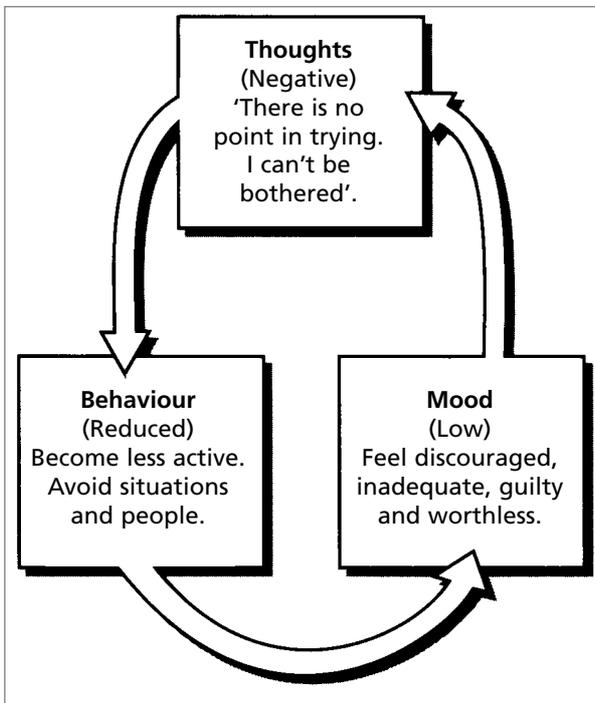


'Action may not always bring happiness; but there is no happiness without action'

– Benjamin Disraeli –

■ The problem

Feeling depressed is a vicious spiral. Your negative thoughts make you feel miserable, inadequate and discouraged, which means you feel slowed down and tired and less inclined to be active. Your activity level goes down; you start to avoid situations, which means that you don't have positive thoughts and experiences; your confidence is further reduced, which increases the negative thoughts and low mood and so on the less you do, the less you want to do.



■ The way out

Becoming more active is one way of breaking this vicious depressive spiral because:

Activity makes us feel less tired

Normally when you feel tired you need a rest but when you are feeling depressed the opposite is true – you need to do more. Doing nothing makes you feel more exhausted and lethargic.

Activity distract us

Being active gives your mind something different to think about instead of dwelling on worrying negative thoughts when you are inactive.

Activity improves our confidence

Being active gives you more of a sense that you are taking control of your life again and achieving something worthwhile. Small steps help rebuild shattered confidence. Then there is a chain reaction effect where you feel motivated to try to achieve something else.

Activity improves our thinking

Activity improves our thinking and memory and helps us to get problems into a more realistic perspective.

Activity can involve others

People who care about you will probably be pleased to see you more active, which may make you feel better. Being more involved with people improves your chances of feeling better.

■ What to do

Begin by setting yourself simple tasks, such as making a phone call or doing the shopping. Jot down a list of tasks that are 'out of grasp but not out of reach'. Accept that the tasks are difficult and require effort. Being depressed is a little like having flu – you feel sluggish, its an effort. Do not expect to find these activities immediately enjoyable – nevertheless it is a first step.