necessary to identify what you are saying to yourself or thinking. These are your beliefs, and you usually need to slow down your thinking and look at what's going on beneath the surface thought to get a good idea of how your thinking is influencing your feeling.

- Use the unhelpful thought discovery questions to get at the underlying thoughts (eg "what is bad about that?")
- In the thought diary, use an asterisk (\*) to mark the "hot thought" – the thought that relates most to the strongest emotion and rate how much you believe the thought between 0-100.
- Identify any unhelpful thinking styles that relate to the unhelpful thoughts.

## STEP 3: Do some detective work and disputation to weigh up the evidence ("D")

Okay, so now you have identified the beliefs, and the "hot thought" that is producing the intense feeling. Now the next very important step is to do some detective work and disputation, examining the evidence for and against what you are thinking.

- Identify what evidence there might be for the hot thought
- Ask yourself the disputation questions, such as looking at things from a different perspective, assessing the realistic probability of things, and making sure you're not missing the positives.
- Challenge the unhelpful thinking styles

## STEP 4: Replace the unhelpful thought with a balanced thought ("E" and "F")

Now that you have thoroughly examined all of the evidence, you are in a position to generate a more balanced thought. Rather than being unrealistically positive, a balanced thought is a thought that takes into consideration the evidence that does and does not support your hot thought.

- Incorporate aspects of the evidence for and against the hot thought that can contribute to a helpful, balanced thought.
- In the thought diary, re-rate what was your most intense emotion between 0-100.
- In the thought diary, re-rate how much you believe in your hot thought between 0-100.
- Try to strengthen your new balanced thought by using thought cards or finding ways to turn your thoughts into actions.



## Module Summary

- After completing A to D, ask yourself, “How can I revise my hot thought to take into account all the evidence I have listed?” Then, write out an alternative explanation, which becomes your new, balanced thought
- A balanced thought or belief is one that takes into consideration all the evidence, objective information, and alternative viewpoints
- Replace your original, unhelpful hot thought with this new, balanced, and helpful belief
- Integrating balanced beliefs into your system takes practice and repetition
- You could write out your balanced beliefs on cards and refer to them regularly and in situations where you may become upset or distressed
- Integrating helpful and balanced thoughts into your belief system also requires you to act on them – applying them to your life and translating them into action

### Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss how to challenge strongly-held thoughts and beliefs that seem particularly hard to let go of.

## About The Modules

### BACKGROUND

This module was created in the early 2000s by Clinical Psychologists at the Centre for Clinical Interventions, under the supervision of the Centre's Founding Director, Paula Nathan.

The concepts and strategies in these modules have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT for depression and anxiety is based on the approach that depression and anxiety are the result of problematic cognitions (thoughts) and behaviours.

### REFERENCES

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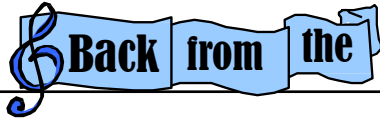
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### “BACK FROM THE BLUEZ”

This module forms part of:

Nathan, P., Rees, C., Lim, L., & Correia, H. (2003). *Back from the Bluez*. Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions



# Back from the Bluez

## Module 8

### **Core Beliefs**

Core Beliefs	2
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# Core Beliefs



By now you are probably becoming used to the process of challenging your thinking in a range of situations. You know how to identify the thoughts that are causing you distress and how to challenge them and replace them with more balanced thoughts. However, you might notice that there are times when it is harder to believe the new balanced thought and the old unhelpful thoughts seem to be very powerful. You might notice that this happens in certain kinds of situations.

A possible explanation for this 'difficulty in letting go' of an unhelpful thought is that there may be a strong core belief at the root of that unhelpful thought. **Core beliefs** are the very essence of how we see ourselves, other people, the world, and the future. Sometimes, these core beliefs become 'activated' in certain situations. Here's an example:

Erica is able to challenge her thinking in most situations. However, she has noticed that she has trouble challenging her thinking when it comes to situations involving her flat mates and the people she volunteers with at the hospital. She is troubled by feelings of depression and despair, and even after working through her thought diary, she has a tendency to believe the negative statements and continue to feel bad. In these situations, she has recognised that her thinking is often about being unlikeable. In fact, when she really looks hard at her thinking, she can see that often the underlying self-statement is, "I'm unlovable."

