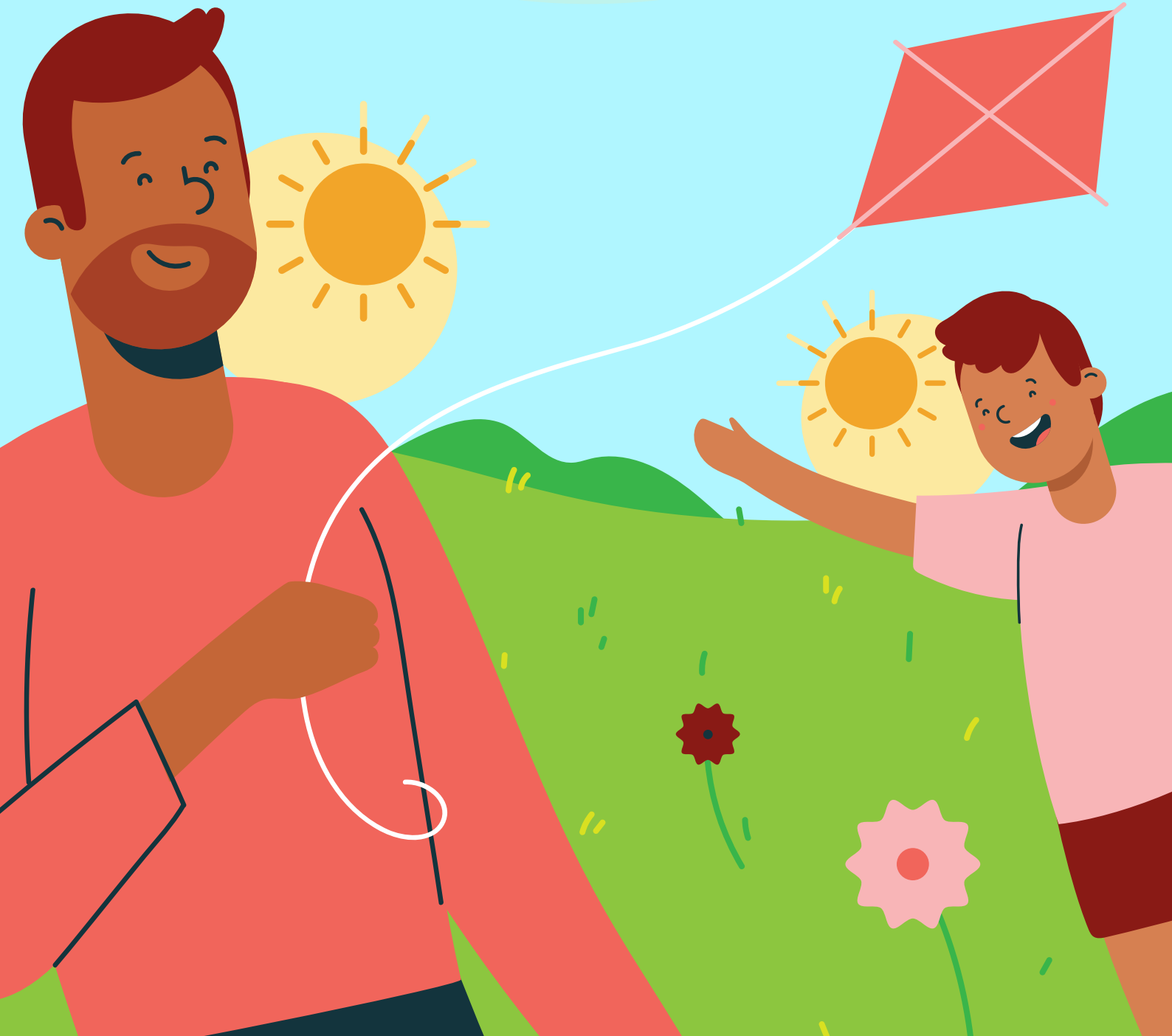


THIS is HOW YOU OVERCOME DEPRESSION

BY THE DEPRESSION PROJECT



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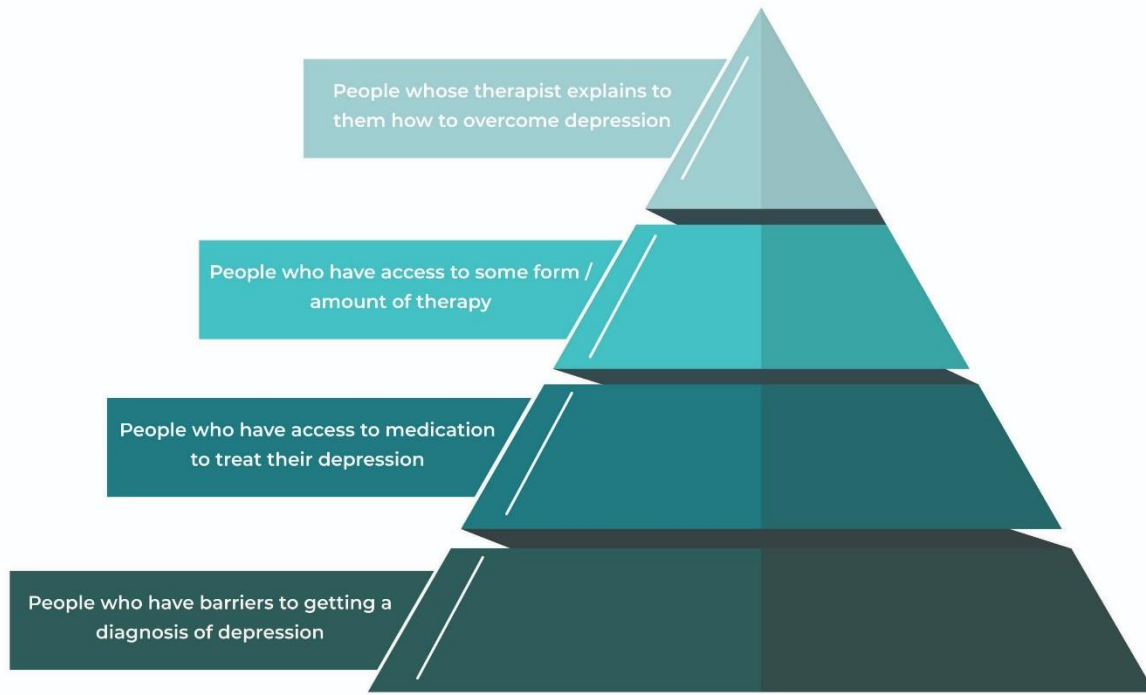
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INTRODUCTION

Since we started The Depression Project a few years ago now, we've had millions of people comment on our social media posts, and one thing that's become glaringly obvious to us is that the majority of people with depression have never, *ever* had anyone explain to them how to actually overcome it. This is most commonly because, from our observations:

1. Many people in the world who suspect they're probably struggling with depression don't have access to the medical care they need in order to get a diagnosis (let alone receive any guidance to get better).
2. For those who do have access to a doctor and who are diagnosed with depression, then rather than having the steps they need to follow to overcome depression clearly explained to them, instead:
 - a. They might be prescribed a medication – which at best, helps them cope with their depression on a day-to-day basis (but falls far short of “curing” them).
 - b. Therapy might be mentioned, but in all likelihood:
 - i. The ways in which therapy works to treat depression and help them overcome it is never properly explained to them – and because therapy consequently seems like such a vague, unclear solution to their problems, they never really buy into it.
 - ii. Even if they do buy into therapy, its high price and limited / non-existent subsidisation often precludes it from ever being a viable treatment option.
 - iii. Even if they do buy into therapy and can afford to pay for it, then for various reasons, there's a reasonable chance that that person's therapist never explained to them how they would overcome depression anyway – and, due to their therapy sessions not having enough direction, clarity and/or value

to justify their cost, there's a reasonable chance that that person gave up on therapy and never went back to it.



And, in the same way that it's really, *really* difficult for a first-time cook to prepare a complicated meal without a clear, detailed, step-by-step recipe, it's really, *really* difficult for a person trapped in the throes of depression to overcome their illness without a clear, detailed, step-by-step explanation of how to do so. Consequently – and tragically – the absence of such an explanation is why, in our observation, so many people in the world have never broken free of their depression, and have become conditioned to believe that doing so is impossible.

As we see it, this is one of the biggest problems that exists in the mental health industry today, and for this reason, we've written this book – in order to give you the clear, detailed, step-by-step explanation you need so that believe it or not, by the time you've progressed through it, you'll know exactly what you need to do to overcome this illness – in such a way that it doesn't keep coming back.

To give you a little visual preview of what this blueprint to overcome depression will look like, please see the table below:

		HOW TO ADDRESS THEM		
ASPECTS OF YOUR DEPRESSION YOU NEED TO ADDRESS		Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies	Healing Strategies
		Your Thoughts		
Your Emotions				
Your Behaviours				
Your Environment				
Your Physiology				

Of course, this table is blank at the moment, and even if it was filled out in the way you’ll ultimately see, it wouldn’t make much sense right now anyway. However, after you’ve progressed through this book, you will:

1. Understand exactly what these five aspects of your depression are; how they all integrate to trigger your “depression cycle”; why taking medication – while often helpful – is by itself far from enough to stop the depression cycle; and why it’s critical to your recovery that you learn and implement a variety of different strategies to address each of the five aspects of your depression (we’ll cover this in Chapter 1).
2. You’ll learn exactly what “survival strategies” are, why you need to learn and implement them, and why not doing so can lead to depression completely consuming you (we’ll cover this in Chapter 2).
3. You’ll learn exactly what “coping strategies” are, why you need to learn and implement them, and why not doing so can lead to you feeling burned out, exhausted, and can result in the symptoms of your depression significantly worsening (we’ll cover this in Chapter 3).

4. You'll learn exactly what "healing strategies" are, why you need to learn and implement them, and why not doing so can result in you never being able to break free of depression (we'll cover this in Chapter 4).
5. You'll learn exactly when you should implement survival strategies, exactly when you should implement coping strategies, and exactly when you should implement healing strategies – and why these strategies are unlikely to be effective if you implement them at the "wrong" times. Of course, you'll also learn why if you implement them at the "right" times, then it is possible to overcome depression (we'll cover this throughout the book, but particularly so in the fifth and final chapter).

We truly believe this book is going to be a real gamechanger for you, and we can't wait to begin this journey with you and explain in detail the exact steps you need to take in order to conquer this illness once and for all.

Particularly if you've been battling depression for a long time, then right now, it might be impossible for you to believe that you can seize control of your life back from it. But, when you have a step-by-step blueprint for doing so, it really is possible.

At this point, you're probably still sceptical, so why don't we get started right away so that we can convince you?

1. Understanding The “Depression Battlegrounds” - I.e. The Five Aspects Of Your Depression That You Need To Address

HOW TO ADDRESS THEM				
ASPECTS OF YOUR DEPRESSION YOU NEED TO ADDRESS	Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies	Healing Strategies	
	Your Thoughts			
	Your Emotions			
	Your Behaviours			
	Your Environment			
	Your Physiology			

As you can see in the visual depiction of your “Blueprint To Overcome Depression” above – that’s based on the cognitive behavioural therapy model¹ – there are five aspects of this illness that you need to address in order to beat it. However, before we talk more about that, it’s important to first flesh out what depression actually looks like with respect to each of these factors.

1. Your Thoughts

As you’ve no doubt unfortunately experienced, struggling with depression usually involves battling negative thoughts². While these negative thoughts can come in many forms, some particularly common ones include, for example:

- **Worthless Thoughts:** For example, “I’m a loser”, “I’m unlovable”, “I’m worthless”, “I’m a failure”, “I’m lazy”, “I’m useless”, “I deserve to suffer”, “I’m not worthy of anything good happening to me”, and/or “everybody else is better and more important than I am”.

- **Hopeless Thoughts:** For example, *“nothing good will ever happen to me”, “I have no future”, “there’s no point in doing anything”, “everything I do will be a failure”, “I will never feel happy again”, “I will never overcome depression”, “none of my dreams will ever come true”, and/or “I will never be free of my pain”.*
- **Worrying Thoughts:** These tend to occur when you fixate on something bad happening, and then convince yourself that when that bad thing does inevitably happen, it will be catastrophic. These “bad events” can be particular to you – such as you losing your job; your partner leaving you; or even much smaller, relatively trivial events like making a mistake at work or saying something a bit silly in a social setting, for instance. Additionally, these “bad events” can also be more macro in nature, such as the danger of climate change, the possibility of a war breaking out, political and/or civil unrest, or an election result, for example. Regardless of what the triggering incident or situation is, though, worrying thoughts tend to take a form along the lines of: *“if this happens, it will be a catastrophe”, “I will never recover from this happening”, and/or “this will completely destroy me if it happens”.*
- **Negative Thoughts About Your Impact On Loved Ones:** For example, *“I’m such a burden because I suffer from depression”, “I’m such a drain for other people to deal with”, “they can’t possibly enjoy spending their time with me”, “they must regret ever becoming my friend / partner / spouse”, and/or “their life would be so much better without me in it”.*
- **Rumination:** This is where you dwell on something negative or painful that happened (often many years ago) which you’re still struggling to let go of. It can include, for example, beating yourself up over a mistake you once made, lamenting a break-up that happened, or feeling ashamed of something you did which you’re not proud of.

Additionally, when it comes to all of these types of negative thoughts, the more severe your depression is and/or the longer you struggle with it for, the closer your negative *thoughts* are likely to be to negative *beliefs* – in the sense that you’re highly attached to your negative thoughts and you believe them to be true.

2. Your Emotions

Of course, struggling with depression also involves dealing with difficult, painful emotions³. As is the case with negative thoughts, these painful emotions can be different for different people – however, they most commonly consist of:

- **Feeling Intense, Excruciating Misery** – to such an extent that life may no longer seem worth living.
- **Feeling Worthless** – sometimes so much so that you don't see how your partner, your friends or your family members could love you.
- **Feeling Unmotivated** – including loss of interest in almost everything that you used to enjoy.
- **Feeling Numb** – in the sense that you're completely disconnected from the world around you, and bereft of being able to feel anything at all – to such an extent that rather than "living", it seems as if you are merely "existing".
- **Feeling Irritable** – due to dealing with so many difficult emotions. For this reason, you're also much more likely than you otherwise would be to get frustrated and snap over something small.
- **Feeling Shame** – for example, because you believe that only "weak" people struggle with depression, or because you're embarrassed about not being able to do some (or a lot) of the things that you used to do before you started struggling with depression (such as maintaining a job, cleaning the house or showering, for instance).
- **Feeling Misunderstood / Lonely / Isolated** – most commonly, because nobody around you seems to understand what you're going through.
- **Feeling Regret** – if a contributing factor of your depression is a past mistake you made.

- **Feeling Grief** – if a contributing factor of your depression is a devastating loss. Additionally, it’s common for people with depression to experience grief due to feeling as if their life is turning out (or has turned out) very differently to how they’d thought it would.
- **Feeling Hopeless** – sometimes to such an extent that you can’t envision life ever getting better.

3. Your Behaviours

Thirdly, depression is likely to have a significant “behavioural impact” on you. This can happen in many ways, including:

- **A Decreased Ability To Function**⁴ – to such an extent that when depression is at its most severe, even simple tasks like having a shower, dressing or getting out of bed can feel like climbing a mountain.
- **Social Withdrawal**⁵ – due to, for example:
 - Having no motivation or energy to leave the house.
 - Feeling far too miserable to be able to fake a smile and pretend that everything is “fine”.
 - Not knowing how to articulate how awful you’re feeling, and/or how to explain all of the debilitating ways that depression is affecting you.
 - Not wanting your loved ones to see you feeling so depressed.
 - Because you want to “protect” / “shield” your loved ones from your pain.
 - Because you’re worried that people will judge- or think less of you for having depression – particularly if your depression has led you to behave in ways that you’re ashamed of (like not showering, for instance).

- Because you don't feel as if you currently have the capacity to be the friend that you think your loved ones deserve – such as someone who can, for example, have a pleasant conversation with them, be funny and make them laugh, be happy and celebrate their wins with them, and/or support them through their own struggles in life.
- **Shutting Down And Being Non-Communicative** – a type of social withdrawal, this is where, due to the debilitating intensity of your symptoms in a given moment in time, you completely withdraw from a conversation / social setting and stop communicating entirely. Shutting down in this way most commonly occurs when you become so consumed by your depression that continuing to interact with other people just becomes too much for you, and/or when you become lost for words to explain your depression and all the ways it's affecting you.
- **Difficulty Concentrating And/Or Remembering Things**⁶ – which can occur due to the overwhelming intensity of your depressive symptoms, and/or to being constantly bombarded by negative thoughts which are severely distracting you.
- **Comfort Eating**⁷ / **Alcohol Abuse**⁸ – which often occurs as a way of trying to cope with depression.
- **Self-Harm**⁹ – this can sadly take place for a number of reasons, including:
 - Because it's a way of punishing yourself for something you feel you've done wrong.
 - Because the physical pain that's experienced through self-harm is a preferable distraction to your more intense mental pain.
 - Self-harm can also be a way of trying to release pent-up negative emotions that you may struggle to release through other, more healthier means.

4. Your Environment

As we hear very, very frequently from members of The Depression Project's community, depression can also impact your “environment” as well – and by this, we mean the state of your physical surroundings (such as your living quarters), and also your “life situation” / your “situational environment” (such as your relationships, your job, your finances, etcetera). In particular, according to members of The Depression Project's community, some common environmental impacts of depression include:

- Because simple, mundane tasks like doing the dishes, vacuuming, and cleaning up in general can become too much for someone in the midst of a severe depressive episode, it's common for people with depression's home to be much more untidy than it otherwise would be.
- Many people with depression also find themselves facing an overwhelming to-do list – which continuously mounts due to them feeling too weighed down by depression to be able to complete it at their usual pace.
- Because depression can impact a person's ability to concentrate and function, it can hinder their capacity to work, and therefore contribute to them having financial difficulties.
- Because depression can lead to social isolation, it can result in the gradual erosion of a person's relationships, and to them feeling lonely and even more depressed as a result.
- For a multitude of reasons, depression can also exacerbate existing problems in a marriage or a relationship, and it can also trigger new problems that weren't initially present.

5. Your Physiology

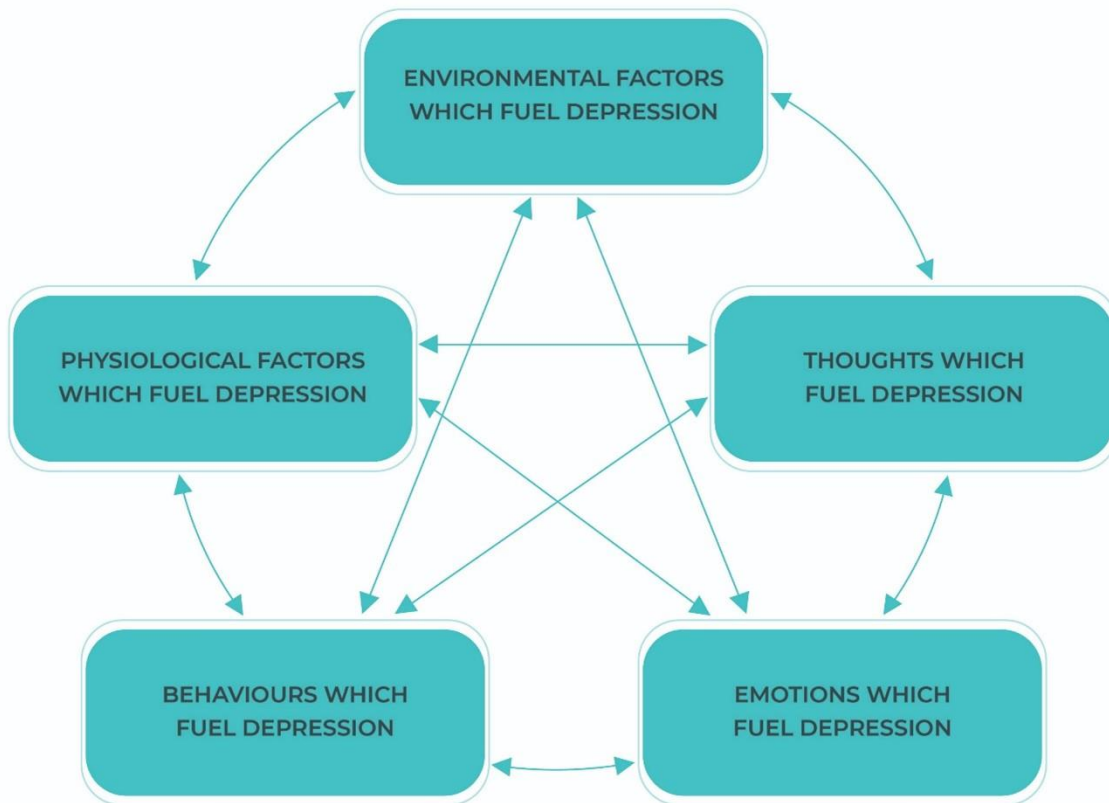
Last but not least, depression can also involve chemical and/or physical changes that take place in your brain and body. For example:

- A chemical imbalance in the brain¹⁰.

- Exhaustion – which is an extremely common symptom of depression¹¹.
- Difficulty sleeping¹² (in spite of feeling exhausted) – often due to having so many negative thoughts and/or painful emotions filling your head that you struggle to wind down and fall asleep, and/or as a side effect of an anti-depressant medication.
- Excess sleep¹³ – on the other hand, some people find that depression causes them to sleep far more than they otherwise would.
- Sexual dysfunction¹⁴.
- Body aches and pains¹⁵.
- Headaches and/or loss of appetite¹⁶.

The Downward Depression Spiral – I.e. How Each Of These Aspects Of Depression Interact To Exacerbate This Illness

Before we move on to talking about what your thoughts, emotions, behaviours, environment and physiology all mean when it comes to your blueprint for how to overcome depression, we'd just like to make one further point, which is that rather than operating in isolation, these five aspects of depression actually fuel each other to create what we call the *downward depression spiral*:



As the above cycle shows, these five aspects of depression can each fuel each other in many different combinations and permutations. Some common examples include:

- An environmental trigger (e.g. being criticised by someone) → which fuels a negative thought (e.g. *"I'm a loser"*) → which fuels one or more painful emotions (e.g. misery, shame, worthlessness) → which fuels a negative behaviour to try to deal with the painful emotion(s) (e.g. drinking alcohol) → which leads to a physical reaction that further fuels depression (e.g. decreased brain serotonin, a hangover, less energy) → which fuels more negative thoughts, and so the cycle continues.
- A behaviour (e.g. prolonged social withdrawal due to feeling consumed with depression) → which fuels an environmental change (e.g. a fractured connection with friends) → which fuels a painful emotion (e.g. loneliness) → which fuels negative thoughts (e.g. *"I'm such a loser because I have no friends"*) → which fuels more painful emotions (e.g. misery,

worthlessness, lack of confidence) → which fuels more social withdrawal, and so the cycle continues.

