

You are probably reading this because you are currently feeling like you are suffering with depression, low mood, or maybe you know someone close to you who is. Please know that whatever heavy feelings you are navigating right now, you are not alone, and there is a supportive path forward.

Depression is far more than simply feeling sad or going through a difficult week. It is a persistent, systemic mental health condition that impacts how you think, feel, sleep, and interact with the world around you. Often arriving quietly, it can cast a heavy, fog-like weight over a person's life, stripping away motivation and flattening everyday experiences.

**A Vital Truth:** Depression is not a reflection of personal weakness, a flaw in character, or a lack of willpower. It is a complex interaction of both biological and psychological factors:

- **Biological Factors:** It involves physical shifts in your body, including changes in neurotransmitters (chemical messengers in the brain like serotonin and dopamine), hormonal imbalances (such as elevated stress hormones like cortisol), and genetic predispositions that influence how your nervous system handles stress.
- **Psychological & Situational Factors:** It is deeply shaped by your environment and life events—such as loss and grief, chronic situational stress, relationship difficulties, trauma, or feeling stuck in low-reward environments that deplete your mental energy.

Recognizing this medical and situational reality means understanding that depression requires structured strategy and professional support, rather than simply trying to "snap out of it."

## What Does Depression Feel Like?

Depression operates symmetrically across multiple domains of our life. When an external trigger or internal shift occurs, it fundamentally structures our cognitions, body mechanics, and behavioural choices.

### 1. The Situation (Trigger Example)

*Events or transitions that can precipitate low mood:*

- Facing a major life change, professional setback, or relationship breakdown.
- Experiencing a prolonged period of chronic stress, bereavement, or physical illness.
- A buildup of minor unresolved issues, leading to feeling stuck.

### 2. Thoughts (Cognitive Triad)

*The self-critical, heavy narrative your mind spins:*

- **Self:** "I am a failure; I cannot do anything right."
- **World:** "Nothing matters; everything is too difficult and exhausting."
- **Future:** "Things will never change; it is hopeless to try."

### 3. Physical Symptoms (Biological Autonomic Shifts)

### 4. Behaviours (Withdrawal Cycles)

*How the body holds the emotional weight:*

- Deep, unrefreshing fatigue and a feeling of physical heaviness.
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia or oversleeping/hypersomnia).
- Significant disruption in appetite (loss of appetite or emotional overeating).
- A general physical slowing down (sluggishness) or inner restlessness.

*The common shifts in daily action and patterns:*

- **Social Withdrawal:** Isolating from friends, avoiding phone calls, or declining invitations.
- **Inactivity:** Letting go of hobbies, regular exercise, or daily self-care tasks.
- Procrastination and neglecting work or domestic responsibilities due to lack of drive.

## The Lethargy Loop

Depression sustains itself through a powerful, draining cycle. When energy levels drop, motivation declines, leading to a reduction in active behaviour (such as withdrawing socially or staying in bed). While this isolation offers temporary safety, it unfortunately decreases the opportunities for positive reinforcement or connection. The brain interprets this lack of activity as confirmation of hopelessness, further draining energy and deepening the depression loop.

## Practical Steps to Manage Low Mood

While counselling builds a steady space to work through deeper patterns, these active, small-scale self-care strategies can help begin shifting your momentum today:

### 1. Behavioural Activation (Small Steps First)

Do not wait until you feel motivated to act; motivation follows action. Pick one tiny, low-demand task (e.g., washing a single dish, stepping outside for two minutes, or making your bed). Fulfilling a microscopic task triggers small shifts in brain chemistry, gradually chipping away at inertia.

### 2. The Five-Minute Rule

Commit to an activity for just five minutes. If your mind is screaming that you are too tired to read, clean, or walk, tell yourself: "I will do this for five minutes, and if I want to stop after that, I have permission to stop." More often than not, starting is the highest barrier.

### 3. Mindful Compassion & Fact-Checking

Depression acts like a distorted lens, filtering out your achievements and magnifying perceived mistakes. Challenge your inner critic by asking: *If a friend were struggling in exactly this way, would I speak to them the way I am speaking to myself right now? What are the objective facts here, outside of how I feel?*

## How Counselling Can Help

Depression tries to convince you that you are entirely alone and that change is impossible. At **JPL Counselling**, we partner to gently disrupt these loops. Together, we explore the origins of your low mood, unpack underlying emotional patterns, and build realistic, compassionate steps that restore your vitality, meaning, and connection. Recovery is a collaborative process, taken one steady day at a time.

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Take the next step toward reclaiming clarity and balance.  
To book a session or find more emotional well-being resources, please visit:

**[www.jplcounselling.co.uk](http://www.jplcounselling.co.uk)**