Core beliefs, such as the one from the above example, develop over time, usually from childhood and through the experience of significant life events or particular life circumstances. Core beliefs are strongly-held, rigid, and inflexible beliefs that are maintained by the tendency to focus on information that supports the belief and ignoring evidence that contradicts it. For example, Erica focuses on any feedback from her flat mates that isn't positive and then uses this to confirm that yet again she is unlikeable. Even neutral statements from her flat mates and friends are often interpreted as negative. Over the years, this narrow focus gives strength to the belief and Erica no longer thinks to question it. It is just totally and absolutely accepted. It is not surprising, then, that these types of beliefs are the hardest to shake.

## Identifying Themes from Thought Diaries

So, how can you start identifying your core beliefs? The first step is to look over your Thought Diaries to see if your 'hot' thoughts have any common themes. You might notice that there are certain patterns to your thoughts – similar themes that occur in the B columns. Look closely at these to identify the patterns. You may become aware of one or two common themes found in the things you say about yourself, others, and the world. In the columns below, write down the themes you might have found from your 'hot' thoughts.

## Identifying A Core Belief

The process of identifying a core belief is not a great deal different from what you have already been doing in your thought diaries. Essentially, the idea is to extend the hot thought further to reveal the bottom line or root of what you might be thinking. This is illustrated using the following example:

I am ...	Others are ...	The world is ...	The future is ...
Eg: "I am inadequate."	Eg: "People always reject me."	Eg: "The world is a dangerous place."	Eg: "The future is hopeless."

# Thought Diary

(Example)

## A Activating Event

This may be either: An actual event or situation, a thought, mental picture or recollection

*My flatmates went to see a movie together but I wasn't invited to go with them*

## C Consequences

1. Write down words describing how you feel.
2. Rate the intensity of those feelings and underline the one that is most associated with the activating event.

*Hurt (90)*

3. Jot down any physical sensation you experienced or actions carried out.

## B Beliefs

1. List all self-statements that link A to C. Ask yourself: "What was I thinking?" "What was I saying to myself?" "What was going through my head at the time?"
2. Find the most distressing (hot) thought and underline it.
3. Rate how much you believe this thought from 0 to 100.

*"My flatmates don't like me."*

**"What does that mean?"**

*"There must be something wrong with me"*

**"What does that mean?"**

*"I'll never be able to have close friends"*

**"What does that say about me?"**

*I'll never be able to have a relationship*

**"What does that mean?"**

*"I'm unlovable" (core belief)*

As you can see it takes a bit of work to get down to the actual core of what you believe. Use questions similar to the Thought Discovery Questions discussed in Module 4, such as:

- "If that's true, what does that mean?"
- "What's bad about that?"
- "What does that say about me?"

This process is like sifting through the layers of self-talk to get at what is at the bottom layer. Now, you are ready to challenge your core beliefs. Even though these beliefs are strongly held, it is important that they are challenged, just like any unhelpful thoughts. Once you have fully identified what you are telling yourself, you can begin to see if your core beliefs hold up against all that you have experienced. This process of challenging your core beliefs may not be an easy one. If you find the process too difficult or distressing, do consider seeing a mental health professional and discussing this with them.

## Challenging Your Core Beliefs

To evaluate and challenge your core beliefs, ask yourself "What experiences do I have that show that this belief is not completely true all the time?" Use the space below to list as many experiences, and be as specific, as possible. Remember to write down everything even when you're not sure if they are relevant.

When you have considered all the experiences you have written down, develop an alternative, balanced core belief. Remember that these experiences show that your unhelpful core belief is not completely true all the time. What would be an appropriate balanced and helpful core belief? Write this down.

In the example of Erica, some of the experiences that go against her core belief ("I am unlovable") might be:

1. When I was in school, I had 4 really good friends. We hung out together every day. Unfortunately, we didn't keep in contact after we left school, but I did have friends who liked me.
2. I had a neighbour who became quite a good friend. She would tell me a lot about herself. She's married and moved over east now, but we occasionally keep in touch.
3. At the hospital where I volunteer, there's someone I sometimes have coffee with.

Her balanced core belief might be: “Not everyone will like me all the time, but I am likeable to some people.”

**Core belief to be challenged:**

**Experiences that show that this belief is not COMPLETELY true ALL the time:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

**Balanced Core Belief:**

## Behavioural Experiments

You could also try doing a behavioural experiment to challenge those hard-to-budge unhelpful core beliefs. The purpose of doing an experiment is to find out how true your core beliefs are. Here's how you could conduct an experiment.