- A negative thought / belief (e.g. “I’m weak / a failure for struggling with depression”) → which fuels a painful emotion (e.g. shame) → which fuels a behaviour (e.g. not telling anyone about your depression because you feel too ashamed) → which fuels more painful emotions (e.g. feeling misunderstood, lonely, isolated) → which fuels more negative thoughts (e.g. “my life is terrible”) → which fuels more painful emotions (e.g. misery) → which reinforces the negative thought that your life is terrible, and so the cycle continues.
- An emotion (e.g. feeling unmotivated) → which leads to a behaviour (e.g. putting off getting help / beginning therapy / reading self-help books) → which leads to worsened depressive symptoms (including feeling even more unmotivated), and so the cycle continues.

Of course, these are just a few examples – sadly, there are literally countless more – but as we hope you can see, each of the five aspects of depression all fuel each other, and create a vicious, vicious cycle. This explains why depression is so difficult to break out of, and why if there isn’t any intervention to stop depression’s vicious cycle, your depression is unfortunately likely to get worse and worse over time.

The Significance Of These Five Aspects Of Depression When It Comes To Beating This Illness

At this point, you might be wondering why we're going into so much detail about these five aspects of depression, and what they have to do with you overcoming depression. So, to bring everything back to the sole purpose of this book, let us now make the following very, very important point:

Because there are five different aspects of depression, and because these five aspects all operate in a vicious cycle to continuously fuel your depression, then in order to overcome this illness, it’s essential that you “fight back” against depression at each of these five “battlegrounds”, so to speak.

Or, to put it another way:

If you DON'T “fight back” against depression at each of these five “battlegrounds”, then unfortunately, it’s very unlikely that you’ll ever win the “war” against it.

We believe it's critically important that you understand this, so to clearly illustrate this point, let's now have a look at the common example of taking medication. Before we begin, though, we'd like to emphasise that anti-depressants can indeed play a role in helping you overcome depression.

This is through:

1. Altering your brain chemicals in a positive way, and therefore helping you to “fight back” against depression at the “physiology battleground”.
2. As a result of helping you “fight back” against depression at the “physiology battleground”, taking medication will also help to slow the depression cycle that we just showed you – which means that indirectly, it can also have a positive effect on your thoughts, your emotions, your behaviours and your environment.

In saying that, though, if taking medication is your *only* way of fighting back against depression, then it's highly unlikely that you'll ever beat this illness – because taking medication is only directly addressing *one* out of *five* aspects of your depression. In other words:

- **When It Comes To Your Thoughts:** Medication can't magically turn your negative thoughts into positive thoughts; it can't all of a sudden make you stop worrying about the future or ruminating about the past; and it can't eradicate any negative core beliefs you have about yourself (such as “*I'm a loser*”) and instantly replace them with positive core beliefs (such as “*I'm a good person*”, “*I am worthy of love*” or “*I am enough*”).
- **When It Comes To Your Emotions:** Medication can't teach you how to regulate your emotions so that you feel more pleasurable emotions and less painful emotions; it can't magically make you stop hating yourself and instead start loving yourself; it can't all of a sudden stop you from feeling misunderstood, lonely and isolated; it can't help you come

to terms with feelings of grief over a loved one passing; and it can't all of a sudden fill you with hope.

- **When It Comes To Your Behaviours:** Anti-depressants aren't a "magic pill" that make you automatically stop engaging in self-sabotaging behaviours and start engaging in healthy behaviours. For example, taking medication doesn't automatically mean that you'll stop people pleasing, stop negatively comparing yourself to others, or stop resorting to avoidance behavioural patterns. Similarly, taking medication doesn't mean that you'll all of a sudden start exercising, practicing mindfulness, or reading self-help books, for instance.
- **When It Comes To Your Environment:** Medication can't solve the difficult and challenging environmental factors in your life that are contributing to your depression. For example, taking anti-depressant medication won't suddenly fix a toxic relationship; it won't suddenly make the people you're surrounded by stop treating you badly; it won't suddenly make you start enjoying the job you hate; it won't suddenly resolve any financial difficulties that you're having; and it won't suddenly help you come to terms with war, climate change, or any of the other devastating events that are taking place in the world.

For these reasons, then like we said, if taking medication is your *only* way of fighting back against depression, then unfortunately, it's very, *very* difficult to ever beat depression – since you'll only be directly combating depression at one out of the five battlegrounds where depression's attacking you (or put another way, you'll only be directly treating one out of the five aspects of your depression).

How To Treat ALL Five Aspects Of Your Depression – So That You Can Overcome This Illness Once And For All!

		HOW TO ADDRESS THEM		
ASPECTS OF YOUR DEPRESSION YOU NEED TO ADDRESS		Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies	Healing Strategies
		Your Thoughts		
Your Emotions				
Your Behaviours				
Your Environment				
Your Physiology				

As you can see in our “Blueprint To Overcome Depression” above, and as we’ve been repeating throughout the first chapter of this book, in order to overcome depression, you need to fight back against it at each of the five battlegrounds where it attacks you. And, in the three chapters of this book that follow, we’re going to teach you the ways that you need to do this. In particular, we’re going to break down the three columns of your “Blueprint To Overcome Depression” that are depicted above, and explain why in order to beat this illness, it’s essential that you:

1. Address the thoughts, emotions, behaviours, environmental factors and the physiological factors which fuel your depression in such a way that you can “survive the storm” when you’re in the “Storm Zone” of the Storm To Sun Framework (i.e. when your depressive symptoms are severe). This will prevent depression from completely consuming you.
2. You need to also address the thoughts, emotions, behaviours, environmental factors and the physiological factors which fuel your depression in such a way that you can “cope with the rain” when you’re in the “Rain Zone” of the Storm To Sun Framework (i.e. when your depressive symptoms are moderately severe). This will allow you to function as well as

possible and uphold your day-to-day responsibilities – without getting burned out, breaking down emotionally, and having your symptoms intensify.

3. Lastly, you need to address the thoughts, emotions, behaviours, environmental factors and the physiological factors which fuel your depression in such a way that you can “heal” from depression when you’re in the “Cloud Zone” of the Storm To Sun Framework (i.e. when your depressive symptoms are only mildly severe). As a result of doing this, you can “reach the sun” – or in other words, you can actually stop struggling with depression, and instead live the healthy life that you want to live.

At this point in time, we know that some of the above terminology probably won’t make much sense to you. However, it soon will, and we believe that once you’ve progressed through the next three chapters of this book, you’ll have a very clear understanding of exactly what you need to do in order to beat this illness!

Where Does Anti-Depressant Medication Fit Into All Of This?

Like we said before, anti-depressant medication helps you to combat depression at the “physiology battleground”. However, it’s something that you need to consult with your doctor or psychiatrist about, and therefore, not something that we’re in a position to advise you on. For this reason, despite it being a helpful tool that you may be able to use to fight back against depression, we’re not going to mention it throughout the rest of this book. However, we will now “update” our “Blueprint To Overcome Depression” as follows:

HOW TO ADDRESS EACH ASPECT OF YOUR DEPRESSION

ASPECTS OF YOUR DEPRESSION YOU NEED TO ADDRESS	Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies	Healing Strategies	
	Your Thoughts			
	Your Emotions			
	Your Behaviours			
	Your Environment			
	Your Physiology	Possibly take medication – consult with your doctor / psychiatrist about this		

Last But Not Least ...

Like we promised, in the following three chapters of this book, we're going to explain to you exactly what survival-, coping- and healing strategies are, and why learning and implementing each of them is essential to you overcoming depression. Before we do that, though, we'd now just like to ask you a few questions to help you understand each of the five aspects of your depression. After all, "knowing your depression" like so is really important, because if you aren't aware of the ways in which depression is attacking you, then it's going to be almost impossible for you to be able to fight back and win the war against it. So, we recommend that right now, you grab a notebook and pen, and then thoughtfully ponder and write down your answers to the following questions:

1. What does your depression look like with respect to your thoughts?
2. What are the difficult, painful emotions that are part of your depression?
3. How does your depression affect you behaviourally? For example, how does it affect your ability to function? To concentrate? Your willingness to socialise? Etcetera.
4. How does your depression impact your environment? For example, how does it impact your relationships, your career, your finances, etcetera?

5. Does your depression affect you physically? If so, how?

Well Done!

After thoughtfully pondering and writing down your answers to the questions above, you would've officially completed the first part of this book – well done! Next, we're going to press forward and talk about the importance of being able to “survive the storm” when you're in the Storm Zone of the Storm To Sun Framework!

2. The Importance Of Knowing How To “Survive The Storm” When You're In The “Storm Zone”

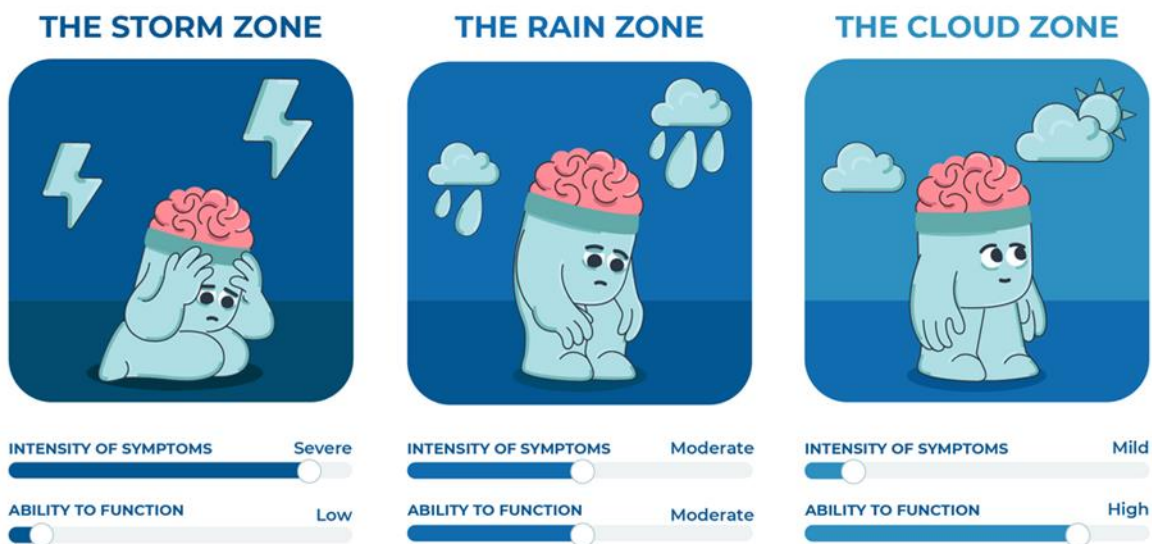
HOW TO ADDRESS THEM				
ASPECTS OF YOUR DEPRESSION YOU NEED TO ADDRESS	Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies	Healing Strategies	
	Your Thoughts			
	Your Emotions			
	Your Behaviours			
	Your Environment			
	Your Physiology			

As you’ve no doubt experienced, depression can be very different things at different times. Or, put another way, the severity of your symptoms in any given time period can vary significantly from the time period before it. For example:

- **One Day:** You might feel so exhausted, so miserable and so completely overwhelmed that you just want to lie in bed all day.
- **Then The Next Day:** You might feel pretty good.
- **Then The Day After That:** You might feel a lot worse, but you still try to carry on by faking a smile and pretending that everything is “fine”.
- **Then The Next Two Days:** You might feel so tired and burned out from pretending to be OK that you just want to sleep and not talk to anyone.
- **Then The Day After That:** You might be feeling so overwhelmed and stressed out that you can’t fall asleep.

- **Then The Day After That:** You might want to talk to a friend and be supported.
- **Then The Three Days After That:** You might actually feel fine, and not want to talk about or be reminded of your depression at all.
- **Then The Next Two Days After That:** You might just be pretending that everything is fine, when deep down, you're feeling miserable again.

This reality is reflected in The Depression Project's Storm To Sun Framework – which is something we created to make understanding-, supporting- and treating depression much, *much* clearer. Let us now quickly show you what it is!



The Cloud Zone

- **Intensity of Symptoms:** Low
- **Ability to Function:** High

This is when the symptoms of your depression are mild. When you're in this Zone:

- You feel more or less “normal” – in the sense that your days are only minimally impacted by depression.

- You're able to function relatively well and fulfil all of your responsibilities (such as going to work, taking care of your children, etcetera) without becoming easily tired.
- In the Cloud Zone, your motivation is at its highest due to your symptoms being at their mildest – so you're most able to do the things that you may've been putting off doing while your symptoms were more severe.
- You're also much more likely to want to socialise with friends and family and interact with other people.

We'll talk a lot more about the Cloud Zone and its relevance to you overcoming depression in Chapter 4 of this book.

The Rain Zone

- **Intensity of Symptoms:** Moderate
- **Ability to Function:** Moderate

You can think of yourself as being in the Rain Zone when the symptoms of your depression are moderately intense. In this Zone:

- While you can likely still uphold your responsibilities and carry on with life, you'll probably get tired much quicker than you otherwise would.
- Feeling burned out is common, and you're prone to snapping easily.
- Socialising and/or interacting with others – while possible – often feels too draining.
- At any point in time, the "rain" may deteriorate into a "storm" – i.e., you may find yourself slipping from the Rain Zone into the Storm Zone (see below).

We'll talk a lot more about the Rain Zone and its relevance to you overcoming depression in Chapter 3 of this book.

The Storm Zone

- Intensity of Symptoms: Severe
- Ability to Function: Low

This is when the symptoms of your depression are severe – i.e., when it feels like there’s a storm that’s raging in your mind. When you’re in this Zone:

- You’re usually being bombarded with negative thoughts; those negative thoughts are at their most distorted / negative / catastrophic; and you’re at your most attached to those negative thoughts (i.e. more so than at any other time, you believe them to be true).
- Emotions like misery, shame, worthlessness, hopelessness, etcetera, are felt more intensely than ever.
- Your ability to function is significantly compromised – to such an extent that fulfilling your day-to-day responsibilities can feel unmanageable (and often are); and even simple tasks like getting out of bed or having a shower may feel like climbing a mountain.
- Faking a smile and pretending to be “OK” may be impossible.
- In the “Storm Zone”, it’s common to feel so miserable, broken, and hopeless that you’re unable to envision the storm ever passing.

As you know, the Storm Zone will be the focus of this chapter of the book – so let’s dive right into things.

The Relevance Of The Storm Zone To You Overcoming Depression

The key takeaway of this chapter of the book is that it’s very, *very* important that you learn and implement strategies which help you to “survive the storm”, so to speak. And by that, we mean *strategies that give you quick, short-term relief from your depression when your symptoms are at their most severe – in order to prevent those symptoms from completely consuming you.*

For example:

- If you're so stressed out and overwhelmed that you feel like your head's about to explode, then it's important that you have some simple, go-to strategies you can turn to that will help you calm down.
- If you find yourself feeling so miserable and exhausted that you can't get out of bed, then it's important that you have some simple, go-to strategies you can turn to that will give your mood a boost.
- If you find yourself being bombarded with so many negative thoughts that you can hardly concentrate on anything else, then it's important that you have some simple, go-to strategies you can turn to that will help give you some distance from those negative thoughts so that you can think more clearly.
- If you find yourself feeling really scared and vulnerable, then it's important that you have some simple, go-to strategies you can turn to that will make you feel safer.
- If you're feeling so depressed that you're contemplating suicide, then it's *really important* that you have some simple, go-to strategies you can turn to that will prevent you from doing so.

Collectively, we call these "simple, go-to strategies" "*survival strategies*", because their aim is to help you "*survive the storm*". And, in order for them to help you achieve this objective, it's important that your survival strategies have two key characteristics:

1. **They Must Provide You With Quick (And Ideally Instantaneous), Short-Term Relief From Your Crippling Symptoms** – since when you're in the Storm Zone and your symptoms are at their most intense, this is what you need more than anything else in order to prevent your depression from completely consuming you.
2. **Your Survival Strategies Must Be Simple And Easy To Implement** – this is because like we've said, when you're in the Storm Zone, your ability to function is at its lowest. For this reason,

your survival strategies to help get you out of the Storm Zone need to be simple and easy to implement, so that you can turn to them even when your ability to function is low.

Having Survival Strategies To Help You Address Each Aspect Of Your Depression

Like we said in Chapter 1 of this book, in order to overcome depression, it's essential that you address each of the "thoughts"-, "emotions"-, "behaviours"-, "environmental"- and the "physiological" aspects of your depression; and as we've been saying in this chapter of the book, it's also essential that you know strategies which help you to "survive the storm" when you're in the Storm Zone – in order to prevent depression from completely consuming you. And, when you bring these two principles together, the result is that it's extremely important that you know *survival strategies that address each of these five aspects of your depression.*

With that thought in mind, let's now dive into what these survival strategies look like for the "thoughts"-, "emotions"-, "behaviours"-, "environmental"- and the "physiological" aspects of your depression!

1. Your Thoughts

As we mentioned in Chapter 1, negative thoughts can play a big role in fuelling the depression cycle. And, like we touched upon at the beginning of this chapter, when you're in the Storm Zone:

- Your negative thoughts are going to be at their most uncontrollable, intrusive and constant. In other words, when you're in the Storm Zone, your negative thoughts will occur much more frequently than when you're in the Rain Zone or the Cloud Zone; and they'll also be much more smothering and difficult to get away from.
- You're much more likely to catastrophise small problems and think of them as enormous problems. In this way, when you're in the Storm Zone, your negative thoughts are likely to be at their most distorted / "negative".

- When you're in the Storm Zone, your negative *thoughts* are often much closer to negative *beliefs* – in the sense that you'll tend to be highly attached to them, and strongly believe them to be true. This differs from the Rain Zone, for example, where while you're in all likelihood still dealing with negative thoughts, you're likely to be much less attached to them nor to be as convinced that they're true.

As a result of your negative thoughts being at their most uncontrollable, intrusive, constant, catastrophic and believable when you're in the Storm Zone, they're fuelling the depression cycle more so than at any other time as well. For this reason, in order to “survive the storm” and help reverse the depression cycle, *it's critical that you learn and implement some survival strategies to distance yourself from your negative thoughts and to mitigate their intensity.* In practice, this could take the form of, for example:

- **Telling yourself positive affirmations**¹⁷ – which is where you repeat a positive statement to yourself over, and over, and over again like a mantra. For example, *“depression is strong, but I am stronger” ... “depression is strong, but I am stronger” ... “depression is strong, but I am stronger ...”* Positive affirmations such as these can be really helpful, since they work to offset the negative affirmations that you're telling yourself (such as *“I'll never get through this ... I'll never get through this ... I'll never get through this ...”* etcetera). For a long list of positive affirmations that you may find helpful to tell yourself when you're in the Storm Zone, please see Appendix A of this book.
- **Reading hopeful, uplifting statements** – this is another simple way of giving yourself some distance from your negative thoughts in the Storm Zone. For a long list of hopeful, uplifting statements that we think you'll find helpful, please have a look at Appendix B.
- **Asking Yourself: If My Loved Ones Were In My Position, Would I Be Telling Them The Same Negative Things That I'm Currently Telling Myself?** The reason this simple cognitive behavioural therapy strategy¹⁸ can be so powerful is because asking yourself this question has the effect of distancing you from your negative thoughts and looking at them from a

different, more objective angle. And, when you do this, you'll often realise that you're being much, *much* too hard on yourself.

2. Your Emotions

In the Storm Zone, the difficult, painful emotions that you feel when you're depressed are at their most intense – i.e. you're feeling at your most miserable, worthless, unmotivated, numb, irritable, angry, ashamed, lonely, misunderstood, isolated, regretful, hopeless, filled with grief, etcetera. For this reason, in order to “survive the storm” and prevent your depression from completely consuming you, *it's important that you learn and implement survival strategies to give yourself some quick, short-term relief from these difficult and painful emotions.* Some examples of survival strategies which help you do this include:

- **Diaphragmatic breathing**¹⁹ – also at times referred to as “belly breathing” or “abdominal breathing”, this is a breathing technique which can help you to, among other things, feel more calm and centred. To learn a couple of different diaphragmatic breathing techniques, please see Appendix C of this book.
- **The 5-4-3-2-1 mindfulness exercise**²⁰ – this can help you to get in touch with your immediate surroundings, which can result in you gaining some separation between you and your emotions and feeling calmer as a result. To learn more about the 5-4-3-2-1 mindfulness exercise, please see Appendix D.
- **Soothing your senses** – this can also help you ease your distress²¹, and feel more calm, comfortable and at peace as a result. To learn some different ways that you can soothe your senses, please see Appendix E.
- **Engaging with a cold sensation** – this can involve, for example, dunking your face in icy-cold water, having a cold shower, placing an ice pack between your shoulder blades or on your forehead, holding an ice cube, or wrapping your hands around an icy-cold drink. Strategies such as these can be very effective at helping you manage distress, because they can turn on your nervous system's relaxation response and slow your heart rate²². In saying

that, though, depending on how you choose to implement this technique, it may be sensible to consult with a medical professional (particularly if you're pregnant or dealing with a health issue, for example).

- **Practicing visualisation** – this is a technique that uses mental imagery to help bring you into a state of calm. To learn a visualisation exercise that you may find helpful to implement when you're in the Storm Zone, please see Appendix F.
- **Journalling** – this is a great way to get a cathartic release, help you let go of your emotions instead of keeping them trapped inside of you, and improve your psychological outlook²³. To learn more about journalling in the Storm Zone, please see Appendix G.
- **Practicing gratitude** – this has been proven to, among other things, reduce stress²⁴, improve self-esteem²⁵, increase feelings of optimism²⁶, reduce rumination²⁷, improve quality of sleep²⁸ and reduce depression's symptoms²⁹. In saying that, though, when you're in the Storm Zone and experiencing severe symptoms of depression, practicing gratitude can be much more challenging than it would otherwise be – which is why in Appendix H, we'll teach you a variety of strategies to help you cultivate gratitude when you're in the Storm Zone.
- **Reminding yourself of all the difficult things you've overcome in the past** – in the midst of a challenging time, it's common for people to project their pain forwards, and conclude that "life will always be this bad"³⁰. And, if you can relate, then it can be really helpful to remind yourself of all the difficult times you've gotten through in the past. This strategy can help you combat feelings of hopelessness in particular, and make it easier to see that even though it may not feel possible to survive the challenging times you're facing right now, that in the end, you will indeed make it through them.

