

■ Why do I feel good one day and bad the next?

Everybody's moods go up and down. Sometimes we have a good day, sometimes we have a bad day. Very often these changes in mood are so small we don't notice them. When you have been feeling anxious or depressed you are sensitised to your own reactions. You are on the look-out for any minor changes that might occur. When normal fluctuations occur, which you may have paid little attention to previously, you notice them. This attention with its associated worrying thoughts means that those minor changes become exaggerated and magnified. Your mood tends to go up and down like a roller coaster with high peaks and low troughs.

To counteract this tendency, first you have to recognise that it is happening. Then watch out for your thoughts. Are you allowing 'all-or-nothing thinking' or 'catastrophising' to take place? Do you think when the day starts badly, 'Oh no, today's going to be terrible, I might as well not bother. I'm not getting any better'? Challenge that thought and change it to, 'It's just a bad day, no more, or less. Everybody has them.'

■ How long do I need to keep practice going?

Sometimes when people confront a fear or phobia they expose themselves to the anxiety-provoking situation once or twice and say 'I'm cured, I've cracked it', and then stop putting themselves back into that situation. Research suggests that for a fear to be truly banished, you have to return regularly to the avoided situation, otherwise there is a tendency for the fear to return. So, keep practice going. Watch out for subtle avoidance when you say to yourself, 'I've done it once, I'm OK now, I don't need to do it again.'

■ Dealing with setbacks

Expect setbacks and you won't be disappointed. Most people will have setbacks; the important thing is not to be demoralised. Be aware of saying to yourself: 'I'm fine now, everything is

OK'. Even when you are doing well expect a setback – plan for it. When it occurs don't be demoralised; it is likely to be one step back but three steps forward. Setbacks come to instruct.

■ Are you looking after yourself?

Are you getting enough fun out of life? When we are under stress the pleasurable activities get squeezed out by everyday life. Hobbies get dropped, we see friends less often. It is important to reverse this process and restart the things that you used to enjoy. Make a list of all the things you used to enjoy in the past and push yourself into restarting some of these activities. Treat yourself occasionally.