1. Write down the core belief you want to test
2. Think of a few tasks you could do to test your core belief
3. Write down what you would expect would happen if your core belief were true.
4. Carry out the tasks
5. Record what actually happened when you carried out the tasks
6. Compare the actual results with your prediction and write down what you might have learned from the experiment. Then, write down a new balanced belief that fits with your conclusion.

Let's use the example of Erica to illustrate this process for you. Use the blank behavioural experiment record provided below, and a Core Beliefs Worksheet on the next page, to challenge your unhelpful core beliefs.

<b>Core belief to be tested:</b> <i>I'm unlovable</i>		
<b>Task/s:</b> <i>Smile and say hello to 5 nurses I don't know</i>  <i>Ask 3 persons I volunteer with to have coffee with me</i>	<b>Prediction:</b> <i>They will look away or mumble something and then walk away</i>  <i>They will all say no</i>	<b>What actually happened:</b> <i>1 mumbled something</i> <i>3 said hello</i> <i>1 stopped to chat</i>  <i>2 said they were busy, 1 said yes</i>
<b>Conclusion:</b> <i>From this experiment, I realise that I am not totally unlovable or unlikeable. I definitely know some people who like me and are friendly with me. Therefore, my core belief is not always true.</i>		
<b>Balanced core belief:</b> <i>Not everyone will like me all the time, but I am likeable to some people.</i>		

<b>Core belief to be tested:</b>		
<b>Task/s:</b>	<b>Prediction:</b>	<b>What actually happened:</b>
<b>Conclusion:</b>		
<b>Balanced core belief:</b>		



# Core Beliefs Worksheet

Core belief to be challenged:

Experiences that show that this belief is not COMPLETELY true ALL the time

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Balanced core belief:

Core belief to be tested:

Task/s:

Prediction:

What actually happened:

Conclusion:

Balanced core belief:



## Following Through

You might find it useful to write your balanced core beliefs onto cards that you can carry around with you as a reminder when this type of thinking is triggered. Remember, unhelpful core beliefs are approached just the same as any other type of unhelpful thinking – they just take some extra work on your part. Once you've gathered evidence against your unhelpful core beliefs, conducted a behavioural experiment to test them, and have developed balanced core beliefs, follow through on them.

Balanced core beliefs require careful nurturing and 'tender loving care.' Affirm yourself by using positive self-statements, remind yourself of all the evidence against the unhelpful core belief. Also, act against your unhelpful core belief. If you have previously avoided doing certain things because of your unhelpful core belief, now is the time to act against it, and stop avoiding those things. Ask yourself, "If I really believed my balanced belief, what are the things I would do?" Then, go out and do them. The more you do these things, the more you will come to believe your balanced beliefs. Over time, these new core beliefs will be integrated into your belief system.

## Module Summary

- Sometimes, it may be difficult to believe balanced thoughts in certain situations because there may be a strong core belief operating in that particular situation
- Core beliefs are the very essence of how we see ourselves, other people, the world, and the future. They are strongly-held, rigid, and inflexible beliefs that are maintained by the tendency to focus on information that supports the belief and ignoring evidence that contradicts it. Such beliefs are often unquestioned – they are just totally and absolutely accepted
- Core beliefs can be identified by looking over your thought diaries to see if your ‘hot’ thoughts have any common themes
- You can get to the core of what you believe by asking yourself “What does that mean?” after an unhelpful thought or a ‘hot’ thought
- To evaluate and challenge your unhelpful core beliefs, ask yourself, “What experiences do I have that show that this belief is not completely true all the time?”
- Core beliefs can also be challenged by conducting a behavioural experiment, which aims to find how true your core beliefs really are
- Plan a few tasks to test your belief, write down what you expect will happen, carry out the tasks, record what actually happened and compare this with your prediction
- Develop an alternative, balanced core belief to replace the unhelpful core belief
- Remind yourself of your balanced core belief by writing it on a card and carry it around with you and affirm yourself with positive self-statements
- Follow through on your balanced core belief by putting it into action

### Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss how you can maintain the gains you have made, stay healthy, and enhance your wellbeing.

## About The Modules

### BACKGROUND

This module was created in the early 2000s by Clinical Psychologists at the Centre for Clinical Interventions, under the supervision of the Centre's Founding Director, Paula Nathan.

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### “BACK FROM THE BLUEZ”

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# Back from the Bluez

## Module 9

### **Self-Management**

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# Maintaining Your Gains and Staying Well



into your lifestyle.