3. Your Behaviours

Like we've said, depression can significantly impact you behaviourally – and this occurs more so than ever when you're in the Storm Zone. Most notably, your ability to function tends to be

significantly compromised – sometimes to such an extent that simple tasks like getting out of bed or having a shower can seem impossible. Furthermore, when you're in the Storm Zone, it's also common to:

- Be very socially withdrawn – to such an extent that you may not interact with anyone (particularly face-to-face, and also through non-face-to-face means like text messaging, for instance).
- If you do happen to be interacting with someone, it's common to at times shut down and become non-communicative.
- It's common to have difficulty concentrating and/or remembering things.
- You're more likely to engage in destructive behaviours to try to deal with your intense depressive symptoms (such as binge eating, over-spending on "retail therapy", substance abuse and/or self-harm, for example).
- You're more likely to engage in reckless behaviours due to feeling ambivalent about whether or not you live or die (and in some cases, because you'd prefer to die). An example of this could be crossing the street without looking.

Consequently, in order to “survive the storm” and also reverse the depression cycle instead of continuously fuelling it, we recommend that you:

- **Implement healthy, non-destructive behaviours that give you quick, short-term relief from your severe depressive symptoms** – such as, for example, watching your favourite television show, reading a book, listening to music, having a soothing bubble bath, taking a walk in nature, talking to a loved one, etcetera.
- **Additionally, we also encourage you to try to find alternatives to unhealthy behaviours** – such as binge eating, overspending on “retail therapy”, substance abuse and/or self-harm for example – that over the long-term, can hurt you / increase the time you spend in the

Storm Zone. We talk more about healthy alternatives to unhealthy behaviours such as these in Appendix I.

- **Furthermore, it's also extremely important that you have a "suicide prevention plan" that will keep you safe in the Storm Zone if you're feeling suicidal** – particularly when you think you might act on those feelings. If you don't have one already, then in Appendix J, we will help you create one.

4. Your Environment

Your depression can have a significant impact on your environment – and by the same token, your environment can also have a significant impact on your depression. So, to help you “survive the storm” and reverse the depression cycle, it's important that you learn and implement some simple, go-to survival strategies that you can utilise to:

1. Make your surroundings a bit more comfortable;
2. Do your best to give yourself a break from any environmental factors that are presently contributing to you being in the Storm Zone (such as toxic people, your job, etcetera).

On that note, let's now look at a few examples of each.

- Firstly, when it comes to making your surroundings a bit more comfortable, you could:
 - **Retreat to a “safe space” where you feel at your most calm, soothed and relaxed** – such as a couch where you can curl up with your favourite cup of tea, a relaxing bathtub that you can close your eyes and soak in, or a warm bed with a cherished stuff animal.
 - **You could make your surroundings a little bit tidier.** After all, when you're in the Storm Zone and battling severe symptoms of depression, it's common to neglect mundane tasks like cleaning the dishes, vacuuming, laundry, and/or just general tidying up around your home. Of course, neglecting such tasks is completely understandable when you're in the Storm Zone – however, for many people, living

in a messy environment can further trigger their depression. For this reason, if you can muster the energy to clean up a bit and make your surroundings a little more ambient, then there's a good chance that it will give your mood a boost – as well as help you feel more in control of your depression.

- Secondly, when it comes to giving yourself a break from the environmental factors that are contributing to you being in the Storm Zone, some examples could include:
 - If one or more people are contributing to you being in the Storm Zone, then you could try your best to limit your interaction with them (or even better if possible, you could stop interacting with them until you feel able to do so in a way that isn't so triggering).
 - If your work is contributing to you being in the Storm Zone, then you could take a “mental health day / hour / period of time” in order to recharge your batteries and put yourself back together again.

5. Your Physiology

Last but not least, like we've said, physical factors such as a chemical imbalance in the brain can also contribute to you being in the Storm Zone as well. Additionally, depression can also affect you in a number of physical ways like we've mentioned which can further fuel the depression cycle – and, if you're someone who is physically affected by depression, then the Storm Zone is when these physical symptoms are at their most severe. Most commonly:

- If you have difficulty sleeping as a result of your depression, then the Storm Zone is when you'll find it the hardest to fall asleep.
- If your depression makes you feel exhausted, then in the Storm Zone, you'll feel at your most exhausted – to such an extent that like we've mentioned, simple tasks like having a shower, doing your chores or getting out of bed can feel like climbing a mountain.

Consequently, when you're in the Storm Zone, we encourage you to implement survival strategies which will:

1. Give you some relief from the physical symptoms of your depression;
2. Directly influence your brain chemicals in a positive way.

Examples of each of these include:

- **Firstly, when it comes to getting relief from the physical symptoms of your depression:**
 - We encourage you to take steps to try to make it as easy as possible for you to fall asleep. In particular, we share strategies you can implement to help you do this in Appendix K.
 - Additionally, you may also find it helpful to practice progressive muscle relaxation – which is a stress-relieving technique that involves tensing and relaxing individual muscle groups. In addition to helping you feel more relaxed and better able to tolerate distress³¹, progressive muscle relaxation also has physical health benefits³², and has proven effective at relieving symptoms of depression and anxiety³³, as well as improving quality of sleep³⁴. To learn a simple yet effective progressive muscle relaxation technique that you can implement when you're in the Storm Zone, please see Appendix L.
- **Secondly, when it comes to directly influencing your brain chemicals in a positive way, you could, for example, engage in some form of physical activity** – When you're in the Storm Zone, doing strenuous exercise like going for a run or lifting weights at the gym can often be beyond your current energy levels. However, we still encourage you to do whatever you feel capable of. This could include, for example, stretching in bed if you're feeling really exhausted – or if you can manage it, going for a walk up and down your street. We know it may not sound like much, but even small amounts of physical exercise like this can still help engage your senses, give you a little bit more distance from negative thoughts, and also help you to release painful emotions as well. Additionally, the more physical activity you're

able to do, the more your brain is releasing endorphins³⁵, which, due to positively influencing the “physiology” aspect of your depression, can help reverse the depression cycle as well.

The Consequences Of Not Implementing Survival Strategies When You’re In The Storm Zone

If you don’t address the thoughts-, emotions-, behaviours-, environmental- and the physiological aspects of your depression by implementing survival strategies when you’re in the Storm Zone, then like we’ve said, you run the risk of depression “*completely consuming you*”. This is a phrase we’ve been using throughout this chapter of the book, but one that we haven’t yet gone into detail defining. So, let us now do this for you – with reference to the five aspects of depression that we’ve been talking about.

When It Comes To Your Thoughts

When depression completely consumes you, due to telling yourself the same negative thoughts over, and over, and over, and over again for a prolonged period of time, it’s highly likely that you’ll become convinced that they’re true (i.e. it’s highly likely that your negative thoughts will complete the transformation from negative *thoughts* to negative *beliefs*). In the worst cases, due to being so consumed by depression, there’s also a serious risk of becoming convinced that it isn’t possible to ever recover, and that you’re destined to struggle with this illness for the rest of your life.

When It Comes To Your Physiology

When depression completely consumes you, it’s common to feel so exhausted that you can’t get out of bed, nor do basic tasks (such as showering) for days or even weeks on end.

When It Comes To Your Behaviours

When depression completely consumes you, it's common to feel so exhausted, unmotivated, miserable and broken that you can't bring yourself to take the actions that you need to take in order to overcome depression – which as a result, keeps you trapped in depression. It's also common to shut yourself off from human contact for prolonged periods of time – which can lead to the gradual erosion of your interpersonal relationships. Additionally, the more time you spend completely consumed by depression, the more likely you are to try to deal with your all-consuming symptoms through unhealthy, destructive behaviours that can become highly addictive and extremely difficult to break out of (such as alcohol abuse).

When It Comes To Your Environment

When depression completely consumes you, your symptoms are often too intense to be able to concentrate, communicate or work effectively for extended periods of time – which can make it hard to keep a job. For this reason, unemployment and financial difficulties can become a legitimate risk. Like we also mentioned before, due to being extremely socially withdrawn, it's also common for friendships to erode over time, and to feel extremely isolated as a result. All of the aforementioned consequences of depression consuming you as well as heightened irritability, anger, and other symptoms can also push marriages to breaking point, and in the worst and most prolonged cases, they can result in divorce.

When It Comes To Your Emotions

When your depression completely consumes you, your feelings of misery, shame, worthlessness, hopelessness, grief, regret, etcetera, are extremely suffocating and are present without relief. Because depression is so enveloping at this time, it's also common to feel completely powerless against this illness, and to feel as if life is no longer worth living.

In saying all of that, however, we really want to emphasise that life is indeed worth living, and that you are NOT powerless against this illness!

After all, if you learn and implement survival strategies at each of the five “battlegrounds” where depression attacks you, then like we've said, you can stop depression from completely consuming you. Not only that, but you can also help to reverse the depression cycle – to such an extent that you can significantly decrease the amount of time you spend in the Storm Zone, and instead spend a lot more time in the Rain Zone!

Now, how to address your depression when you're in the Rain Zone is a brand-new component of overcoming depression – and in the next chapter of this book, that's exactly what we're going to focus on. Before we get to that, however, we'd first like to ask you a handful of guided questions to help you think about and understand what exactly the Storm Zone looks like for you, and what you're currently doing to “survive the storm” when you're in this state.

Guided Questions For You To Carefully Think About And Answer Before We Move On

1. When you're in the Storm Zone:
 - a. What negative thoughts do you experience?
 - b. How strongly are you attached to these negative thoughts?
 - c. How frequently do they occur?
2. What, if any, survival strategies do you currently know and implement to quickly distance yourself from negative thoughts / mitigate their intensity?
3. What emotions do you experience when you're in the Storm Zone?
4. For each of these emotions, what, if any, survival strategies do you currently know and implement to give yourself some quick, short-term relief from them?
5. How does being in the Storm Zone affect you behaviourally?
6. What, if any, survival strategies do you currently know and implement to:

- a. Give yourself quick, short-term relief from your severe depressive symptoms?
 - b. Do as an alternative to unhealthy behaviours that in the long-term, can hurt you / increase the time you spend in the Storm Zone?
7. Do you currently have a carefully thought-out suicide prevention plan to keep you safe if you're feeling suicidal?
8. What are the environmental factors that contribute to you being in the Storm Zone?
9. How does being in the Storm Zone affect your environment?
10. What, if any, survival strategies do you currently know and implement to:
 - a. Make your surroundings a bit more comfortable when you're in the Storm Zone?
 - b. Give yourself a break from the environmental factors that are contributing to you being in the Storm Zone?
11. How does depression affect you physically when you're in the Storm Zone?
12. What, if any, survival strategies do you currently know and implement to:
 - a. Give yourself relief from the physical symptoms of your depression?
 - b. Directly influence your brain chemicals in a positive way?
13. Up until now, which "battlegrounds" of your depression have you most effectively targeted when you've been in the Storm Zone? And, moving forwards, at which "battlegrounds" do you think you need to learn more survival strategies to help you fight back against depression?

3. The Importance Of Knowing How To “Cope” With Depression When You’re In The “Rain Zone”

		HOW TO ADDRESS THEM		
		Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies	Healing Strategies
ASPECTS OF YOUR DEPRESSION YOU NEED TO ADDRESS	Your Thoughts			
	Your Emotions			
	Your Behaviours			
	Your Environment			
	Your Physiology			

So, like we talked about in the previous chapter, in order to prevent your depression from completely consuming you, it’s really important that you implement a wide range of survival strategies that give you quick, short-term relief when you’re in the Storm Zone with severe depressive symptoms. And, like we also said, if you implement these survival strategies and therefore reverse the depression cycle, you can pull yourself out of the Storm Zone and into the Rain Zone of the Storm To Sun Framework. We touched upon the Rain Zone in the previous section, but to paint a more detailed picture of it for you, the Rain Zone is where:

- **Metaphorically Speaking:** The storm in your mind has calmed down or not yet started – but it could flare up on short notice.
- **When It Comes To Your Thoughts:** While you’ll still in all likelihood struggle with negative thoughts, they’ll be less uncontrollable, less intrusive, less constant, less catastrophic, and you’ll be less attached to them than you were in the Storm Zone.

- **When It Comes To Your Emotions:** Similarly, while you'll still have to deal with difficult emotions such as worthlessness, overwhelm, irritability, sadness and/or lack of motivation for example when you're in the Rain Zone, the severity of these emotions is considerably less intense than was the case in the Storm Zone.
- **When It Comes To Your Behaviours:** When you're in the Rain Zone, as a result of your depressive symptoms not being as intense as they were in the Storm Zone, you are much less likely to emotionally shut down, engage in destructive or reckless behaviours, or self-harm. Because your symptoms are less intense, your ability to function will also be higher, and as a result, relatively simple tasks like getting out of bed, having a shower or preparing dinner for example won't feel akin to climbing a mountain like they can sometimes do in the Storm Zone. In fact, when you're in the Rain Zone, you can usually uphold your day-to-day responsibilities – including doing relatively simple tasks like the ones we just mentioned, in addition to, for example, going to work, taking care of your children, etcetera. However, while manageable, upholding all of these responsibilities while dealing with moderately severe symptoms of depression is still likely to make you:
 - Feel tired and burned out much quicker than you otherwise would.
 - Since your ability to function is still compromised and you're consequently often at the end of your tether, then you may be prone to snapping over something small.
 - When you're in the Rain Zone, completing the day's "essential tasks" like getting ready for work, working all day and then making the trip home, for example, is likely to consume the majority of your energy – and as a result, you often may not have much capacity left over for what could be deemed "non-essential" activities such as your hobbies or socialising, for instance.
 - If you do happen to be interacting with someone when you're in the Rain Zone, then you may still struggle to be as engaged as you otherwise would be. Not only that, but there may also be times when you have difficulty concentrating, and/or

when you forget something they told you (although not to the same degree as when you were in the Storm Zone).

- **When It Comes To Your Environment:** When you're in the Rain Zone, any environmental triggers of your depression such as toxic relationships or your job for instance are likely still triggering you – however, they're not doing so to as significant a degree as they were when you were in the Storm Zone. Additionally, if you were previously in the Storm Zone prior to being in the Rain Zone (as opposed to previously being in the Cloud Zone), then you may also have an extended “to-do” list / a backlog of work to attend to – due to putting off doing such things when you were in the Storm Zone and all your energy was focused on “surviving”.
- **When It Comes To How You Feel Physically:** Like we said above, as a result of having to function while dealing with moderately severe symptoms of depression, you may be prone to feeling burned out and tired much quicker than you otherwise would. Due to battling moderately severe depressive symptoms, it's also possible that you'll have difficulty sleeping; that you'll oversleep; and/or that you'll experience other physical symptoms of depression like sexual dysfunction, body aches and pains, headaches, digestive issues or a loss of appetite, for example. As is the case with the other four aspects of your depression, though, none of these physical symptoms are likely to be present to the degree that they were when you were in the Storm Zone.

The Importance Of Knowing How To “Cope With The Rain” (I.e. The Moderately Severe Symptoms Of Your Depression)

When you're in the Rain Zone, rather than trying to “survive the storm”, the challenge now is to do your best to “cope with the rain”, so that you can:

1. Function as best as possible, have positive interactions with the people around you, and uphold your day-to-day responsibilities (such as, for example, going to work, caring for your children, being attentive to your partner, etcetera).

2. Do the above without getting burned out, breaking down emotionally, or fuelling the depression cycle and consequently slipping back into the Storm Zone.

To show you the importance of being able to “cope with the rain” – i.e. the moderately severe symptoms of your depression – in this way, let’s now have a look at three different examples.

Example #1: Coping With Moderate Symptoms Of Depression And The Feelings Of Being Frazzled, Burned Out And Stressed After A Hard Day At Work

As with each of the three examples we're about to show you, there are many different ways that you can cope in this situation – and indeed, to give yourself the best chance of “coping with the rain” effectively, we recommend that you learn and implement strategies to do so which address each of the five different aspects of your depression (more on this shortly). However, for the sake of simplicity, let’s just assume that in this particular situation, you decided to cope with your moderate symptoms of depression by going for a run in the park after work to clear your mind and give your brain a healthy boost of endorphins.

- **Why “Coping With The Rain” In This Way Helps You:** As a result of clearing your mind and giving your brain a healthy boost of endorphins, you’re likely going to feel less frazzled, burned out and stressed when you get home and see your family. This means you’ll be better able to uphold your responsibilities towards them (such as preparing dinner or helping your children with their homework, for example), and that you’ll be much more likely to enjoy their company – which is also going to give your mood a lift. As a result, by the end of the night – thanks to clearing your mind after a tough day at work, feeling good about yourself for upholding your familial responsibilities, and being uplifted by the presence of your family – you’re much more likely to get a relatively peaceful night’s sleep, and wake up the next morning feeling as if you could do it all again.
- **What Might’ve Happened If You *Hadn’t* Gone For A Run:** In this case, you would’ve brought your frustration, stress and irritability home to your family. Consequently, you would’ve

been much more likely to snap at your child while you were trying to help them with their homework for example, and to have been in too much of a bad mood to have enjoyed your family's company during dinner. Consequently, by the end of the night, as a result of still feeling frazzled, burned out and stressed over your work – in addition to feeling guilty and ashamed for snapping at your child when they didn't deserve it – you would've been much less likely to have a good night's sleep, which would've resulted in you having to drag yourself out of bed for work the next morning feeling not only tired, but even more frazzled, burned out and stressed than you did the previous day ... and so the depression cycle would've continued and continued until sooner or later, you would've likely found yourself back in the Storm Zone.

Example #2: “Coping With The Rain” While Studying For A University Exam, And Feeling Overwhelmed And Triggered By The Negative Thought “I’m Not As Prepared For This Exam As I Could Be, Which Means That I’m Going To Fail”

In this situation, one particularly effective strategy to “cope with the rain” would be to calm yourself down by challenging the validity of the negative thought *“I’m not as prepared for this exam as I could be, which means that I’m going to fail”*. There are a multitude of ways that you could do this, but to keep this example simple, let's say that you do so by reminding yourself of the evidence that disproves your negative thought. For example, by telling yourself:

“OK, so just because I’m having the negative thought ‘I’m going to fail’, it doesn’t mean that this negative thought is true – and in fact, there’s actually a lot of evidence to suggest that it’s false. Firstly, just because I’m not perfectly prepared for this exam, it doesn’t automatically mean that I’m going to fail. Secondly, I got 65% and 72% in my last two exams for this subject, which is evidence to suggest that I’m actually pretty good at it. Thirdly, I’ve still got two full days to prepare for the exam, so if I’m able to knuckle down and focus, I’ll be able to consolidate what I already know, learn what I don’t know, and then walk into the exam feeling reasonably calm and confident.”

- **Why “Coping With The Rain” In This Way Helps You:** Now that you're more aware that this negative thought isn't true, you won't feel as stressed out, overwhelmed and worried. As a result, over the next two days, you'll find it much easier to effectively study for your exam, and when you then sit down to take it, you'll find yourself feeling a lot more calm and confident than you otherwise would have. Consequently, you'll likely pass.
- **What Might've Happened If You *Hadn't* Implemented This Coping Strategy:** In this case, you probably would've continued to feel stressed out, overwhelmed and worried, which would've made it much more difficult to study; which in turn would've made you feel even more stressed out, overwhelmed and worried; which would've made it even more difficult to study ... and so the vicious cycle would've continued. Consequently, you would've then had to sit your exam without understanding the material as well as you otherwise would have, and you would've had to do so while feeling more stressed out, overwhelmed and worried that you're going to fail than ever before. On top of this, your difficulty concentrating would've put you at risk of making a lot more mistakes than you otherwise would have, and as a result, you would've been in genuine danger of your negative thought that you're going to fail actually becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Example #3: “Coping With The Rain” After Seeing Your Friend On Facebook Going On A Fancy Tropical Holiday, Which You Yourself Would Love To Experience But Right Now Can't Afford

Just like with our other two examples, there are many ways that you could “cope with the rain” in this situation, and the more strategies you use to do so, the better and better you'll be able to cope. For the purpose of this simple example, though, let's say that you cope with your feelings of misery, jealousy, etcetera by redirecting your focus and bringing awareness to all of the things in your life that you're grateful for, and of all the reasons why your life is good in spite of you not currently being able to afford a tropical holiday. Doing this can be really helpful, since it will put your misery and jealousy in context, and help prevent you from overmagnifying an area of your life that you're not 100% satisfied with.

Now, some of the things you're grateful for and some of the reasons why your life is good could include, for example:

- Because you have abundant access to food and water as well as a safe, comfortable home to live in – when so many people in the world do not.
- Because you have a terrific partner who loves and supports you.
- Because you have a beautiful, healthy child who brings you more joy than you ever thought possible.
- Because you have a gorgeous dog who always gets excited and licks you when you come home from work.
- Because the next season of your favourite television show is about to start on Netflix.

Now, let's look at the impact of implementing (or not implementing) this strategy.

- **Why “Coping With The Rain” In This Way Helps You:** After reminding yourself of all of the good aspects of your life, you're likely going to feel more uplifted and positive, and then you may decide to, for example, make the most of your blessings by taking your child and your dog to the park to play for an hour before sunset. This will uplift you even more, and as a result, by the time you get home, your mood may well have improved enough such that you feel able to enjoy dinner with your partner and child before putting the young one down to sleep, watching an episode or two of your favourite television show with your partner in bed, and then ultimately falling asleep feeling a lot less jealous and miserable than you did earlier in the day when you noticed your friend posting about their tropical holiday on Facebook.
- **What Might've Happened If You *Hadn't* Implemented This Coping Strategy:** In this case, you would've continued to feel miserable and jealous, which may've led to the negative thought *“I'm a loser and a failure for not being able to afford to go on a tropical holiday myself”*. This would've caused you to feel even more miserable; which may've led you to

ruminate on all of the other places you'd like to go in the world that you can't currently afford to visit; which may've made you think that you're an even bigger loser and a failure; which may've made you feel even more miserable; which may've led to you getting a bad night's sleep; which may've led to you waking up feeling lethargic the next day; which may've led to even more negative thoughts; which may've made you feel even more miserable ... and so the depression cycle would've continued and continued until sooner or later, you would've found yourself back in the Storm Zone.

The Characteristics Of “Coping Strategies”

As you can see in the examples we just shared with you, implementing strategies to cope with depression significantly helps you to:

- Function;
- Uphold your day-to-day responsibilities;
- Have positive interactions with the people around you (as opposed to snapping at them);
- It also helps prevent you from getting burned out, from breaking down emotionally, and from fuelling the depression cycle and slipping back into the Storm Zone.

