

What Keeps Depression Going?



When you are depressed, you feel less motivated to do the things you used to enjoy, or to spend time with people you like. Without feelings of motivation it is often easier to avoid doing things.

Following the demotivated feeling and avoiding these activities means that you are missing out on key ingredients for wellbeing, making you feel even less energetic, and even more demotivated.

All of us have 'automatic thoughts' that pop into our minds.

When you are depressed, your thinking can become distorted or biased without you realizing it. It is like your mind starts taking unhelpful 'shortcuts' with thinking. This causes your thinking to become negative or self critical, leaving you feeling hopeless.

What you do when you feel unmotivated

Unhelpful thinking habits

What keeps it going?

Depression

Ruminating or worrying about your problems

Your past, beliefs, rules and assumptions

Many people who are depressed try to 'solve the problem' by asking themselves questions like:

- Why is my life like this?
- What is wrong with me that I feel like this?

Psychologists have found that particular types of thinking can keep people stuck in depression. Asking questions like "why am I feeling this way?" tends to be less helpful than asking questions like "what can I do right now that will help me?"

People struggling with depression often believe very negative things about themselves. For example:

- I'm a failure.
- I'm not good enough.
- I'm unlovable.

These beliefs haven't come from nowhere – you can think of them as the answer to the question "what has life taught me about myself?". The problem is that despite these beliefs not being accurate or fair, they have profound effects on how you feel.