Congratulations on making it to the end of this information package! We're glad you stayed on with us. If you haven't read all the modules, it might be good to go back to the ones you missed. However, the most important thing for you now is to keep practising some of the strategies you might have learned through reading the modules in this info-pack. This means continuing to apply all of the useful skills and insights about yourself you might have gained. If you continue practising the concepts and skills you have learned, they will become like habits that have been integrated

There are also some important things you will need to do in order to make the most of what you have learned to stay well or gain that extra improvement. The easiest way to summarise this is by looking at the "Healthy Me" worksheet on the next page. It shows the main areas of your life that you should give some attention to in order for you to continue maintaining your gains.

You will notice that on the "Healthy Me" Worksheet, each heading has spaces left blank for you to write in what you will need to attend to. For example, under Self-Care you might write: "I will shop every week and purchase fruit and vegetables, and avoid eating take-out. Under Social Activities you might write: "I will visit friends at least once each week." You may want to update this worksheet on a regular basis when you need to extend your goals or modify them. We really encourage you to do this, as it will enable you to keep track of things.

There are some important things to remember about monitoring and managing yourself.

## 1. Expect Slip-Ups and Down Days

Slip-ups in progress can happen at any time and are to be expected. Try not to fall into the trap of believing that you are 'back to square one' as this will only make you feel worse. Use your skills of challenging your thinking to help when this situation occurs. It might be useful to remind yourself that most people have 'down days' or days where life's hassles are harder to deal with – its part of being human! Also, you can use setbacks as a way of learning something new about yourself to help avoid similar problems in the future.

## 2. Social Support

It is wise to find someone with whom you can sit down and have a good talk. This doesn't mean a therapy session where you pour out your heart but rather just a chance to talk through what's going on in your life, what your goals are, and generally just to ventilate with someone you trust. Often, problems seem bigger than they really are when a person tries to deal with them on their own. Hearing yourself talk through something can help to put it into perspective. Socialising is also fun and will help you to keep on track with scheduling of pleasant events.



Remember – progress may be a bumpy road at times but it will be a rewarding journey on the whole!

**Balanced Thoughts**

**Social Activities**

**Pleasant Activities**

*Healthy*



*ME*

**Exercise**

**Relaxation**

**Self-Care**

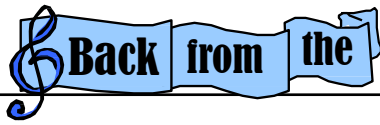
**Goals**

**Social Support**

## Module Summary

- It is important that you keep applying and practicing the strategies you learned through reading the modules in this info-pack
- Consistent and continuous practice will enable you to integrate the strategies into your lifestyle
- Slip-ups and down days are part and parcel of life – expect them and challenge any unhelpful thoughts that might get in the way of your progress
- Find some friends with whom you can be with and talk to. A group of friends can be a source of social support and good company for social activities

We hope that you have found this information package to be of benefit to you and that you will maintain all the gains you have made. If you have questions about medication or psychotherapy for depression, do go and see your doctor or an appropriate mental health practitioner. For now, it's goodbye from us at CCI. Take care!



## About The Modules

### BACKGROUND

This module was created in the early 2000s by Clinical Psychologists at the Centre for Clinical Interventions, under the supervision of the Centre's Founding Director, Paula Nathan.

The concepts and strategies in these modules have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT for depression and anxiety is based on the approach that depression and anxiety are the result of problematic cognitions (thoughts) and behaviours.

### REFERENCES

These are some of the professional references used to create the modules in this information package.

Beck, A. T., Rush, A. J., Shaw, B. F., Emery, G. (1979). Cognitive Therapy of Depression. New York: The Guildford Press.

Beck, J.S. (1995) Cognitive therapy: Basics and beyond. New York: The Guilford Press

Barlow, D.H. (2001). Clinical handbook of psychological disorders: A step-by-step treatment manual (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.) New York: The Guilford Press

Clark, M.D. & Fairburn, C.C. (1997) Science and practice of cognitive behaviour therapy. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Dobson, K.S., & Craig, K.A. (1998) Empirically supported therapies: Best practice in professional psychology. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Hawton, K., Salkovskis, P.M., Kirk, J., & Clark, D.M. (1989) Cognitive behaviour therapy for psychiatric problems: A practical guide. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Nathan, P.E. & Gorman, J.M. (2002) (Eds.) A guide to treatments that work (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) New York: Oxford University Press.

### “BACK FROM THE BLUEZ”

This module forms part of:

Nathan, P., Rees, C., Lim, L., & Correia, H. (2003). *Back from the Bluez*. Perth, Western Australia: Centre for Clinical Interventions