At The Depression Project, we call strategies that help you achieve these objectives *coping strategies*. In general, these strategies will have the following characteristics:

1. They will provide relief that is relatively quick and short-term in nature – however, when compared to survival strategies, this relief may not be quite as quick / instantaneous, although it will often be longer lasting. For instance, in Example #2, we looked at the coping strategy of challenging the validity of your negative thoughts by highlighting the evidence that is contrary to what your negative thought is telling you. In practice, this would require a degree of brainwork, and therefore, the relief it provides will usually not be as quick as the relief which comes from instantly switching on your favourite television show, for example. However, as you saw in our example, the relief that came from that thought-

challenging exercise lasted for a few days – which is much longer than the relief provided from distracting yourself with television would have lasted.

2. Unlike survival strategies which can be implemented when you currently have a very low ability to function (which is why they're ideal for the Storm Zone), coping strategies require at least a moderate degree of energy (such as in the case of exercising), and/or a moderate degree of mental capacity (such as in the cases of challenging negative thoughts or practicing the gratitude exercise we showed you). This is why coping strategies are ideal for the Rain Zone, and are likely to be beyond your capacity when you're in the Storm Zone.
3. Unlike survival strategies which only target the *symptoms* of your depression, coping strategies can target both the *symptoms* as well as the *triggers* – i.e. the thoughts, event, situation, behaviour, etcetera which “ignited” or “set off” your depression in that moment. This was the case in examples #2 and #3, where:
 - a. In Example #2, the thought-challenging coping strategy targeted both the *symptoms* (i.e. the overwhelm, the stress and the worry) as well as the *trigger* (i.e. the negative thought).
 - b. In Example #3, the gratitude coping strategy targeted both the *symptoms* (i.e. the feelings of misery, jealousy, etcetera) as well as the *trigger* (i.e. the negative comparison to another person).

How To Give Yourself The Best Chance Of Coping With Depression When You're In The Rain Zone

Now, just as was the case when it came to surviving depression when you were in the Storm Zone, *in order to give yourself the best chance of coping with your depression when you're in the Rain Zone, it's critical that you implement coping strategies to address each of the five aspects of this illness.* So, let's now dive into what these coping strategies look like for the “thoughts”-, “emotions”-, “behaviours”- “environmental”-, and the “physiological” aspects of your depression!

1. Your Thoughts

Like we've said, while your negative thoughts won't be as intense as they were in the Storm Zone, they're still likely to be present. Furthermore, because your negative thoughts won't be as intense as they were in the Storm Zone – and because your depressive symptoms on the whole won't be as severe – then you'll have more mental capacity with which to fight back against them. Consequently, rather than just trying to “survive” your severely intense negative thoughts by quickly distancing yourself from them / by mitigating their intensity like we suggested you do in the Storm Zone, when you're in the Rain Zone, *your goal is to cope with and overcome your moderately intense negative thoughts as much as possible – so that they stop fuelling the depression cycle.*

On that note, if you'd like to learn a variety of cognitive behavioural therapy strategies to help you do this, please see Appendix M.

2. Your Emotions

When you're in the Rain Zone with moderately severe symptoms, the painful emotions that are associated with your depression like worthlessness, overwhelm, irritability, etcetera, will be felt to a moderate degree. So, in order to “cope with the rain”, it's important to *learn and implement coping strategies that help you to regulate these painful emotions – so that rather than becoming more intense, they gradually become less intense.* For example:

- You can learn and implement strategies to *cultivate gratitude* – which, like we showed you in Example #3 beforehand, can help you regulate feelings of misery and jealousy, as well as contribute to you feeling positive emotions such as joy and contentedness. To learn a variety of gratitude strategies that are particularly helpful when you're in the Rain Zone, please see Appendix N.
- You can practice mindfulness – which has a wealth of benefits including, among other things, reduced symptoms of depression, and reduced probably of having another major depressive episode³⁶. To learn more about the benefits of mindfulness, as well as a wide

variety of mindfulness strategies that you can implement to help you “cope with the rain”, please see Appendix O.

- Once again, you could also *journal*. Of course, this is something we suggested you do in the Storm Zone, because writing down your feelings is usually doable even when your ability to function is low. In saying that, however, journaling is also a strategy that can help you regulate your emotions when you’re in the Rain Zone as well. Additionally, when you’re in the Rain Zone with a higher ability to think clearly and function as compared to the Storm Zone, then on top of (or instead of) just writing down your feelings, you could also journal in a way that is a lot more “problem-solving-orientated” in nature, and a lot more geared towards regulating the specific emotions that you’re struggling with. On that note, in Appendix P, you'll find some Rain Zone-specific journal prompts to help you do just that.

3. Your Behaviours

When you’re in the Rain Zone, it’s important that you learn and implement coping strategies that help prevent you from burning out and/or breaking down emotionally. A couple of examples of such healthy behaviours include:

- Ensuring that you make time to practice self-care. This is, among other things, critical to you “recharging your batteries”, so to speak, and to therefore preventing you from getting burned out and/or breaking down emotionally. To learn a wide variety of self-care strategies, please see Appendix Q.
- Additionally, we encourage you to implement boundaries on your time to prevent you from overcommitting yourself (e.g. to your job, to other people, to extracurricular events, etcetera). This is an important coping strategy to reduce the chances of you becoming overwhelmed, burned out, breaking down emotionally and falling back into the Storm Zone. It’s also an important step in ensuring that you have enough time for self-care. To learn more about boundaries and how to implement them, we encourage you to pay particular attention to the “Social Self-Care” section in Appendix Q.

4. Your Environment

Like we said at the beginning of this chapter, when you're in the Rain Zone, then:

1. You're still likely being moderately triggered by the environmental factors which contribute to your depression.
2. If you were previously in the Storm Zone, then you may also have a backlog of things to do that you didn't have the capacity to deal with beforehand when your symptoms were so severe (for example, chores around the house, tasks to do at work, errands that need to be run, etcetera). Along with your environmental triggers, this build-up of your "to-do" list can also contribute to overwhelm, frustration, stress, exhaustion, etcetera, and therefore fuel the depression cycle.

Consequently, in order to "cope with the rain" and reverse the depression cycle, it's important that you learn and implement coping strategies to help you:

1. Cope with the environmental factors that are triggering your depression;
2. Gradually work through your to-do list without getting burned out, breaking down emotionally and falling back into the Storm Zone.

Examples of coping strategies to achieve each of these objectives include:

- When it comes to coping with the environmental factors that trigger your depression:
 - If this happens to be an unfulfilling job, for example, then one way to better cope with it would be to make sure that you're getting your needs fulfilled when you're *not* at work – such as through pursuing a hobby in your leisure time that you really enjoy.
 - If it's a toxic person that's triggering your depression, then one of many possible coping strategies you could use would be to anticipate the topics of conversation / the things they might say which will trigger you, and then have pre-planned

methods of avoiding these conversations / responding to these comments – in such a way that you don't get drawn into an argument and therefore have your depression triggered.

- When it comes to gradually working through your to-do list without getting burned out, breaking down emotionally and falling back into the Storm Zone, then one possible coping strategy you could implement to help you do this would be to break down “big” tasks that can feel overwhelming and stressful into a series of smaller, more manageable tasks that feel much less overwhelming and stressful.

5. Your Physiology

As was the case when you were in the Storm Zone, it's important to continue to give yourself relief from whatever physical symptoms of depression you're feeling in the Rain Zone (like we said before, these physical symptoms will be less severe than they were in the Storm Zone – but they may still be present). Additionally, it's also important to continue trying to do your best to directly influence your brain chemicals in a positive way as well – which is something that, due to having a higher ability to function, is something you'll find easier to do in the Rain Zone as compared to the Storm Zone. For example, when it comes to exercising, while you may not have had the energy to do much more than stretch in bed while you were in the Storm Zone, in the Rain Zone, there's a much higher chance you'll have enough energy to take a brisk walk around the block, go for a run through the park or lift weights at the gym – all of which will give your brain a much bigger rush of dopamine.

The Cloud Zone Of The Storm To Sun Framework

At the start of this chapter, we walked you through three examples that highlighted the dangers of not implementing coping strategies when you're in the Rain Zone, and explained how not doing so can lead to you getting burned out, breaking down emotionally, and slipping back into the Storm Zone. However, the good news is that if you use coping strategies to address each aspect of your depression like in the ways we just showed you, then not only will you give yourself the best

possible chance of preventing this from happening, but you'll also give yourself the best possible chance of reversing the depression cycle, and therefore spending proportionally more of your time in the Cloud Zone – where your symptoms are only mild and your ability to function is at its highest. When it comes to overcoming your depression, this is where the most work needs to be done, which is why the next chapter of this book will be dedicated to explaining exactly what you need to do in the Cloud Zone – and how taking the action you need to take can lead to you conquering this illness and living the healthy, depression-free life you want!

However, before we move on to all of that, let us now ask you a series of questions to help you think about and understand exactly what the Rain Zone looks like for you, and what you're currently doing to cope with depression when you're in this state.

Guided Questions For You To Carefully Think About And Answer Before We Move On

1. When you're in the Rain Zone:
 - a. What negative thoughts do you experience?
 - b. How strongly are you attached to these negative thoughts?
 - c. How frequently do they occur?
2. What, if any, coping strategies do you currently know and implement to try to cope with and overcome your negative thoughts so that they stop fuelling the depression cycle?
3. What emotions do you experience when you're in the Rain Zone?
4. For each of these emotions, what, if any, coping strategies do you currently know and implement to help you regulate them – in such a way that you can continue to function and uphold your responsibilities without getting burned out, breaking down emotionally and falling back into the Storm Zone?
5. How does being in the Rain Zone affect you behaviourally?

6. What, if any, behavioural coping strategies do you currently know and implement to help prevent you from burning out and/or breaking down emotionally?
7. How does being in the Rain Zone affect your environment?
8. What, if any, coping strategies do you currently know and implement to:
 - a. Cope with the environmental factors that are triggering your depression?
 - b. Gradually work through your to-do list without getting overwhelmed, burned out and falling back into the Storm Zone?
9. How does depression affect you physically when you're in the Rain Zone?
10. What, if any, coping strategies do you currently know and implement to:
 - a. Give yourself relief from the physical symptoms of your depression?
 - b. Positively influence your brain chemicals?
11. Up until now, which aspects of your depression have you most effectively targeted when you've been in the Rain Zone? And, moving forwards, in which areas do you think you need to learn more coping strategies to help you fight back against depression?

4. The Importance Of Knowing How To “Heal” From Depression When You’re In The “Cloud Zone”

		HOW TO ADDRESS THEM		
		Survival Strategies	Coping Strategies	Healing Strategies
ASPECTS OF YOUR DEPRESSION YOU NEED TO ADDRESS	Your Thoughts			
	Your Emotions			
	Your Behaviours			
	Your Environment			
	Your Physiology			

So, to quickly recap what we've covered thus far in this book:

1. If you implement survival strategies at each of the five “depression battlegrounds” when you’re in the Storm Zone, then it will help prevent depression from completely consuming you, as well as help to reverse the depression cycle and minimise the time you spend in the Storm Zone.
2. Then, when you’re in the Rain Zone, if you implement coping strategies at each of the five depression battlegrounds, it will help you function as best as possible, have positive interactions with the people around you, and uphold your day-to-day responsibilities – without getting burned out, breaking down emotionally, or fuelling the depression cycle and slipping back into the Storm Zone. Not only that, but you’ll also give yourself the best chance of reversing the depression cycle, and therefore maximising the time you spend in the Cloud Zone of the Storm To Sun Framework.

Now, just to remind you, you can think of yourself as being in the Cloud Zone when the symptoms of your depression are mild (or perhaps even absent), your ability to function is reasonably high, and you consequently feel relatively “fine” – in the sense that you’re only being minimally impacted by depression (or perhaps not being impacted at all). In particular, here is what the Cloud Zone looks like for each of the five aspects of your depression:

- **When It Comes To Your Thoughts:** In the Cloud Zone, you’ll be able to think at your clearest, as well as at your most positively. This does not necessarily mean that you won’t experience any negative thoughts while you’re in the Cloud Zone (although you may not). However, if you do, they’ll be relatively passive, controllable, infrequent and mild in nature – and as a result, they’ll cause very little disruption to your day-to-day life.
- **When It Comes To Your Emotions:** All the emotions that are associated with depression like misery, overwhelm, worthlessness and hopelessness, for example, will be at their mildest when you’re in the Cloud Zone – and in the best of cases, they may not even be present.
- **When It Comes To Your Behaviours:** Because your depressive symptoms will be at their mildest, then like we’ve reiterated, your ability to function will also be at its highest. For this reason:
 - You’ll be able to function reasonably well without becoming easily tired.
 - You’ll be much more likely to want to socialise with your friends and family.
 - In the Cloud Zone, your motivation is also likely to be at its highest, and for this reason, you’ll be most able to do anything that you may have been putting off doing while you were in the Rain- or the Storm Zone (for example, socialising like we just mentioned, but also your hobbies, chores, or anything left on your to-do list).
- **When It Comes To Your Environment:** When you’re in the Cloud Zone, the environmental components of your depression – while still present in your life – are either not currently triggering you, or only doing so in a minimal way.

- When It Comes To How You Feel Physically: In the Cloud Zone, any physical symptoms of your depression will be mild or non-existent.

The Importance Of Knowing How To “Heal” From Depression When You’re In The Cloud Zone

While progressing through this book, you may have at some point wondered why the Storm To Sun Framework is indeed called the Storm To *Sun* Framework, and not the Storm To *Cloud* Framework – since the Storm-, Rain- and Cloud Zones are the only aspects of this framework we’ve discussed thus far. However, the “sun” part is also critically important, because while the “Storm To Cloud” part is representative of the different states of depression that a person can be in at any point in time, the “sun” symbolises a person’s state when they’ve overcome the storm, the rain and the clouds so to speak, and can therefore be said to have *overcome their depression*. Or, to put it another way, you can be said to have “reached the sun” when you no longer struggle with depression, and can therefore live your life free of this debilitating illness.

Now, in order to “reach the sun” and be free of depression, it’s unfortunately not enough to “survive” depression when you’re in the Storm Zone, nor is it enough to “cope” with depression when you’re in the Rain Zone (although doing both is essential for the reasons we’ve mentioned). Rather, what “reaching the sun” will require is for you to “heal” from depression when you’re in the Cloud Zone. In particular, this will require you to heal from the *contributing factors* (AKA the *underlying causes*) of your depression – in such a way that as you gradually heal from those contributing factors, they gradually stop causing you to feel depressed. Or, to phrase it in a different way, if you gradually heal from the contributing factors of your depression, then the symptoms of your depression will consequently become less and less intense over time, until ultimately, they will no longer be a part of your life (at which point – just to be completely clear – you can be said to have “overcome depression” / “beaten depression” / “reached the sun” / “become free of depression” (we’ll use each of these phrases interchangeably from now on)).

Now, in terms of *how* to actually do this, the answer – as has been the theme throughout the entirety of this book – is once again centred around the five aspects of your depression. In particular:

- **When It Comes To Your Thoughts:** You need to stop / undo / rewire the thinking patterns and belief systems that contribute to your depression.
- **When It Comes To Your Emotions:** You need to resolve / move through / heal from the emotions that contribute to your depression.
- **When It Comes To Your Behaviours:** You need to unlearn self-sabotaging / protective (but sub-optimal) behavioural traits that contribute to your depression, and replace them with healthy behavioural traits that contribute to you being depression-free and happy.
- **When It Comes To Your Environment:** You need to resolve / heal from the environmental factors that contribute to your depression.
- **When It Comes To Your Physiology:** You need to resolve / heal from any physiological factors that contribute to your depression.

Let's now break all of this down in more detail for you.

1. In Order To “Reach The Sun”, You’ll Need To Stop / Undo / Rewire The Thinking Patterns And The Belief Systems That Contribute To Your Depression

For example:

- If having deep-seeded, negative core beliefs about yourself such as “*I’m a loser*” or “*I’m unlovable*” are contributing to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies which help you to undo these negative core beliefs, and instead replace them with positive core beliefs.

- Similarly, if overthinking is a contributing factor to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies which help you to stop overthinking – so that you can instead start feeling much more calm, relaxed and at peace. Depending on your situation, this may involve, for example, learning and implementing healing strategies that help you to:
 - Forgive yourself for any mistakes you’ve made in the past that you continuously find yourself ruminating on.
 - Get closure from unresolved situations that you can’t stop overthinking about (for example, like why a previous relationship didn’t work out).
- Additionally, if there are any other thinking patterns that are contributing to your depression, then it's important that you learn and implement healing strategies to stop / undo / rewire them as well.

2. In Order To “Reach The Sun”, You’ll Need To Resolve / Move Through / Heal From The Emotions That Contribute To Your Depression

For example:

- If feeling worthless is a contributing factor to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies to instead help you to love yourself.
- If anger over someone hurting you is a contributing factor to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies to resolve this anger. Depending on your situation, this may involve, for example, learning how to forgive someone who’s wronged you.
- If heartbreak over a broken relationship is a contributing factor to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies to

help you move through the painful, complex emotions you have surrounding the break-up, so that in time, you can:

- Come to be at peace with what happened and put it behind you;
 - Be willing and able to be vulnerable to someone new in the future, and have a happy, healthy, fulfilling relationship with them.
- If grief over the death of a loved one is a contributing factor to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies to help you move through the grieving process, and healthily adapt from “what life was” to “what life is now”.
 - If there are any other emotions that are contributing to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve resolving / healing from them as well.

3. In Order To “Reach The Sun”, You’ll Need To Unlearn Self-Sabotaging / Protective (But Sub-Optimal) Behavioural Traits That Contribute To Your Depression, And Replace Them With Healthy Behavioural Traits That Contribute To You Being Depression-Free And Happy

For example:

- If people pleasing is a contributing factor to your depression, then beating your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies to stop people pleasing – so that you can start to get your own needs met, and begin living life on your own terms. In particular, these healing strategies could include, for example:
 - Implementing boundaries that allow you to still be the helpful, caring, supportive person you are, but that protect you from having your own needs and wants sabotaged; from getting burnt out and exhausted; from being used by others; from

hiding the “real you”; from living a life that’s not in line with your values; and from having your depression triggered;

- Getting comfortable saying “no” to people who consistently ask favours of you and who try to take advantage of your helpful nature.
- Similarly, if negatively comparing yourself to other people is a contributing factor of your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies to help you cease this behaviour; cultivate acceptance and compassion for who you are and where you’re at in life; and focus on being the best individual that you can be.
- If you were mentally abused in the past, then a protective behaviour you may have developed in response is to keep people at a distance / push them away if they get too close – in order to try to prevent yourself from getting hurt. However, if this leads to loneliness, lack of fulfilment and other issues that contribute to your depression, then beating your depression will involve learning and implementing healing strategies that will help you feel more comfortable trusting and opening up to others – so that you can start to develop the deeper, more intimate connections you crave.
- Additionally, if there are any other self-sabotaging / protective behavioural traits that are contributing to your depression, then it’s important that you learn and implement healing strategies to help you replace them with healthy behavioural traits as well.

4. In Order To “Reach The Sun”, You’ll Need To Resolve / Heal From The Environmental Factors That Contribute To Your Depression

In practice, this involves either changing your environment; or learning and implementing healing strategies to help you better come to terms with your existing environment – in such a way that your existing environment no longer causes you to feel depressed. For example:

- If one or more toxic relationships are contributing to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve either:
 - Learning healing strategies to resolve this toxicity and improve the relationship. Depending on the situation, one such healing strategy could be to undertake assertiveness training in order to teach you how to better stand up for yourself, and how to clearly express the problems that you're having to the person who's behaving toxically towards you. This may lead to that person changing their own behaviour – such as by starting to treat you much nicer and making more effort to fulfil your needs – which would result in the relationship becoming much, much healthier.
 - On the other hand, you may need to end the relationship – if you've already repeatedly tried to work with that person to make it healthier, and doing so hasn't led to any improvements.
- Similarly, if having a job that's causing you a high degree of stress is a contributing factor to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve either taking steps to make your current job less stressful, or alternatively, finding a new job that's less stressful.
- If an unfulfilling lifestyle that no longer serves you is a contributing factor to your depression (such as always partying and having one-night stands even though you crave something more meaningful), then overcoming your depression will involve changing your lifestyle to one that better meets your needs.
- If there are any other environmental factors that are contributing to your depression, then overcoming your depression will involve resolving / healing from them as well.

5. In Order To “Reach The Sun”, You’ll Need To Resolve / Heal From Any Of The Physiological Factors That Are Contributing To Your Depression

The way that depression affects you physically is often *reactive* in nature. For example, the reason depression can make you feel exhausted is because having to constantly deal with negative thoughts, painful emotions, toxic environments, etcetera can drain you of all of your energy – as can engaging in unhealthy behaviours to try to cope with your depression (such as drinking alcohol, for example). For this reason, you’ll likely find that the more you heal from / resolve the other four aspects of your depression, the more the physical symptoms of your depression will diminish as well. However, in saying that, it’s important that you also resolve / heal from any physiological factors that are *contributing* to your depression (as opposed to being a *reactive symptom* of it) – such as low thyroid levels, for instance. For this reason, we encourage you to consult with a doctor to see if there may be any such factors that are contributing to your depression, and to get treatment for them if there are.

The Key Characteristics Of Healing Strategies, And How They Differ From Survival And Coping Strategies

As you've likely picked up on by now, healing strategies have very different characteristics and serve a very different function to both survival and coping strategies. In particular:

- **They Address The Causes Of Your Depression, And Not The Symptoms:** Unlike survival strategies (which focus solely on giving you quick, short-term relief from depression’s symptoms), and unlike coping strategies (which help you cope with the triggers of your depression as well as the symptoms), healing strategies *only* target the underlying causes of your depression.
- **Resolving Problems Vs Surviving / Coping With Them:** Rather than just helping you to survive or cope with the underlying causes of your depression, the objective of healing

strategies is for you to actually resolve / heal from those underlying causes – in such a way that moving forwards, they no longer cause you to feel depressed.

- **Healing Strategies Require A High Ability To Function:** Due to inherently being much more complex and involved than survival strategies (which can be implemented with a low ability to function), and also coping strategies (which can be implemented with a moderate ability to function), healing strategies require a relatively high ability to function. This is why they're best suited for the Cloud Zone as opposed to the Rain Zone or the Storm Zone.
- **Long-Term Relief Vs Short-Term Relief:** Whereas the relief that comes from coping strategies and particularly survival strategies is short-term in nature, the relief that comes from healing strategies is long-term in nature.

The Consequences Of Not Learning And Implementing Healing Strategies In The Cloud Zone

Out of this entire book, we're about to make our most important point – the one key takeaway that we really, truly hope you remember.

Are you ready for it?

If you never learn and implement healing strategies, then unfortunately, it's highly, highly unlikely that you will ever overcome depression.

The reason why is because when it comes to each of the contributing factors / underlying causes of your depression, if they are never resolved or overcome through healing strategies, then those contributing factors / underlying causes of your depression will always be present in your life, and therefore, they will always cause you to feel depressed.

It's similar to if you have a broken leg, for example: if you never get surgery to fix it, then your leg will always be broken – or at best, it will heal a little bit over time, but never close to completely, and never in a way that that broken leg won't trouble you. You might be able to "cope" with that broken leg by using crutches, or by limping on your good leg to limit the pressure you put on your

bad leg – but without a clear strategy to recover (i.e. surgery), your broken leg will never, ever heal properly. And, just as this is the case for a serious physical illness or injury, the same can be said for a mental illness like depression as well. In this context, while it's essential to know how to survive and cope with the symptoms of this illness so that those symptoms don't consume you and so that you can continue to function and uphold your day-to-day responsibilities, it's also essential to resolve / heal from the underlying causes of those symptoms – otherwise, how will you ever be free of them?

Now, to really drive this point home and prove to you that it's true, what we're going to do now is show you two detailed examples of healing strategies in action.

Example #1: How Depression Project Co-Founder Danny Baker Used A Healing Strategy To Overcome His Perfectionistic Tendencies And Conquer His Feelings Of Worthlessness

Sadly, in 2008 Danny collapsed into a crippling spell of depression, that over the next four years led to alcoholism, drug abuse, medicine-induced psychosis and multiple hospitalisations. One major trigger of Danny's depression was that any time he set himself a goal and didn't achieve it – for example, like getting 79% in a university exam rather than his goal of 85% – he felt like a worthless, pathetic, hopeless failure, and he hated himself so much that he felt suicidal. Even more unfortunately, for the first two years that Danny battled depression, he didn't learn and implement any healing strategies to address this underlying cause of his depression, because he thought:

The main reason why I keep getting depressed is because I keep failing to achieve my goals. So, if I just work really hard to make sure that I ALWAYS achieve my goals, then it means that I'll stop feeling depressed – so that's what I've got to do!

However, no-one in the world *always* achieves their goals, which is why for two years, Danny just kept on relapsing, and relapsing, and relapsing back into depression. Eventually though, he decided to see a psychologist, which was when he finally learned that one of the contributing

factors / underlying causes of his depression was a very unhealthy level of perfectionism - like he talks about in his memoir *Depression is a Liar*:

“You relentlessly seek excellence, Danny,” his psychologist told him, “and you always set extremely challenging goals and then throw yourself into achieving them. Being perfectionistically goal-driven like this is fine in and of itself, but the problem with you is that you measure your self-worth entirely in terms of whether or not you achieve these goals. If you don’t achieve a goal that you set out to achieve – like getting an 85% average at university or getting your novel [that Danny was writing] published by a particular point in time – then you hate yourself. You feel worthless and inadequate. You feel like a failure. And, you feel this pain so intensely that you’d rather be dead.

You’re human, Danny, and humans, by our very composition, are not perfect. Humans make mistakes. Humans don’t always achieve their goals. You need to accept this, and not be so hard on yourself. You need to accept this, and be able to love yourself regardless. You need to be able to love yourself regardless of how you go in your university exams and no matter what happens with your novel. Even if you fail every exam for the rest of your degree and your novel never gets published, you should still be able to love yourself. You should be able to find elements of yourself that you love that will be there no matter what. That will let you love yourself no matter what.”

So, over the following week, Danny tried really hard to find things he liked about himself that had absolutely nothing to do with achieving his goals. It wasn’t easy for him, since like his psychologist had said, that’s what Danny’s self-love had always been predicated on: if he was achieving his goals, or was on track to, then he loved himself; and if he hadn’t, or was not on track to, then he hated himself. However, after a long time pondering, Danny had finally written a healthy, outcome-independent list of things about himself that he liked.

- *I like that I’m a kind person – someone who always treats other people with respect.*
- *I like that I’m an honest person who acts with integrity.*
- *I like that I’m compassionate, and that I do volunteer work to try and help others less fortunate than myself.*

- *I like that I'm a loyal friend, son, brother and grandson.*
- *I like that I'm a good, supportive listener, and that I'll always be there for a loved one in need.*
- *I like that I'm humble – in spite of everyone always telling me that I've accomplished a lot.*
- *I like that I'm generous, and always willing to share what I have with others.*
- *I like that I have the determination and the work ethic to pursue my dreams through to completion.*
- *I like the fact that I'm a positive person. I like the fact that even after everything I've been through, I still feel tremendously blessed, still feel immensely fortunate to have everything that God has bestowed upon me. I like the fact that instead of thinking of myself as unlucky for having suffered such a severe depression, I think of myself as lucky for having all the support I'm getting to help me beat it.*

And, when Danny focused on these things, he could actually see that there really was a lot to love about himself.

"Wow, I actually am a good person," he says he remembers thinking at the time. *"And this really is true – regardless of what my marks are at university and whether or not my novel ever gets published. These are the reasons why I can love myself, and whether I succeed or fail doesn't compromise them at all."*

As a result, for the first time in a very long time, Danny was really able to see the good in himself – and now that he could, he didn't feel worthless anymore. He didn't hate himself. He didn't feel inadequate. Instead, he felt confident, and proud of himself, and he didn't feel depressed at all.

"OK, that all sounds great in theory," you might be thinking, *"but what about the next time Danny didn't achieve one of his goals? Surely then he'd just relapse right back into depression like always, right?"*

Of course, we understand why you might think this, but the answer is *no, not anymore* – because Danny had finally implemented a *healing strategy* to deal with one of the biggest underlying causes of his depression: feelings of worthlessness caused by his extremely unhealthy level of perfectionism.

In fact, to show you what happened the next time Danny didn't achieve one of his goals, we'd like to share with you another excerpt from his memoir *Depression is a Liar*:

Over the next week, at [my psychologist] Dr Gregor's instruction I continued reading over my list – in order to help keep all of my healthy reasons to love myself at the forefront of my mind, and to continue embedding them into my subconscious. Each day, I'd read it 50 or 100 times, during random intervals when I had a spare few minutes – such as when I woke up; while I was waiting for a bus; in between classes at uni; or while I was taking a break from studying for my mid-semester exams, which just so happened to be around that time. Thanks to my sessions with Dr Gregor, I'd been feeling much better, and courtesy of a few all-nighters and some help from my friends, I'd been able to catch up on most of the work I'd fallen behind on [as a result of being too depressed to study]. By the 22nd of May, 2010, I'd gotten the marks back for three out of my four subjects, and I'd done well – getting 80% for Monetary Economics, 88% for Advanced Microeconomics Honours, and 90% for Regression Modelling. I'd run out of time to properly catch up on all the material for Mathematical Economics, so I knew I wouldn't do as well in that one – but, I was hopeful I could scrape together 75%, and due to the other exams luckily being worth more, have my marks balance out to a High Distinction average [which was 85% – my goal for the semester].

The results were due to be released at 5:00 p.m. that day, so after reading through my list of healthy reasons to love myself a couple more times, I logged in to my university's online portal and went to the "Exams Results" section. As soon as I saw my score, my jaw dropped.

Nine out of 20.

Nine.

Forty-five per cent.

A fail.

I couldn't believe it. I'd never failed an exam at uni before. Never even come close. I was absolutely gutted.

*F***ing hell! I thought. A mark like this is really going to drag my average down. It's really going to make it difficult to get a High Distinction average this semester. This is bad. This is f****d. F**k, f**k, f**k, f**k, f**k.*

I stewed in disappointment for the next half an hour before getting changed into my running clothes and heading to the gym. I popped into the bathroom before I went, and then while I was washing my hands, the magnitude of what had just happened hit me square in the face.

*Wow! I actually exclaimed out loud. I just got a shocking exam mark back and I didn't abuse myself! I didn't call myself a loser or a failure or a f**k up! And I don't feel inadequate, worthless or suicidal! I only feel disappointed! Not depressed – just disappointed!*

I could hardly believe it. Before I saw Dr Gregor, an exam mark like that would've shattered me. It would've made me hate myself and wish I was dead. But now, all I felt was disappointment – which is a perfectly healthy emotion.

*I've had a setback, yes, I thought, but that doesn't mean I'm worthless. It doesn't mean I'm a loser, a failure, or a f**k up. I'm still the same kind, honest, compassionate, loyal, supportive, humble, generous, determined, positive and strong-minded person I was before I received this exam mark, and instead of falling to pieces like I would have in the past, I'll learn where I went wrong in this exam, do better next time, and then go on to live a happy, healthy, fulfilling life.*

Wow, I continued thinking to myself. I never thought I'd say this on a day I failed an exam, but I actually feel great right now. I think I've finally conquered my demons! After all, God set me a huge test, and I passed with flying colours! In the past this would've completely destroyed me, but now I don't feel depressed at all!

And there you have it – a clear example of how learning and implementing healing strategies can help you conquer the underlying causes of your depression, and prevent you from always relapsing back into it. And, like we’ve said, if you’re able to resolve / heal from *all* of the underlying causes that comprise each of the five aspects of your depression, then you can indeed recover from this illness, and live the healthy, depression-free life that you want to live! In fact, this is exactly what happened to Danny – who, after learning and implementing additional healing strategies to deal with the other underlying causes of his depression, was able to make a complete recovery, and these days, he's been happy, healthy and depression-free for 11 years and counting (his last depressive episode was at the start of 2012).

Example #2: Implementing Healing Strategies To Overcome Negative Core Beliefs You’ve Had For Years

If you’re like many people who struggle with depression, then you in all likelihood have one or more deep-seeded, negative core beliefs about yourself or the world – such as “*I’m a loser*” or “*I’m unlovable*”. Now, negative core beliefs such as these are not beliefs that you’re born with – they’re beliefs that have been developed over time. To see how, take a look at the cycle below:



Negative Experiences

As you can see, this cycle starts with a negative experience – such as being bullied, being abused, or being neglected by your parents, for example. Often, this negative experience occurs during childhood, since that’s when your core beliefs about yourself and the world are most often formed. However, this cycle can also be triggered by a negative experience that took place in your adulthood as well (such as by a divorce).

Violation Of Basic Needs

In some way, this negative experience violated at least one of your basic human needs – most commonly, your need to avoid pain, your need for safety, your need for control, and/or your need for positive attachment. To use the example of being bullied that we mentioned above, this violates:

- Your need to avoid pain (since being bullied is obviously painful).
- It violates your need for safety (since you don’t feel safe when you’re being bullied).
- It violates your need for control (since you likely feel helpless in the face of a person or a group exerting their strength or dominance over you).
- And, it violates your need for positive attachment (since being bullied is a negative interaction with the perpetrator(s)).

Mentally Processing The Negative Experience

This is where you try to understand and find an explanation for what happened. Broadly speaking, you can attribute this negative experience to two different factors:

1. External factors that have nothing to do with you; or
2. Internal factors that are to do with you.

And, if we're talking about a negative experience that occurred in your childhood such as being bullied, for example, then chances are that you internally attributed yourself as the cause of this negative experience. The reason why is because when you're a child, you only have a limited understanding of the world around you, and the complex reasons why other people behave the way that they do. Consequently, it's much simpler to blame yourself, and this is exactly how negative core beliefs often start to develop – such as the *"I'm a loser"* negative core belief, which, for example, might have come about because as a child, this was the only explanation you could think of for why you were bullied.

Recalibrating Your Behaviours In Response

This is where you try to change your behaviour in the hope of preventing the negative experience from occurring again. In the context of bullying, for example, this might mean:

- Withdrawing from social situations;
- Not opening up and letting people get to know the "real you" out of fear of being hurt;
- Avoiding people altogether.

However, the problem that often occurs when you recalibrate your behaviour in this way is that you unwittingly fuel the cycle that we've been talking about, and entrench your negative core belief even deeper in your psyche. For example, if moving forwards you become very socially withdrawn as a response to being bullied, then this can lead to the negative experience of being lonely, which violates your human needs to avoid pain and to have positive attachments to other people, which can lead you to conclude that this is happening because you're a "loser", which further entrenches the negative core belief that you're a loser, which can lead you to withdraw even more in response, and so the cycle continues and continues.

How To Get Control Over Your Negative Core Beliefs

Now, not surprisingly, negative core beliefs that you've had for years or even decades can take some time to undo and replace with positive core beliefs. However, with healing strategies, it is indeed possible – and right now, we're going to show you one way of doing so.

To start with – if you'd like to follow along yourself for a negative core belief that you have – please get a pen and a piece of paper, and write down a negative core belief that you have about yourself, accompanied by, as a percentage, how convinced you are that this negative belief is true. For example:

- *“My negative core belief is that I’m a loser, and I believe it with 100% certainty.”*
- *“My negative core belief is that I’m unlovable, and I believe it with 85% certainty.”*

Next, please write down the negative experience(s) that led to the development of this negative core belief. Now like we've said, the way this experience led to you developing this negative core belief is because at the time it occurred, you attributed something negative about yourself as the cause of it – and then over time, the continuation of the cycle we showed you led to this belief becoming more and more entrenched in your psyche.

However, instead of blaming yourself for that negative experience occurring, right now, please ask yourself:

What are some alternative explanations for why that event occurred?

For example, let's say that you were bullied in school, which led you to conclude that the reason you were bullied is because you're a “loser”. However:

- The bully may have been feeling extremely angry and frustrated with something going on in their own life (such as their parents getting divorced), and since they were just a kid and didn't know how to healthily process this anger and frustration, they bullied you – *not* because you're a loser, but because their childish selves didn't know how else to release their anger and frustration.

- The bully may have lacked self-esteem, and so they bullied you *not* because you're a loser, but because bullying you improved their self-esteem by making them feel strong, powerful and dominant.
- The bully may have also admired and been jealous of you – for example, because you achieved better marks in school than they did – and since they didn't like feeling inferior to you intellectually, they tried to compensate by bullying you in order to feel superior to you physically. Unfortunately, this explains why a lot of children are bullied – *not* because they're a loser, but because they have admirable qualities or traits that bullies wish they could emulate, but can't.
- The bully may've also simply been acting out behaviour that they'd repeatedly witnessed in their own personal life – most commonly by their parents. In this instance, they bullied you *not* because you're a loser, but because they'd never been shown a kinder way to behave.

As you can see in this example, there are a *lot* of reasons why you could've been bullied that have nothing to do with you being a loser. So, right now, please return to your own negative core belief, and try to re-process the experience that triggered it by writing down 5-10 alternative explanations for why it occurred. Doing this exercise is really important, because like we've said, when you're a child, your mind is still developing and your understanding of the world is relatively limited, which means that rather than appreciating the complexity of the situation in question and being able to correctly attribute it's occurrence to one or more external factors, you simply blamed yourself – and as the “negative core belief cycle” continued and continued to occur, your negative core belief became more and more entrenched. So, now that you're an adult and have the capacity to better appreciate the complexity of the situation, we encourage you to spend some time trying to think of 5-10 additional explanations for why your negative experience occurred.

Alright, so once you've done that, you're now going to have 5-10 explanations for why your negative experience took place, in addition to the original conclusion that you drew which led to

you developing your negative core belief. To use our bullying example once again, our total list of possible explanations for why this occurred would now be:

- Because the bully was angry / frustrated about something, and was taking it out on you;
- Because bullying you made them feel strong, powerful and good about themselves;
- Because the bully was jealous of you;
- Because the bully was modelling the behaviour of their parents;
- Because you're a loser (the original negative core belief that you have).

The fact that you now have not just one, but a handful of explanations for why your negative experience took place should already cast some doubt on the accuracy of your original negative core belief.

And, to cast even more doubt, we'd now like you to ask yourself:

If I was an innocent bystander and saw the same negative experience play out with different people in front of me, then how would I explain it? And even more fundamentally, would I blame the victim or the perpetrator?

This is an extremely, *extremely* important question to ask, because in almost all cases, you would *not* explain it by attributing the negative core belief you have about yourself to the victim who's in your shoes. Rather, you would blame the perpetrator – are we right?

So, to return to our bullying example once again, if you witnessed another child being bullied in the same way you were, then:

1. *Would you conclude that the child is being bullied because they're a loser?* Our guess is that you certainly would *not!* And, if this is the case, then don't you think it's unfair to yourself to conclude that the reason *you* were bullied is because *you* are a "loser"?

2. *Would you blame the bully, or the victim?* Similarly, we're very confident that you would blame the bully – and if this is the case, then isn't it also unfair to blame *yourself* for the time when you were bullied?

Once again, asking yourself these questions should cast even more doubt on the accuracy of your negative core belief.

After Completing This Exercise, How Convinced Are You Now That Your Negative Core Belief Is True?

Remember at the start of this exercise, when we asked you to write down, as a percentage, how convinced you are that your negative core belief is true? Well, after completing the above exercise, we'd like you to answer this question again.

Why?

Because our guess is that right now, you're less convinced that this negative core belief is true than you were beforehand. For example:

- If you were 100% convinced it was true before this exercise, then maybe now, you're only 60% convinced that it's true.
- If you were 80% convinced it was true before this exercise, then maybe now, you're only 50% convinced that it's true.
- If you were 50% convinced it was true before this exercise, then maybe you're only 25% convinced now.

Once again, this is how healing strategies work – by addressing the underlying causes of your depression and helping you overcome them. And, when it comes to negative core beliefs, if you keep learning and implementing healing strategies like so, then over time, you can get to the point where you're 0% convinced that they're true – or in other words, where you know that they're

false – and you can also learn how to replace them with positive core beliefs that instead of fuelling your depression, contribute to you being emotionally stable, confident and happy.

Like we've been repeating throughout this chapter of the book, this really is the key to you overcoming your depression: resolving / healing from the contributing factors of your depression, in such a way that those factors no longer cause you to feel depressed.

How Do You Know When You're On The Way Towards "Reaching The Sun" / Have Already Reached It?

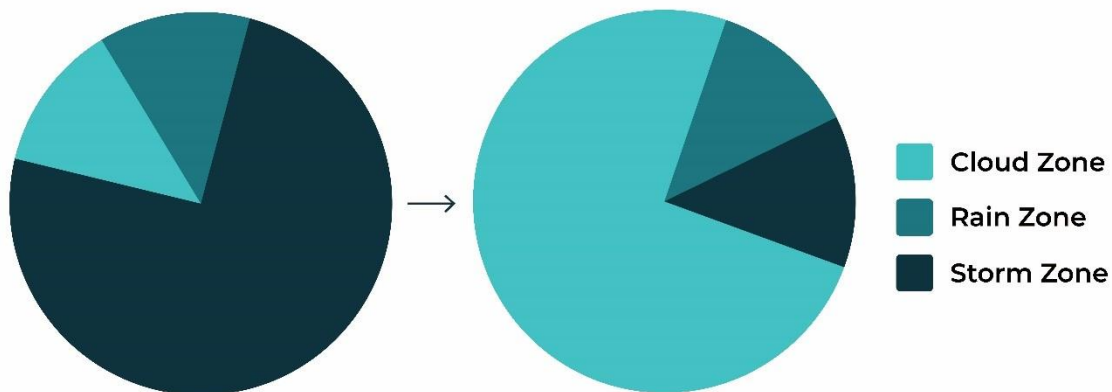
Before we ask you to answer the customary end-of-chapter questions, one very important point that we want to address is how to know when you're on the "right track" to overcoming depression, and/or how to know when you have actually overcome depression. The reason why we feel the need to do this is because on countless occasions, we at The Depression Project have unfortunately seen or heard of the following sequence of events taking place:

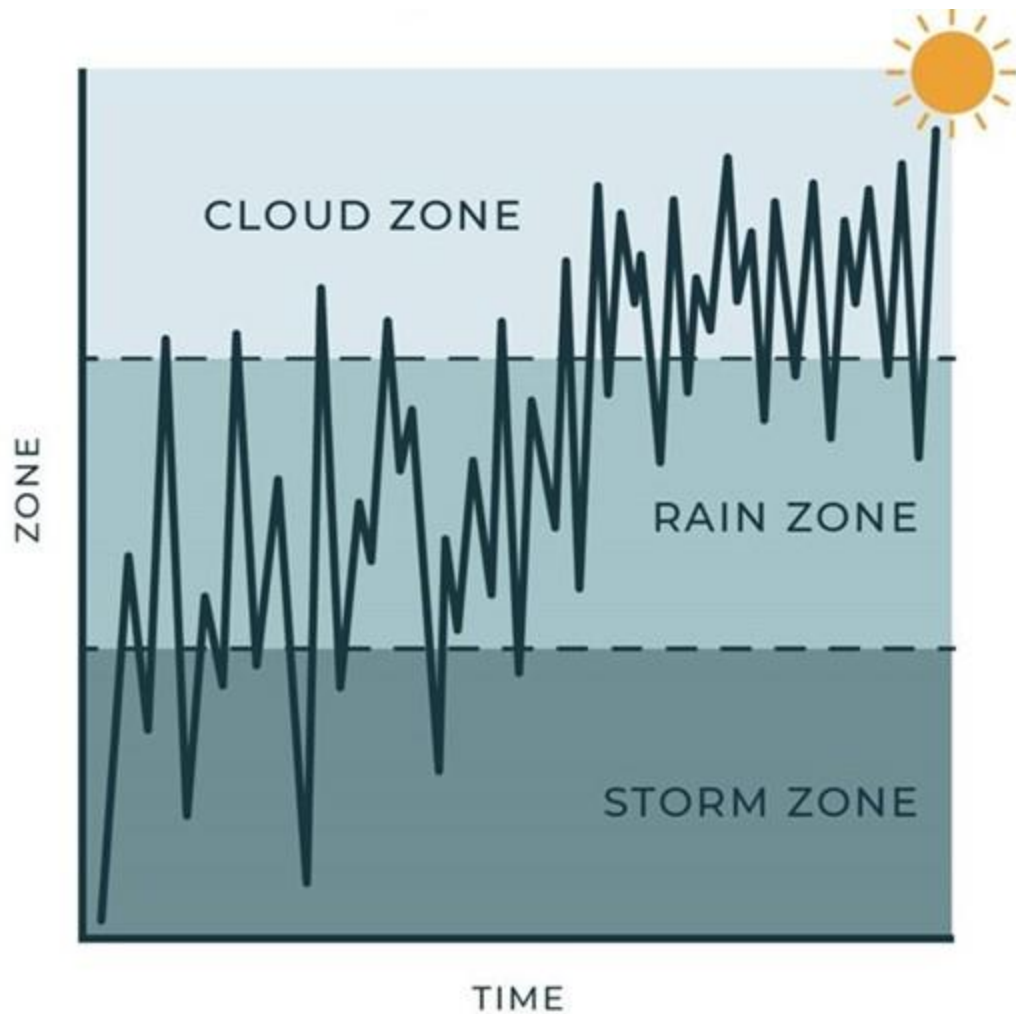
1. In the early months of depression's onset, the person in question breaks out of either the Storm- or the Rain Zone, and finds themselves in the Cloud Zone. And, because their depressive symptoms are mild / practically non-existent when they're in the Cloud Zone, they conclude that they've overcome their depression, and that they'll never struggle with it ever again.
2. Due to not resolving / healing from any of the underlying causes of their depression when they were in the Cloud Zone, however, they inevitably relapse back into the Rain- or the Storm Zone. Because they were convinced that they'd previously beaten their depression, this comes as an enormous, devastating shock to them.
3. At some point, they find themselves in the Cloud Zone again, and once again, they mistake this for having beaten their depression.
4. Once again, due to not resolving / healing from the underlying causes of their depression when they were in the Cloud Zone, they inevitably relapse back into the Rain- or Storm Zone.

5. This cycle continues to repeat and repeat itself, until sooner or later, it results in the person concluding that it isn't possible to overcome depression, and that they're destined to struggle with it for the rest of their life.

As we're sure you'll agree, this is really, really sad, so to prevent this from happening to you – or to undo the *“it isn't possible to overcome depression”* negative core belief that you've already become conditioned to believe – we really want to emphasise the following:

- As you now know from progressing through this chapter of the book, being in the Cloud Zone does *not* mean that you have overcome depression. Additionally, you being in the Cloud Zone at a given moment in time does not necessarily indicate that you are on track to overcoming depression, either.
- An accurate indicator that you are on the right track to overcoming depression and therefore “reaching the sun” is if, over a prolonged period of time, an increasing proportion of your time is spent in the Cloud Zone, and a decreasing proportion of your time is spent in the Storm Zone.





- Like we've said repeatedly, in order to overcome your depression and therefore "reach the sun", you need to resolve / heal from the contributing factors of your depression – in such a way that as you gradually heal from those contributing factors, they gradually stop causing you to feel depressed. The corollary of this is therefore that:
 - You know you're on track to overcoming your depression when:
 - You're gradually stopping / undoing / rewiring the thinking patterns and the belief systems that contribute to your depression;
 - When you're gradually resolving / moving through / healing from the emotions that contribute to your depression;

- When you're gradually unlearning self-sabotaging / protective (but sub-optimal) behavioural traits and replacing them with healthy behavioural traits;
 - When you're gradually resolving / healing from the environmental factors that contribute to your depression;
 - When you're gradually resolving / healing from any physiological factors that contribute to your depression;
 - When, due to all of the above, the contributing factors of your depression no longer cause you to feel as depressed as they used to, and as a result, you're spending proportionally more and more of your time in the Cloud Zone as opposed to the Storm Zone.
- Similarly, you know you've overcome depression when none of the underlying causes of your depression cause you to feel depressed anymore. This is what happens when you've "reached the sun", and is exactly what happened to Danny like we explained in the example we showed you earlier.

Guided Questions For You To Carefully Think About And Answer Before We Move On

1. What are the underlying causes of your depression? In particular, what are the underlying causes of your depression with respect to:
 - a. Your thinking patterns / belief systems?
 - b. Your emotions?
 - c. Your behaviours?
 - d. Your environment?
 - e. Your physiology?

2. What healing strategies have you learned and implemented to stop / undo / rewire the thinking patterns and belief systems that contribute to your depression?
3. What healing strategies have you learned and implemented to resolve / heal from the emotions that contribute to your depression?
4. What healing strategies have you learned and implemented to unlearn self-sabotaging / protective (but sub-optimal) behavioural traits that contribute to your depression, and replace them with healthy behavioural traits that contribute to you being depression-free and happy?
5. What healing strategies have you learned and implemented to resolve / heal from the environmental factors that contribute to your depression?
6. What have you done to resolve / heal from any physiological factors that are contributing to your depression?
7. For which of the contributing factors of your depression have you not yet learned and implemented strategies in order to help you resolve / heal from them?

CONCLUSION: A Word Of Warning, And How To Learn All Of The Survival-, Coping- And Healing Strategies You Need To Implement In Order To “Reach The Sun”

	SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN THE STORM ZONE (TO PREVENT DEPRESSION FROM COMPLETELY CONSUMING YOU)	COPING STRATEGIES IN THE RAIN ZONE (SO THAT YOU CAN FUNCTION WITHOUT FALLING BACK INTO THE STORM ZONE)	HEALING STRATEGIES IN THE CLOUD ZONE (TO RESOLVE / HEAL FROM THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF YOUR DEPRESSION)
YOUR THOUGHTS	Aim is to quickly distance yourself from negative thoughts / to mitigate their intensity	Aim is to overcome negative thoughts which trigger the depression cycle	Aim is to stop / undo / rewire the thinking patterns and belief systems that contribute to your depression
YOUR EMOTIONS	Aim is to give yourself quick, short-term relief from painful emotions	Aim is to regulate painful emotions	Aim is to resolve / heal from the emotions that contribute to your depression
YOUR BEHAVIOURS	Aim is to give you quick, short-term relief from your symptoms; provide alternatives to unhealthy behaviours that keep you trapped in the Storm Zone; and keep you safe if you're feeling suicidal	Aim is to prevent you from burning out / breaking down emotionally	Aim is to unlearn self-sabotaging / protective (but sub-optimal) behavioural traits that contribute to your depression, and replace them with healthy behavioural traits
YOUR ENVIRONMENT	Aim is to make your surroundings a bit more comfortable / to give you a break from your environmental triggers	Aim is to help you gradually work through your to-do list / cope with your environmental triggers	Aim is to resolve / heal from the environmental factors that are contributing to your depression
YOUR PHYSIOLOGY	Aim is to give yourself relief from depression's physical symptoms / to directly influence your brain chemicals in a positive way	Aim is to give yourself relief from depression's physical symptoms / to directly influence your brain chemicals in a positive way	Aim is to resolve / heal from any physiological factors that are contributing to your depression (talk to a doctor about this)
Possibly take medication – consult with your doctor / psychiatrist about this			

So, throughout this book, we have covered a *lot* of ground, and given the lack of insight and direction about how to overcome depression that – as we hear about every single day from members of The Depression Project's community – is currently being disseminated by the mental health industry as a whole, there's a good chance that some or all of what we've delved into is brand-new information for you. Given that, we're guessing that you may still have two questions in particular that are lingering in your mind:

1. You might be curious as to whether or not you can implement survival-, coping- and healing strategies in different Zones to the ones we advised.
2. You might be wondering about the different ways you can learn all of the survival-, coping- and healing strategies that you need to implement in order to “reach the sun”.

So, before we bring this book to a close, we'd like to take a moment to answer both of these questions.

1. A Word Of Warning: The Consequences Of Not Implementing Survival-, Coping- And Healing Strategies In The "Right" Zones

Throughout this book, we've recommended that you:

1. Implement survival strategies in the Storm Zone so that you can “survive the storm”;
2. Implement coping strategies in the Rain Zone so that you can “cope with the rain”;
3. Implement healing strategies in the Cloud Zone so that you can heal from depression and “reach the sun”.

However, what people often do instead is:

1. Try to learn and implement healing strategies when they're in the Storm Zone – since this is when their depression is at its worst, and consequently, this is when they feel at their most compelled to “do something about it”.

2. When they're in the Cloud Zone and feel basically "back to normal", they're so grateful to be getting some relief from their symptoms that they just want to "make the most of it" – rather than spending any time learning and implementing healing strategies.
3. Rather than learning and implementing healing strategies in the Cloud Zone, they often just implement the same strategies they'd been implementing in the Storm- and Rain Zones in an attempt to try to keep their depression at bay.

However, these approaches are unfortunately flawed. This is because firstly, like we said in the previous chapter, healing strategies to help you overcome depression and "reach the sun" are inherently relatively intricate in nature, and for this reason, they require a relatively high ability to be able to think clearly and function (which is why we recommend that you learn them when you're in the Cloud Zone). If however, you instead try to learn and implement them when you're in the Storm Zone, then they're less likely to work, because at that point in time, your symptoms will likely be too severe and your ability to think clearly and function will likely be too low to be able to effectively comprehend and apply them. To illustrate this by way of examples:

- If you're so stressed out and overwhelmed that you feel as if your head's about to explode, then it's highly unlikely you're going to be able to concentrate on a self-help book that teaches you brand new techniques for how to deal with worrying thoughts.
- If you feel so miserable and worthless that you can't get out of bed, then it's highly unlikely you're going to have the capacity to start learning how to re-train your brain to love yourself for healthy reasons, for instance.
- If you're feeling horribly depressed and are crying your eyes out because a nasty person said something really upsetting to you, then it's not the right moment to, for example, begin "assertiveness training" to learn how to stand up to that person.

As these examples illustrate, if you try to learn brand new, intricate healing strategies while you're in the Storm Zone, then it's unlikely that they're going to work. This can lead you to then conclude that those healing strategies themselves don't work – or that you're a "failure" for not being able to make them work – when in reality, you've just tried to learn them at an inopportune time.

Secondly, when it comes to the Cloud Zone, then like we emphasised in the previous chapter of this book, it's essential that you learn and implement healing strategies to resolve / heal from the underlying causes of your depression. Now, please don't get us wrong – this does *not* mean that you should forego enjoyable activities in the Cloud Zone that allow you to “make the most of not feeling burdened by depression” (you should indeed do this!); and similarly, it does *not* mean that you shouldn't continue to implement some of the survival and coping strategies that helped you get into the Cloud Zone in the first place (such as exercising, journaling or practicing mindfulness, for instance – since these are all helpful practices which will contribute to you remaining in the Cloud Zone for longer than you otherwise would). However, regardless of what else you choose to do in the Cloud Zone, we really encourage you to learn and implement healing strategies as well – otherwise, you're not giving yourself a fighting chance to overcome depression.

2. The Different Ways You Can Learn All Of The Survival-, Coping And Healing Strategies That You Need To Implement In Order To "Reach The Sun"

Of course, while in this book we have detailed the steps you need to follow in order to overcome depression, what we really encourage you to do next is to actually begin learning all of the survival strategies, the coping strategies and the healing strategies that you have to implement in order to “reach the sun”.

As we've mentioned throughout this book, we teach many of these strategies in the appendices. And, as we talk about below, there are a variety of additional ways that you can learn many more of these strategies, too.

Therapy

Like we noted way, way back in the introductory section of this book, how therapy works and what actually happens during therapy sessions is often minimally explained. If this has been your experience, then let us be the first to tell you that when it comes to depression, then idealistically speaking, the purpose of therapy is to get a clear understanding of why you're struggling with

depression, and to learn- and then be guided through implementing all of the strategies, changes, etcetera that are needed for you to overcome it. Ideally, your therapist would cultivate a very safe, comfortable environment for you to go through this process, and at every step along the way, they'll ideally make sure that you're getting the help you need most at that moment in time.

In saying that, though, seeing a therapist does not guarantee that this is going to happen, because as we often hear from members of The Depression Project's community, it's unfortunately common for therapy sessions to lack direction, clarity and value. For this reason, to get the most out of therapy, we really encourage you to give your therapist as much direction as possible, so that:

1. They know what your needs are, and can then do their best to structure your therapy sessions in a way that meets those needs.
2. If they don't structure your therapy sessions around fulfilling your needs, then you'll know that they're not an appropriate therapist for you – and you can then hopefully transition to another therapist without losing anymore time or money.

On that note, one important example of giving your therapist the kind of direction we're talking about would be to tell them that your ultimate goal is to overcome depression and be free of this illness. Now, if your therapist then adapts your therapy to these needs and offers insight, direction and clarity on how to heal from depression as opposed to solely on how to just *survive* or *cope* with it, then you can feel confident that your therapist is a good match for you, and that they'll be able to assist you in reaching your goal. However, if they instead focus on teaching you a handful of generalised strategies to cope with your symptoms and never make any reference to healing from depression so that you can be free of those symptoms, then it's a strong indication that your therapist isn't a good match for you, and that you won't get what you're looking for out of therapy with them. To give you another example, if you similarly really want to heal from a traumatic incident in your childhood for instance, then you'll know your therapist isn't a good match for you if rather than directly addressing that incident and working through it with you, they instead encourage you to implement a coping strategy that blocks out that painful experience, and emphasise the need for you to focus on the present moment.

Self-Help Books And Other Resources

Utilising self-help books and other resources that are created by mental health experts is also a very helpful – and often very cost-effective – way of learning a lot of the strategies that you’d learn in therapy. Some ways of accessing such resources include, for example:

- Visiting Amazon’s website, and searching “depression” along with the issues that you’re struggling with (such as toxic relationships, substance abuse, etcetera), or searching ways of dealing with depression (such as “mindfulness”, “cognitive behavioural therapy”, etcetera). If you do this, then you’ll likely find a variety of books that you’ll find helpful.
- Additionally, The Depression Project has a wide variety of cognitive behaviour therapy-based journals available at www.thedepressionproject.com, that will:
 - Help you overcome the most common negative thoughts that people with depression struggle with – such as “I’m a failure”, “I’m a burden”, “I’m useless”, “I’m weak”, “I’ll never overcome depression”, “I can’t do anything right”, “everybody hates me”, “everybody’s life is so much better than mine”, and more.
 - Additionally, we also have CBT-based journals to help you deal with and overcome some of the most common – yet minimally talked about – aspects of depression, including *The “Depression Lack-Of-Motivation” Journal*, *The “Depression Numbness” Journal*, *The “Existential Depression” Journal*, *The “Depression Overwhelm” Journal*, *The “Depression Anger” Journal*, *The “Night Time Depression” Journal*, *The “Morning Depression” Journal*, *The “Social Media Depression” Journal*, *The “Depression Loneliness” Journal*, *The “Self-Harm” Journal*, *How To Do Your Chores When You’re “Depression Tired”* and *How To Look After Your Personal Hygiene When You’re “Depression Tired”*.

In saying all of the above, though, while self-help resources can indeed be extremely helpful, the strategies you’ll learn won’t be taught in a way that is personalised to you and your needs (like

they ideally will be in therapy); and of course, self-help resources can't provide you with the "safe space" that a therapist would ideally cultivate for you as well.

Use The Internet

If you do an online search for the issues that you're struggling with as well as different ways of dealing with depression, then you'll likely find a variety of articles to teach you some tips. Additionally, The Depression Project's Blog also includes a wealth of information to help you survive-, cope with- and overcome depression as well – and we're constantly adding more and more to it. To have a look, please visit www.thedepressionproject.com/blog.

It's Hard Work, But You Can Do It!

One thing we have not explicitly mentioned in this book – although it's certainly been implied – is that overcoming depression is challenging, and just like anything else that's challenging, it requires hard work.

Not just for a day.

Not just for a week.

But for a prolonged period of time – until you've mastered "surviving the storm", "coping with the rain", and then ultimately resolving / healing from the underlying causes of your depression in order to "reach the sun".

We know that it's likely going to be difficult at times, and unfortunately, we know that there may be times when it all seems too hard and you might feel like giving up. But, no matter how hard it gets, we really encourage you to never, ever give up on the goal of overcoming this illness, and living a healthy, depression-free life.

We really mean it when we say that you are worthy of that life – and, by investing the time you have into reading this book when there were likely other (probably more enjoyable) things that

you instead could have been doing, you've proven that you have the initiative, the determination and the commitment that's required to achieve it.

And, if you maintain this initiative, determination and commitment to continue learning survival-, coping- and healing strategies, then we really believe that you can.

So, please, *please* try to always remember this, and now go ahead and work really hard for it – OK?

All our love,

The Depression Project Team.

Appendix A: Positive Affirmations For When You're In The Storm Zone

Like we mentioned in Chapter 2, in order to “survive the storm” and help reverse the depression cycle, it’s critical that you learn and implement some survival strategies to distance yourself from your negative thoughts and to mitigate their intensity. And, like we also mentioned, one strategy that can help you to this is to tell yourself positive affirmations.

On that note, we've included a long list of positive affirmations below that we think you'll find helpful.

Positive Affirmations To Combat Worthless Thoughts About Yourself

- *I am worthy of more than my mind tells me I am*
- *I deserve the same compassion I give to others*
- *I will always be my own best friend*
- *I am enough*
- *I am worthy of love and respect*
- *I am learning to love myself more and more each day*
- *I see the good in me*
- *I won't use my flaws as an excuse not to love myself*
- *I feel at peace with who I am*
- *I am loved and valued by others*
- *I see the beauty in my body*

- *I embrace my quirks and find the beauty in them*
- *I am becoming kinder in the way I speak to myself*
- *I'm a good person*

Positive Affirmations To Combat Negative Thoughts About A Mistake You've Made / Something You Perceive To Be A “Failure”:

- *One mistake does not define my worth*
- *It's OK not to be perfect*
- *I never fail as I always learn*
- *I am growing every day*
- *I did my best and that's enough*
- *I did the best I could with what I knew at the time*
- *I forgive myself for the mistakes I've made*
- *I won't let the past define me*
- *One moment does not define who I am*
- *I will give myself the same compassion that I'd give my best friend*
- *I won't feel discouraged if things don't work out the first time*
- *I'm at peace with the outcome as I know I've tried my best*
- *I will remain patient since I know that great things take time*

Positive Affirmations To Combat Hopeless Thoughts About The Future / Doubts About Whether You'll Free Yourself From Depression:

- *I will never give up*
- *I will continue to work towards the future I deserve*
- *I am capable of more than my mind tells me I am*
- *I believe in the future I desire to live*
- *I can get through this*
- *I will beat depression*
- *Depression is strong but I am stronger*
- *I am unshakeable during difficult times*
- *I'm really strong for surviving what I'm going through*
- *I am resilient in the face of adversity*
- *I have a 100% track record of getting through difficult times*
- *I see hope in tomorrow*
- *I am prepared to face any challenge that may come*
- *It's just a bad day, not a bad life*
- *There is light at the end of the tunnel*
- *I will always stay hopeful*
- *Depression will not break me*
- *I believe in a better tomorrow*

- *I see purpose in my future*
- *I have the strength I need to get through this*
- *My current struggles are making me stronger for the future*
- *I believe the best is yet to come*

Positive Affirmations To Combat Negative Thoughts Grounded In Lack Of Motivation:

- *I am motivated by the future I envision*
- *In order to achieve my dreams I need to work hard*
- *I am becoming who I dream to be*
- *I can do more than my mind tells me I can*
- *I work hard towards my goals*
- *One step forward towards my goals is one giant leap away from depression*
- *My hard work now will pay off in the future*
- *I can do anything I put my mind to*

Positive Affirmations To Combat Negative Thoughts Grounded In Negatively Comparing Yourself To Others:

- *I am my own person following my own path*
- *I will not compare my "every day moments" to someone else's "highlight reel"*
- *Social media is not an accurate representation of reality*
- *My goal is to be the best version of myself I can be*

- *I won't allow outside noise to distract me*
- *I'm running my own race with my own timeline*

Positive Affirmations To Combat Negative Thoughts Grounded In The Shame That Depression Can Make You Feel:

- *It's normal for depression to make it difficult to function*
- *I survived today and that's the main thing*
- *I am not lazy*
- *I am not weak*
- *I am not useless*
- *My struggles are a reflection of depression, not me*
- *My depression does not define me*
- *I will be patient with myself as I heal*
- *I forgive myself for what I did in "survival mode"*
- *I will adjust my standards to accommodate for depression's symptoms*

Positive Affirmations To Combat Worries About The Future:

- *I won't allow tomorrow's worries to destroy today's peace*
- *I am grounded in the present*
- *My fears are not my future*
- *I will only focus on what I can control*
- *I will not focus on "what if's?" that may not happen*

- *I can tolerate the uncertainty of tomorrow*
- *It's enough to take proactive steps towards my goals*

General Positive Affirmations To Help You Combat Negative Thoughts:

- *Just because I have a negative thought, it doesn't mean that it's true*
- *Depression is lying to me*
- *I will not buy into depression's lies*
- *My negative thoughts are not facts, they're fiction*
- *My negative thoughts aren't an accurate reflection of reality*
- *I am safe*
- *I won't allow my fears to overpower me*
- *I will let go of thoughts that no longer serve me*
- *I won't internalise the negativity of others*
- *I won't believe every thought that enters my mind*
- *I recognise each thought is just one perception of an event*

Appendix B: Positive, Uplifting, Encouraging Quotes For Depression

In addition to positive affirmations (see Appendix A), like we mentioned in Chapter 2, reading hopeful, uplifting statements can also help you distance yourself from your negative thoughts and mitigate their intensity when you're in the Storm Zone.

On that note, below, we'd like to share with you 150+ positive, uplifting, encouraging quotes for depression:

- Please remember that you're capable, brave and loved – even when it feels like you're not.
- Do not give the past the power to define your future.
- Perhaps you've been assigned this mountain to show others that it can be moved.
- Just a reminder: it is NOT selfish to put your recovery first. Rather, it's necessary in order to make sure that everything else doesn't come last.
- Small, baby steps each day add up to huge, giant leaps over time. So, please keep going. Do NOT give up.
- You are not worthless, you are not a failure, and you are not a loser. That voice saying you are is just your depression trying to trick you.
- On those really difficult days when it seems impossible to go on and you feel like giving up, just remind yourself that you've been there before and you've survived every time, so you can survive this time, too.
- Even the darkest hour only has 60 minutes.
- Perhaps the butterfly is proof that you can go through a great deal of darkness yet become something beautiful again.

- Always try to end the day with a positive thought. No matter how hard things are, tomorrow is a fresh opportunity to make everything better.
- The World Health Organisation estimates that 350 million people suffer from depression worldwide. We know it may not seem like it, but you are NOT alone.
- Don't hate yourself for everything you aren't. Instead, love yourself for everything you are.
- Running away from your problems is a race you'll never win. Instead, reach out for help and try to confront them.
- Don't let your struggle become your identity. After all, you are so much more than just your illness.
- On your good days, write down your reasons to keep on fighting. Then on your bad days, read over your list to give you strength.
- Be proud of who you are, instead of ashamed of how someone else sees you.
- Crying doesn't mean that you're weak. Since birth, it's always been a sign that you're alive.
- Don't dwell on those who hold you down. Instead, cherish those who helped you up.
- Never, ever, ever, ever, ever give up on yourself. As long as you keep on fighting, then you can beat your depression.
- Right now, stop whatever you're doing and think of all the things in life that you are grateful for. This is a really easy way to lift your mood!
- Even if you can't see any reason to keep on going, then it doesn't mean that there aren't any. It just means that in that moment, your depression is telling you even more lies than usual.
- Even the worst depressive episodes won't last forever.

- Having depression does not mean you are weak, a failure, or worth less than anybody else. Please, don't discriminate against yourself.
- If you need a confidence booster, then remind yourself of all the difficult things you've endured and overcome.
- Don't ruin a good day by thinking about the possibility of a bad day in the future. Just enjoy the present moment :)
- As Confucius said, our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we do.
- When your depression says, "Give up", hope whispers, "Try one more time".
- If you're worried about telling a friend that you struggle with depression, then remind yourself that you are one of 350 million people battling this illness. So, odds are that even if you don't know it, one or more of your friends are fighting depression too but are similarly scared to reach out to you.
- You are brave, courageous and strong for continuing to fight an illness that nobody else can see.
- One day, if not already, your refusal to give up will inspire someone else.
- Please remember that having a bad day does not mean you have – or will have – a bad life.
- Hope is one of the most powerful emotions a person can have. Combine it with determination and there's no stopping you.
- Never put the key to your happiness in someone else's pocket.
- Just because you're going through a rough patch, it doesn't mean you always will be. Recovery is possible. We promise you.
- Just because you have a mental illness, it doesn't mean that you are that illness. You're still a person – just like everybody else.

- Recovery is a process. It takes time. It takes patience. It takes hard work. It takes everything you've got. But it IS possible.
- Sometimes, you just need to cry your eyes out to be able to keep going. And you know what? That's OK.
- Listen to positive people and ignore negative ones. After all, people who doubt, judge and disrespect you are not worth your energy.
- Healing is a process, not an event. Give it time. Good things happen to those who never give up.
- Mental illness is NOT a life sentence.
- Don't be upset or caught up with things or people you cannot change. Instead, move on, let go, and concentrate on what you can change.
- When your depression tells you that it's impossible to be free of it, it is LYING!
- Today, do one little thing to take better care of yourself. Then, do it again tomorrow.
- Depression does not make you a burden. What's a burden is having to carry on fighting against an illness that no-one can see.
- When something goes wrong, take a moment to be thankful for all the things in your life that are going right.
- No-one ever injured their eyesight by looking on the bright side.
- You're allowed to scream. You're allowed to cry. You're allowed to fall apart. But you are not allowed to give up.
- Scars tell where we have been. They do not have to dictate where we are going.
- Remember, breakdowns can create breakthroughs. Sometimes, things fall apart so that other things can fall together.

- Never forget that you are worthy of love and respect.
- Sometimes you have to fight through your worst days in order to earn the best days of your life.
- Remember that life's greatest lessons are usually learned at the worst times and from the worst mistakes.
- You might be sad because you've been through a lot, but you should also be proud of yourself for being strong enough to make it through everything you've been through.
- When you say you suffer from a physical illness, you get sympathy. When you say you suffer from depression, you sometimes get blamed. We know it sucks, but at the very least, please take solace in the fact that you are not alone – as evidenced by the fact that 350 million people in the world struggle with depression.
- If someone doesn't respect you, appreciate you and value you, then they don't deserve you.
- If you're going through a hard time right now, make sure you do something today that makes you smile.
- When you're struggling with depression, it's really important to schedule some time in for daily self-care that gives you a lift.
- In the context of mental health, courage can be defined as the strength to ask for help.
- Starting today, stop keeping track of all the mistakes you've ever made. It's time to forgive yourself and start being your own best friend.
- Always look for something positive in each day ... even if some days you need to look a little harder than others.
- Things may seem gloomy ahead and you may feel like giving up, but if you don't keep going, then you will never know what is just around the corner.

- Sometimes it's OK if the only thing you did today was breathe.
- Never be ashamed of a scar. It simply means that you were stronger than whatever tried to hurt you.
- You are NOT your illness. You have an individual story to tell. You have a name, a history, a personality. Staying yourself is part of the battle.
- It is not weak to say, "I'm not OK, and I need help". On the contrary, it is brave. It is courageous. And in the end, it could save your life.
- Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go, just remind yourself how far you have come. Remind yourself of everything you have faced, all the battles you have won, and all the fears you have overcome.
- No matter who gives up on you, don't you ever give up on yourself.
- Don't carry your mistakes around with you. Instead, place them under your feet and use them as stepping stones.
- Never stop doing your best just because someone doesn't give you credit for it.
- Sometimes the hardest part of the journey is believing you're worth the trip – but we're here to tell you that you are.
- Life is like a camera: focus on what's important, capture the good times, develop from the negatives, and if things don't work out, take another shot.
- Whatever you do, never forget that you're human. It's OK to have a meltdown. Just don't unpack and live there. Cry it out and then refocus on where you are heading.
- Remember: Your illness does not define you. Your strength and your courage does.
- No one is ever too broken, too scarred or too far-gone to recover. If you keep on fighting, then anything's possible.

- Never let someone who doesn't know your value tell you how much you're worth.
- Never, ever forget that you are special, and that you touch more lives than you'll ever know.
- Maybe not today, tomorrow, or even in a year, but if you keep fighting and never give up, then things will eventually turn around, and you'll be able to look back with relief and shout, 'Yes! I made it!'
- Never forget that walking away from something unhealthy is a very brave thing to do – even if you stumble a little on your way out the door.
- Depression is a war. Don't give up just because you lost a battle.
- Some days, life is all about your dreams, hopes and vision for the future. But on other days, all it's about is trying to put one foot in front of the other. And you know what? That's OK.
- Relationships are like glass – sometimes it's better to leave them broken than to hurt yourself trying to put them back together.
- MYTH: You will be depressed forever. FACT: With the right help, you can beat your depression and go on to live a happy, healthy, fulfilling life.
- Stop beating yourself up. You are a work in progress, which means you get there a little at a time, not all at once.
- If sometimes all you want is for someone to acknowledge just how difficult struggling with depression is, then here's your acknowledgement. We understand, and we're proud of you for not giving up.
- Someday, everything will make sense. So for now, laugh at the confusion, smile through the tears, and keep reminding yourself that everything happens for a reason.
- Don't compare your progress with that of others. After all, we all need our own time to travel our own distance.

- If you've ever had suicidal thoughts, then we're glad you're still here. Keep holding on.
- Don't change so people will like you. Be yourself and the right people will love the real you.
- Don't look back, because if you do, you might fall over what is in front of you.
- If you're thinking about giving up today, just live until tomorrow. And when you do, read this again.
- Just because your path is different, it doesn't mean you're lost.
- You may have to fight a battle more than once to win it, but if you never give up, you will get there eventually.
- The past is like an anchor that holds you back. You have to be able to let go of who you were in order to become who you want to be.
- When you find the courage to let go of what you can't change, you'll take a giant leap forward in your quest to recover from depression.
- Hating yourself will never, ever get you as far as loving yourself will.
- Beautiful things happen when you distance yourself from negativity.
- The world will not end if you do not figure everything out tonight, so stop pacing, stop sweating, and stop fretting. Instead, go to bed and start again tomorrow.
- There comes a time when you have to stop crossing oceans for people who wouldn't jump puddles for you.
- When you focus on problems, you'll have more problems. When you focus on possibilities, you'll have more opportunities.
- No matter how far you've travelled down the wrong road, you can always turn around and get back on the right track.

- One of the most dangerous myths surrounding depression is that it is a life sentence, when in reality, if you seek the right help and keep on fighting, you CAN recover, and live a happy, healthy, depression-free life.
- When everything feels like an uphill struggle, just think of the view from the top.
- Life has many chapters, and one bad one does not mean that it's the end of the book.
- If you're feeling suicidal, write down your dreams. Block everything else out and picture them coming true. Use them as reasons to keep on fighting.
- Eat like you love yourself, move like you love yourself, speak like you love yourself, and act like you love yourself.
- Would you be as critical to your loved ones as you are to yourself? That's what we thought. Please, be kind to yourself.
- Just because your life may not have turned out the way you'd planned, it doesn't mean that it won't turn out OK.
- It's hard for a person to beat depression, but it's even harder for depression to beat a person who never gives up.
- Being yourself is the prettiest thing you can be.
- No matter what you're going through right now, having a positive attitude is going to serve you better than having a negative one.
- Instead of counting your troubles, count all the joys you have in life as well.
- The most beautiful thing in the world is a smile that has struggled through tears.
- Recovery does not happen linearly. Sometimes you'll have bad days, sometimes you'll have setbacks, and sometimes you'll feel so low and broken that you'll want to give up. But if you keep taking little steps forward, you'll eventually get there.

- Depression isn't pretty, but having depression doesn't make you ugly. Anxiety is a burden, but having anxiety doesn't make you a burden. Even though you're struggling right now, you have nothing to be ashamed of. You are so, so much more than your problems, and you are a warrior for continuing to fight them.
- In case no-one told you today: you are beautiful. You are loved. You are needed. You are alive for a reason. You are stronger than you think, and if you keep on fighting, then you're going to get through this.
- You were given this life because you are strong enough to live it.
- Don't compare the lowest points of your life to someone else's Instagram highlight reel and use it as a reason to feel inadequate.
- Today, you don't need to have all the answers. You just need to know what to do next.
- If you do everything you can to keep on fighting, then even if they don't tell you, there'll be people who'll find your plight with depression inspiring.
- Don't be ashamed of the times you fell. Instead, be proud of all the times you got back up.
- Having depression is NOT a sign of weakness. It's a sign of being human, and anyone who tells you otherwise doesn't understand this illness.
- Guilt is toxic. Reliving the same mistake over and over again is torture. Constantly criticising and blaming yourself is bullying. Break free of this cycle. Reflect. Learn. Grow. Love yourself. Forgive yourself.
- Instead of always focusing on how far you have left to go, make sure you also remember how far you have come.
- This is just a little reminder that you deserve to be treated as well as you treat everybody else. Don't accept anything less!
- It is better to be an imperfect version of yourself than a perfect version of somebody else.

- Hope and depression are bitter rivals until one, always and inevitably, defeats the other.
- Someone failing to see the best in you does not diminish your worth as a person.
- Try not to get so comfortable with your demons that you accept them as being a part of you. Instead, seek help so that you can work on liberating yourself from them.
- Admitting that you're not OK is NOT a sign of weakness. It's a sign of self-awareness, maturity, and emotional strength.
- Making mistakes does not mean you've failed. Rather, it means you had the courage to try, and if you learn from those mistakes, then you'll soon succeed.
- Don't let negative, mean, insecure people drag you down to their level.
- Is whatever you're frustrated about worth ruining the hour, the day, the week?
- We cannot in a minute get rid of unhealthy habits we've been practising for a lifetime. That's why it takes time for therapy to work.
- If you can't figure out where you stand with someone, then it might be time to stop standing and start walking.
- One day, you'll wake up and realise that the pain's still there but that it doesn't hurt quite as much as it used to. That's when you're on the road to healing.
- Try not to be discouraged by setbacks. Instead, try to be encouraged by the fact that you have the chance to overcome them.
- You deserve as much love and support as anybody else.
- Being imperfect doesn't mean you're unworthy. It means you're human.
- As Abraham Lincoln once said, if we magnified our successes as much as we magnified our disappointments, we'd all be much happier.
- Never forget that H.O.P.E. stands for Hold On, Pain Ends.

Appendix C: Diaphragmatic Breathing

Like we mentioned in Chapter 2, in order to “survive the storm” and prevent your depression from completely consuming you, it’s important that you learn and implement survival strategies to give yourself some quick, short-term relief from the difficult and painful emotions you’re feeling. And, like we also mentioned, one strategy that can help you to this is to practice diaphragmatic breathing.

On that note, below are two methods of practicing diaphragmatic breathing that we recommend.

Lying Down

- Lie down on your bed (or a flat surface), and put a pillow underneath your legs.
- Rest one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage (in order to allow yourself to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe).
- Breathe slowly and deeply in through your nose, and feel your stomach move out against your “lower hand” beneath your ribs. As you do this, your “upper hand” on your chest should remain as still as possible.
- As you exhale, tighten your stomach muscles, and breathe out through pursed lips until there’s nothing left. While you do this, once again ensure that your “upper hand” remains as still as possible.
- Repeat this 5 to 10 times.

Sitting Down (More Advanced)

- Sit down upright with your knees bent, and with your shoulders and neck relaxed.
- Place one hand on your upper chest, and the other just beneath your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.

- Breathe slowly and deeply in through your nose, and feel your stomach move out against your “lower hand” beneath your ribs. As you do this, your “upper hand” on your chest should remain as still as possible.
- Tighten your stomach muscles, and allow them to fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips until there’s nothing left. While you do this, once again ensure that your “upper hand” remains as still as possible.
- Repeat this 5 to 10 times.

Appendix D: The 5-4-3-2-1 Mindfulness Exercise

In addition to diaphragmatic breathing (see Appendix C), like we mentioned in Chapter 2, the 5-4-3-2-1 mindfulness exercise can also give you some quick, short-term relief from depression's severely intense emotions when you're in the Storm Zone. For this reason, we'd like to share it with you below.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Mindfulness Exercise

Begin this exercise by sitting down or lying somewhere comfortable, and simply taking a few deep breaths ... breathing in through your nose ... and then out through your mouth ... in through your nose ... and then out through your mouth. Then, while you continue to do so, gradually try to make yourself aware of:

- **5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE:** For example, the table in front of you, the nice painting on the wall, the fridge magnet you bought on vacation, the clear blue sky outside, and the leafy green tree across the road.
- **4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL:** Once you've gotten in touch with five things you can see, then – while you continue breathing in through your nose, and out through your mouth – try to bring awareness to four things you can feel. For example, the chair that's holding up your weight, your clothes against your legs, the soft carpet beneath your feet, or a loose strand of hair brushing against your face.
- **3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR:** Next, bring awareness to three things you can hear. For example, the tik-tok of a clock, a bird chirping outside, or the sound of your children playing in the living room.
- **2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL:** Then, try to get in touch with two things you can smell. If you try but don't find yourself able to smell anything, then try to summon up your two favourite

smells. For example, the scent of freshly cut grass, or the aroma of a steaming mug of hot chocolate.

- **1 THING YOU CAN TASTE:** Lastly, try to be mindful of one thing you can taste (or, try to imagine one thing you can taste).

As you can see, this exercise only takes a few minutes, but like we said, it can be really effective at grounding you in the safety of the here and now.

Appendix E: Soothing Your Senses

Self-soothing strategies can also be very effective at giving you quick, short-term relief from the painful emotions that are often associated with depression when you're in the Storm Zone. In practice, they can take the form of, for example:

- Smelling something that soothes you – such as a scented candle, incense, or oils.
- Looking at something that soothes you – such as waves gently washing up upon a shore, paintings from your favourite artist, or photographs of happy memories.
- Listening to something that soothes you – such as classical music, the sounds of nature, or hypnosis recordings.
- Tasting something that soothes you – such as your favourite meal, or a delicious cup of tea that you really enjoy.
- Touching something or being touched in a way that soothes you – such as patting your dog, getting a massage, or stroking a piece of velvet that you carry around with you.

Additionally, as you can see, self-soothing strategies such as these are all gentle, kind acts towards yourself, which also highlights another beneficial purpose of self-soothing strategies – that they help train you to treat yourself with compassion³⁷.

Appendix F: Visualisation

Like we talked about in Chapter 2, visualisation is a technique that uses mental imagery to bring you into a state of calm. Although there are many different kinds of visualisation, one of the simplest and most effective when it comes to helping you survive the difficult, painful emotions associated with the Storm Zone is imagining yourself somewhere safe, calm and peaceful. In particular, it can be particularly beneficial visualising natural scenes, such as:

- A beach;
- A park;
- A river;
- A meadow;
- Rolling green hills.

This is because spending time in nature has various psychological benefits, including vitality, happiness, mood, self-esteem, and reduced symptoms of anxiety³⁸ – and, since your brain and your body often can't distinguish between what's really happening to you and what you're just imagining³⁹, then if you can't get out and about in nature, imagining that you're there can be the next best thing. However, if you prefer, you can indeed choose to visualise somewhere else that you find safe, calm and peaceful – or if you wish, you can even make up a place⁴⁰.

Wherever you choose to visualise yourself, however, try practicing this technique via the exercise below.

A Visualisation Exercise For Moments Of Distress

Begin this exercise by sitting down or lying somewhere comfortable, and simply taking a few deep breaths ... breathing in through your nose ... and then out through your mouth ... in through your nose ... and then out through your mouth. Then, while you continue to do so, imagine yourself

somewhere you find safe, calm and peaceful, and try to visualise it in as much detail as possible. For example, if you're picturing yourself at the beach, try to go deeper than just picturing the sand and the waves, by filling in all the other little details as well. For example, are you alone or with others? If you're sitting on the sand, what towel are you sitting on? Are there any shells around you, and if so, what size? Are there any seagulls? How about sandcastles – can you see any? What shade of blue is the water? Are there any children playing in it? Any boats in the distance? How about the sky? How does its shade of blue compare to that of the water? Are there any clouds out? In this way, really try to visualise the scene in as much detail as possible.

Then, once you've set the visual scene like so, try to imagine how where you're imagining yourself being might engage the rest of your senses. For example, if you're picturing yourself at the beach, then imagine *feeling* the sun against your exposed skin, and the sand underneath your feet and in between your toes. Imagine *hearing* the sound of seagulls chirping, and the crashing of the waves before they wash up upon the shore. Imagine *smelling* the brine in the air, or the fish and chips you've ordered that you're about to dig in to. Imagine what that fish and chips, an ice-cold beer, or the beach's salt on your lips *tastes* like. Continue visualising your safe, calm, peaceful place in as much detail as possible like so, for as long as you want to, and then when you're ready, open your eyes again.

Appendix G: Journalling When You're In The Storm Zone

Like we mentioned in Chapter 2, journalling can be really beneficial when you're in the Storm Zone, because it can help you to:

- Get a cathartic release;
- Let go of your emotions instead of keeping them trapped inside of you;
- Gain some clarity over your thoughts, feelings and everything you're going through.

Now, in terms of *how* to journal, there are two main methods that we recommend:

1. “Free-Flow Journalling”

This is where you start with a pen and a blank piece of paper, take a few deep breaths, and then, just write what you feel (you could type up your thoughts on a computer as well, but using a pen and paper is generally recommended, since it doesn't come with distractions such as Facebook or your email).

2. “Guided Prompt Journalling”

Secondly, you could instead (or as well as!) take an approach that's a bit more “problem-solving-orientated” in nature, which is where you would start with a “journal prompt” at the top of your page, and then thoughtfully write out your response to it.

On that note, below are some journal prompts you may find helpful to consider and then write out your response to when you're in the Storm Zone.

- *What do I feel right now?*

- *If my best friend was in my present circumstance, what would I say to encourage them, empower them and make them feel better?*
- *What's one thing I can do right now to make myself feel more safe and comfortable?*
- *What's one thing that would make me feel more in control of my present circumstances?*
- *What's one thing I could do to help decrease any overwhelm I'm experiencing right now?*
- *What are some "small tasks" that would make me feel more empowered if I accomplished them?*
- *Who's someone I can turn to who would make me feel heard and understood?*
- *What are some healthy, non-destructive ways in which I could distract myself from depression's symptoms?*
- *What's something that could help me "get out of my head" and therefore get some separation from my negative thoughts?*
- *Is there a "safe space" that I could retreat to in order to feel a bit more comfortable, soothed and at peace? If there isn't, then how could I make one for myself?*
- *Is there anything I could do right now to make my surroundings a bit more tidy and comfortable in order to help me survive this depressive episode? If so, what?*
- *Are there any toxic people in my life who I really ought to avoid in order to help me survive this depressive episode? If so, what can I do to avoid them?*
- *What are some consequences of depression that I shouldn't shame myself for right now?*
- *If I feel like engaging in a self-sabotaging habit – such as binge eating, drinking alcohol, or overspending on "retail therapy", for example – then what's a healthier, less destructive behaviour that I could turn to instead?*
- *What are a few things that I can feel grateful for right now?*

- For example:
 - My couch – which is a comfortable place for me to curl up when my depression’s really intense and I just want somewhere to rest.
 - Video streaming services on my laptop – which I can switch on any time I want to distract myself from my depression.
 - The creamy mug of hot chocolate I’m going to drink while I watch my favourite show.
 - Food delivery services – which mean that instead of having to cook when I’m feeling really depressed, I can have a delicious meal delivered straight to my door.
 - My partner – who’s always so sweet, loving and caring towards me when I’m feeling down.
 - My best friend – who I know will always be there for me as well.
 - Self-help books – which are teaching me the strategies I need to know in order to overcome depression, so that I won’t have to live like this forever.
- *What's something I could do tomorrow that I would look forward to?*
- *What difficult times have I survived in the past, which are proof that I'll be able to survive what I'm going through now as well?*
- *What are some positive characteristics I have which can give me confidence that I'll be able to survive this?*
 - For example, that I’m strong for having overcome so much in the past, and that I’m resilient for having battled depression for so long without giving up.
- *What are some reasons why I can have hope in the future?*

- To answer this question, think about:
 - The difficult times you've survived in the past – which is proof that you can survive whatever you're going through now as well.
 - The positive traits you have which can give you confidence that you'll be able to get through this.
 - Everything you have to look forward to in the future.
- *When I'm ready to, what's a healthy way that I can start engaging in the world again?*

Appendix H: How To Practice Gratitude When You're In The Storm Zone

Like we've said throughout this book, you can be said to be in the Storm Zone of the Storm To Sun Framework when your depression is at its worst – i.e. when it feels like there's a storm raging in your mind. Just to recap, when you're in this Zone:

- Your negative thoughts are at their most catastrophic, at their most constant, and you're at your most attached to them (i.e. you believe them to be true more so than at any other time).
- The painful emotions that are associated with depression like misery, overwhelm, worthlessness, hopelessness, etcetera, are at their strongest.
- Your ability to function will be at its lowest – and as a result, fulfilling your day-to-day responsibilities can feel unmanageable (and often are), and simple tasks like getting out of bed or having a shower may feel like climbing a mountain.
- Faking a smile and pretending to be “OK” may be impossible.
- In the Storm Zone, it's common to feel so miserable, broken, and hopeless that you're unable to envision the storm ever passing.

Now, sceptics of practicing gratitude would argue that you can't do so when you're currently feeling this depressed – because your symptoms are too intense for you to feel grateful, and because if your ability to function is so compromised that it's a struggle to get out of bed for instance, then you can't possibly have the emotional capacity to do a gratitude exercise.

At The Depression Project, we respectfully yet strongly disagree, however:

1. We do believe that certain gratitude exercises which require less emotional capacity are more appropriate for the Storm Zone than other ones which require a higher mental capacity;

2. We also believe that even these “easier” gratitude exercises should be done in a way that takes into account the intense severity of your present symptoms.

With that in mind, we'd now like to share with you some simple yet powerful gratitude exercises that we believe you'll find really, really helpful when you're in the Storm Zone!

1. Write A List Of All The Things You're Grateful For (Storm Zone Edition)

The notion of making a list of all the things you're grateful for is one of the most well-known gratitude practices there is – however, it can be difficult to connect to a lot of the things you would otherwise be grateful for when you're in the Storm Zone. For example, if you live in a country with democracy, then while this is something to indeed feel gratitude for when you consider the impact that living in a democratic country has on your quality of life, it's not something you may feel particularly connected to in the moments when you're curled up in a ball on the couch feeling miserably depressed, for instance. Consequently, democracy (among other things) may be something that's too far removed from your depression for you to be able to feel grateful for it when you're in the Storm Zone.

For this reason, when you're in the Storm Zone, it's our belief that you'll find this exercise most helpful if you focus your list of “things to feel grateful for” on what you can best connect to at that moment in time.

For example:

- The couch you're lying on – which is a comfortable place for you to curl up when your depression's really intense and you just want somewhere to rest.
- Streaming services on your laptop – which you can switch on any time you want to distract yourself from your depression.
- The creamy mug of hot chocolate you're going to drink while you watch your favourite show.

- Food delivery services – which mean that instead of having to cook when you’re feeling really depressed, you can have a delicious meal delivered straight to your door.
- Your partner – who’s always so sweet, loving and caring towards you.
- Your best friend – who you know will always be there for you as well.
- Self-help books – which are teaching you the strategies you need to know in order to overcome depression, so that you won’t have to live like this forever.

Of course, not all of these examples may apply to you, but next time you’re in the Storm Zone, if you’re able to come up with your own list of things to feel grateful for in that moment, then it will likely give you a lift.

2. Keep A Gratitude Journal

Along with making a list of all the things you’re grateful for, keeping a gratitude journal is probably the most renowned gratitude exercise there is. The idea is relatively simple: every night before you go to sleep, write down three things that you’re grateful for that day. An example of what this might look like when you’re in the Storm Zone could be:

1. *I’m grateful for my dog – who loyally lay down beside me next to my bed until I could gather the strength to pull myself out of it.*
2. *I’m grateful for my brother – who called me to see how I’m feeling, and spent half an hour reassuring and encouraging me.*
3. *I’m grateful for chocolate ice-cream – because the two scoops I had after dinner made me feel a little bit better.*

Keeping a gratitude journal like so is a great exercise for the Storm Zone, because it’s relatively easy to do and can really help you find light in your darkest days when you need it most. To make sure you get all the benefits you can from this exercise, though, we recommend that you bear in mind the following:

A) Try To Be As Specific As Possible

Notice how in the above examples, we didn't just write something shallow like "my dog" or "ice-cream", but instead dug deeper and recalled the specific moments of gratitude? Doing this builds more gratitude, since it involves you reflecting upon-, savouring- and appreciating those moments comparatively more.

B) Write It Down

It can be tempting to just try to recall your grateful moments to memory without writing them down, and if that's all you have time- or the emotional capacity for, then it's certainly still better than not doing so. However, actually writing down the three things you're grateful for will tend to result in you being more engaged in this exercise – which of course, will lead to you getting more out of it than you otherwise would. Not only that, but writing your grateful memories down in a diary also gives you the opportunity to read over them at a later date as well – which can give you an additional boost then, too.

C) Find A Frequency That Suits You

While we've encouraged you to keep your gratitude journal daily, if you find doing so to be too overwhelming, then try keeping it every couple of days, or even just once a week. Keeping a gratitude journal isn't meant to be an added burden on your life, so if you don't feel up to keeping it every day, then simply stick to a timeframe that suits you better.

3. Keep A Gratitude Jar

A "gratitude jar" is a fun kind of spin on a gratitude journal, and is another simple yet effective exercise you can try to cultivate gratitude and give yourself a much-needed boost when you're in the Storm Zone. All you need to do is this: place a jar (or a box, or a bowl, etcetera) somewhere that's easily accessible, and any time you feel grateful for something (such as your dog loyally sleeping beside you, your brother calling to check on you, etcetera), write that something down

on a little piece of paper, and then pop it into your gratitude jar. Just like when it came to keeping a gratitude journal, we encourage you to aim to drop in three little pieces of paper a day. If you can do this, then your gratitude jar will gradually fill up, and then any time you need a pick-me-up, you can take out your little notes and read them over to give yourself a lift.

4. Gratefully Recall Pleasant Past Memories

When you're in the Storm Zone, then of course, it's really difficult to find joy, pleasure or beauty in the present moment. When this is the case, one strategy that can really lift your mood is to do a mindfulness exercise that's focused on gratefully recalling joyful, pleasurable or beautiful moments from the past.

Give this a try: sit or lie somewhere comfortable, and take long, slow, soothing breaths. Then, when your breathing has found a comfortable rhythm and you feel yourself relaxing a little bit, recall a time when you felt happy. This could be for any reason – for example, at the sight of the sun setting by the beach on a weekend trip away; a memory of spending time with someone you love; or a major life event like your wedding ceremony or the day your child was born. No matter how big or small the moment was, focus on that memory. Try to recall it as vividly as possible, conjuring up all of the warm, positive, beautiful emotions you felt at the time. Then, while you bask in the pleasure of that moment, calmly declare to yourself:

"I'm grateful I got to experience that in my life."

Repeat this to yourself as you continue to relive the happiness you enjoyed in that instance. Then, when you feel ready to, release this memory from your focus, and choose another happy memory from your life to look back on. Repeat the same process for that memory as well, and continue doing so for as many memories as you'd like.

5. Make A Gratitude Collage

This is a creative way of cultivating gratitude, and is great for when you're in the Storm Zone since it's relatively simple once again, and also, because doing something creative can be a welcome distraction from your severe depressive symptoms!

For this exercise, find some pictures of the things you're grateful for, and then – as the name suggests – make a collage out of them. Some pictures you might like to include in your collage may be, for example:

- Pictures of your family;
- Pictures from previous vacations you've taken;
- Pictures of your favourite food;
- Pictures from momentous days in your life;
- Pictures of different things you enjoy.

Appendix I: Replacing Self-Sabotaging Behaviours With Healthy Alternatives

Like we talked about in Chapter 2, if you engage in one or more self-sabotaging habits – such as substance abuse, binge eating, overspending on “retail therapy” or self-harm, for example – then a helpful survival strategy can be to replace those habits with alternative, much healthier habits.

Below, we’ve listed a variety of such alternatives – many of which were suggested to The Depression Project by our 1,000,000+ person Facebook community. As you’ll see, some of these alternatives have different “objectives” – just like self-sabotaging habits can have different “objectives”. For example:

- To help distract you;
- To help you release painful emotions;
- To help you break out of numbness.

For this reason among others, not all of these healthy alternatives are likely to resonate with you. However, hopefully you'll find at least a handful of them helpful!

Healthier Alternatives To Self-Sabotaging Habits

- Watch your favourite sport or television series;
- Read a compelling fiction book;
- Talk to someone you trust;
- Tear apart a newspaper, photo or magazine;
- Practice mindfulness;
- Play video games;

- Journal;
- Repeat a positive affirmation to yourself (e.g. “I will get through this ... I will get through this ...”);
- Do something nice for someone else;
- Practice aromatherapy;
- Call a crisis support line (if you’re feeling suicidal or the urge to engage in self-harm);
- Listen to your favourite music;
- Draw, paint or fill in an adult colouring book;
- Do a jigsaw puzzle;
- Hug and squeeze your pillow tightly;
- Watch a documentary;
- Play a board game;
- Cook;
- Have a cold shower;
- Go for a drive;
- Make something out of Lego;
- Do sudoku or a crossword;
- Knit a sweater you can donate to a shelter;
- Play with your pet;
- Go for a walk, a run, or dance around the room to release excess energy;

- Scream into a pillow;
- Keep yourself busy by, for example, doing your chores, cleaning up around the house, or doing an admin task that you've been putting off for a while;
- Read a travel guide to your dream destination;
- Write a list of everything you're grateful for;
- Write a short story;
- Read inspirational, uplifting quotes;
- Think of pleasant memories from your past in as much detail as possible;
- Do some work in your garden (or start cultivating a garden if you don't already have one);
- Buy your favourite flowers and place them around your home to give your mood a boost;
- Start that DIY project that you've been meaning to get to;
- Mindfully count to 100;
- Squeeze a stress ball.

TIP: Try To Replace Your Self-Sabotaging Habit With An Alternative Behaviour That Can Fulfil A Similar “Objective” To The One You're Looking For

Remember before sharing this list of alternative behaviours with you, when we said that some of them – as well as some self-sabotaging habits – have different “objectives”? Well, in order for these alternative behaviours to be as effective as possible, you’ll likely find it helpful if you replace your self-sabotaging habits with an alternative behaviour that can fulfil a similar “objective” to the one you’re looking for.

For instance, let's say that you engage in self-harm as a self-sabotaging habit. In this example, let's see how this could potentially look.

- **Reason Why You Feel The Urge To Self-Harm:** Because you're in excruciating mental pain.
- **The "Objective" You're Looking To Achieve:** Distraction from this pain.
- **Healthy Alternatives To Self-Harm That Can Help You Achieve This "Objective":**
 - Watching your favourite sport or television series;
 - Planning your dream holiday;
 - Doing something nice for someone else;
 - Drawing.
- **Reason Why You Feel The Urge To Self-Harm:** Because your emotions have been building for so long and you're desperate to release them.
- **The "Objective" You're Looking To Achieve:** A release from these pent-up emotions.
- **Healthy Alternatives To Self-Harm That Can Help You Achieve This "Objective":**
 - Going for a walk or a run;
 - Screaming into a pillow;
 - Journaling;
 - Writing your negative thoughts on a piece of paper and then tearing it up.
- **Reason Why You Feel The Urge To Self-Harm:** Because you're feeling numb.
- **The "Objective" You're Looking To Achieve:** A "break" from your numbness, to feel something, and/or to remind yourself that you're still alive.

- Healthy Alternatives To Self-Harm That Can Help You Achieve This “Objective”: Doing something to engage your senses that isn't inflicting pain - such as:
 - Having a cold shower;
 - Aromatherapy;
 - Eating spicy food;
 - Smelling your favourite perfume;
 - Going in a steaming hot sauna.

These are all much healthier ways of breaking out of numbness, “feeling something”, and reminding yourself that you're still alive.

Appendix J: Your Suicide Prevention Plan

Like we mentioned in Chapter 2, it's extremely important that you have a "suicide prevention plan" that will keep you safe in the Storm Zone if you're feeling suicidal. And, to help you create one, we really encourage you to think about and write down your responses to the questions below:

1. *What are some warning signs that you may be entering a crisis situation?*
 - a. NOTE: When you encounter these signs, this is when you need to turn to your safety plan.
2. *What are some survival strategies you can utilise to help you relieve your pain and suffering?*
3. *Who are one or more people you can turn to for help?*
4. *What are the contact details of an emergency service / crisis support service that you can contact if you need to?*
 - a. NOTE: For a list of emergency services / crisis support numbers that you may be able to call in your area, please visit thedepressionproject.com/emergencyservices.
5. *What steps could you take to make your environment safe? In particular, what dangerous things could you remove / avoid? And, is there anything safe that you could add?*

Appendix K: Strategies To Help Make It Easier For You To Fall Asleep

Like we mentioned in Chapter 2, in order to help you “survive the storm”, we encourage you to do your best to get a proper night’s sleep. And, to help you achieve this objective, we encourage you to practice good *sleep hygiene*. In particular, this involves:

- Practicing certain “do’s” which will help relax you before it’s time to sleep; make it easier for you to do so; and contribute to your sleep being deeper, longer lasting and less disrupted than it would otherwise be;
- Avoiding certain “don’ts” which tend to have the opposite effect.

On that note, in this Appendix, we’d like to share with you what some of the “do’s” and “don’ts” of good sleep hygiene are.

DO: Wind Down Before Bed In Preparation To Fall Asleep

Approximately one or two hours before you plan to sleep, we encourage you to stop doing things that stimulate- or are likely to trigger you, and instead start doing things that help you wind down. For example:

- Stop: Checking your work emails, using social media, watching the news, having heated conversations, and/or doing anything else that could be triggering.
- Instead: Have a hot shower, read a book while lying on the couch, meditate, or exchange massages with your partner, for example.

DO: Try To Keep A Regular Sleep Schedule

Another key component of good sleep hygiene is to try your best to stick to a regular sleep schedule⁴¹ – by which we mean trying to go to bed and wake up at roughly the same time each

day. This helps get your body in a stable rhythm, and as a result, you may find it easier to fall asleep each night.

DO: Start A “Sleep Ritual”

Similar to trying to keep a regular sleep schedule, it can also help to practice a regular “sleep ritual”⁴² – or in other words, it can be helpful to have a habit or a routine which you practice each night before bed that you know from your own personal experience helps you to fall asleep. While different habits and routines will be helpful for different people, some suggestions from members of The Depression Project’s community include:

- *“Having my spouse stroke my hair / hand / back until I fall asleep.”*
- *“I put on a show I've seen a million times, like Friends or something. It stops my mind from obsessing over stuff, and since I've seen every episode a million times, I don't need to actually focus on it. I can usually fall asleep within 10 minutes of starting it, and as long as it keeps playing, I'll stay asleep until morning.”*
- *“I practice mindfulness to anchor myself in the present moment, which is something I've found very helpful to stop worrying about the future / thinking about the past. It's perfect for me. I do a simple body scan and a few other exercises in bed for about half an hour, and I'll usually fall asleep pretty quickly after that.”*
- *“I bought two Bluetooth speakers, and I search on YouTube for a clip that goes for about the same amount of time I'll be asleep for and play it on low volume to help me relax. Usually it'll be a different track each night, but sometimes I find a really good one and will listen to it time and time again.”*
- *“I snuggle up with my cats.”*
- *“I've found a weighted blanket and lavender oil to be very soothing.”*
- *“I usually listen to ASMR at night, or the sounds of waves or heavy rain.”*

- *“When I’m lying in bed, I’ve found it helpful to make a point of thinking about happy memories, or visualising myself being somewhere nice like the beach or the woods.”*
- *“I drink valerian or chamomile tea, take a hot shower, put on clean and comfortable pyjamas, and play rain sounds on my phone.”*
- *“I love audio books, and after usually 15 or 20 minutes of listening to one, I’ll drift off to sleep.”*
- *“It’s really simple, but I just take long, slow, deep breaths ... over and over again until I fall asleep.”*
- *“I like to spend 20 or 30 minutes journaling about my thoughts.”*
- *“Progressive muscle relaxation works wonders.”*

DO: Create A Relaxing, Soothing Environment To Sleep In

Additionally, we also encourage you to make your bedroom as calm, comfortable and tranquil of a place as you can – since doing so can help you relax and make it easier for you to fall asleep⁴³. A few suggestions for how you can do this include:

- Try to keep your bedroom neat and tidy;
- Adjust the temperature so that it’s neither too hot nor too cold;
- Consider investing in as comfortable a mattress and pillow as possible;
- Choose soothing colours for your bed linen and curtains;
- Sprinkle a little camomile on your pillow;
- Use a weighted blanket.

DON'T: Drink Excessive Amounts Of Coffee Or Alcohol⁴⁴

To prevent it from disrupting your sleep, we encourage you to avoid drinking coffee after 2 p.m. The same goes for other caffeinated drinks like cola, for example. Similarly, we encourage you to avoid drinking alcohol within three hours of when you're planning to go to bed as well – since this can also disrupt your sleep at night.

DON'T: Watch The Clock

Rather than helping you fall asleep, watching the clock and counting how long it is until you need to wake up is likely to contribute to keeping you awake – since as you may have experienced before, this can make you feel frustrated that you can't sleep, panicky about the sleep you're missing out on, and stressed out thinking about how tired you know you're going to feel in the morning.

So, please try your best to avoid engaging in this practice – such as by, for example, turning your clock around to face the wall, or placing something in front of it so that you can't see it when you're trying to fall asleep.

DO: Some Exercise Throughout The Day⁴⁵

Exercise increases your levels of melatonin – which is a natural hormone that helps you fall asleep⁴⁶. So, if you're not already, then try to fit in some exercise throughout your day.

In saying that, though, we encourage you not to exercise within at least two hours of trying to fall asleep. After all, this would be contrary to “winding down in preparation to fall asleep” like we talked about above, and therefore runs the risk of contributing to you staying awake instead.

Appendix L: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Like we mentioned in Chapter 2, progressive muscle relaxation is a stress-relieving technique that can help you “survive the storm”. On that note, in this Appendix, we’d like to share with you a progressive muscle relaxation exercise that we recommend.

A Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

1. Make sure you’re sitting or lying down in a comfortable place where you will not be disturbed.
2. Then, begin by taking several slow, deep breaths, before bringing your attention to your forehead. Tighten the muscles in your forehead for a count of 15, and then release this tension over 30 seconds. Tune in to how different your muscles feel when you tense them compared to when they’re relaxed
3. Next, move on to your jaw. Tense your jaw muscles and grit your teeth gently. Hold this for 15 seconds, then relax for a count of 30, or until your jaw muscles are fully relaxed.
4. The next muscle group to focus on is your shoulders and neck. Tense your shoulders, bringing them up as close to your ears as possible. Again, hold this for 15 seconds, before releasing the tension as you count to 30, and feel how the tension seeps out of your body.
5. Now, focus on your hands and arms. Ball your hands into fists and bring them into your chest, holding this tension for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the relaxing sensation when you release the pressure over a 30 second period.
6. Focus on your buttocks, repeating the 15-second tension and 30-second relaxation sequence before moving on to your legs, and then finally, to your feet.

As you progress through this exercise, keep your breathing slow. At its conclusion, before you open your eyes and carry on with your day, notice the feeling of relaxation throughout your body. If you’re like many people, then you will indeed find yourself feeling calmer and less distressed.

Appendix M: Strategies To Cope With And Overcome Your Negative Thoughts

Like we mentioned in Chapter 3, when you're in the Rain Zone, it's important to be able to cope with and overcome your moderately intense negative thoughts as much as possible. And, to help you do this, in this Appendix, we're going to share a variety of cognitive behavioural therapy thought-challenging strategies with you.

Strategy #1: Bringing Awareness To The Evidence That Disputes Your Negative Thoughts

It's important to note that just because you have a thought, it doesn't mean that it's true – and in fact, when you're viewing everything through depression, anxiety and/or another mental health issue's critical, distorted lens that's causing you to think much more negatively than you otherwise would, many of your negative thoughts are likely going to be *false*.

For this reason, rather than automatically accepting your negative thoughts to be true, it can be really helpful to instead implement a common cognitive behavioural therapy strategy that involves *bringing awareness to the evidence which disputes them*⁴⁷.

Now, to see how this thought-challenging strategy works in practice, let's look at a few different examples.

Example Negative Thought #1: *“I didn't do as well in my exams as I wanted to, so that means that I'm a stupid failure, and that I'll never get a good job after university.”*

However, evidence to the contrary might be:

- You did well enough in your high school exams to get into university, and you've done well in other university exams before this one – which proves that you are not a “stupid failure”.

- Not doing as well as you wanted to in one set of exams does not define you as a failure. After all, nobody achieves their goals 100% of the time, and therefore, it's unrealistic to think that you always will, and it's unfair to label yourself as a failure when you don't.
- When you apply for jobs in the future, you're going to be judged on so much more than just this particular set of exams – and so not doing as well as you wanted to does not mean that you'll never get a good job.

Example Negative Thought #2: *"I snapped at my daughter this morning, so that means I'm a terrible parent."*

However, evidence to the contrary might be:

- While you no doubt regret snapping at your daughter this morning, it does not mean that you're a terrible parent. This is because it's unrealistic to expect yourself to behave perfectly all of the time, and when you don't behave perfectly, it does not automatically mean that you're "terrible".
- Even though you snapped at your daughter this morning, throughout the previous week you've helped her with her homework, cooked her favourite dinner and taken her and her friends to the movies – all of which proves that you're actually a very good parent.

Example Negative Thought #3: *Thinking "I have a bad job" in response to your friend with a higher paying job posting a picture on social media of the expensive new car they just bought.*

However, evidence that you do not have a "bad job" could include, for example:

- Although your job may not be able to afford you a fancy new car, it lets you provide for your family - which is evidence to suggest that it's actually a good job which serves you well in life.
- Your job may have a high social impact (which can't be measured in dollars).
- You may enjoy your job (which once again, is a benefit that cannot be measured in dollars).

- Your job may afford you a nice, comfortable work/life balance that lets you spend time with your loved ones and pursue your hobbies – whereas many higher-paying jobs would require you to work much longer hours.

Example Negative Thought #4: Thinking *“my life sucks”* in response to someone posting a picture of themselves sipping cocktails on a tropical beach holiday – which you'd love to go on but right now can't afford.

However, evidence to the contrary may include, for example:

- The fact that you have abundant access to food and water as well as a safe, comfortable home to live in – when so many people in the world do not.
- You have a terrific partner who loves and supports you.
- You have a gorgeous dog who always gets excited and licks you when you come home from work.
- The next season of your favourite television show is about to start.
- You're working on writing a book, painting a picture, learning a musical instrument, or pursuing another hobby that brings you joy.

Example Negative Thought #5: *“I struggle to do even the simplest of things like brushing my teeth, shaving and having a shower – I'm so worthless.”*

However, evidence to the contrary would include the fact that feeling exhausted is a direct consequence of depression, and that for this reason, it's actually perfectly normal and understandable that you'd find it difficult to do the "little things" like taking care of your personal hygiene. Therefore, you struggling to brush your teeth and have a shower is due to your depression – *not* because you're “worthless”.

Example Negative Thought #6: *“My friend didn't text me happy birthday, so that means that they don't care about me.”*

However, evidence to the contrary could include, for example, the fact that your friend might have had a really busy day, and/or been going through something difficult themselves – which resulted in them not wishing you happy birthday not because they don't care about you, but because they were extremely preoccupied with their own issues.

Example Negative Thought #7: Thinking “*I’m a failure*” as a result of negatively comparing yourself to other people who, because of their social media posts, you feel have a “better life” than you.

However, evidence to the contrary includes, for example:

- Social media is not an accurate reflection of people’s lives, since people usually only post their “best” moments that they want everyone else to see.
- The comparison you’re making is extremely unfair to yourself – since you are comparing another person’s “best” moments to *all* of your moments (i.e. the “good”, the “bad” and the “ugly” moments).

Example Negative Thought #8: “*I’m never going to overcome depression.*”

However, evidence to the contrary includes:

- There is increasingly more and more help available to assist you in overcoming depression – including, for example, increased accessibility to therapy as a result of the internet; progressions in the field of psychology that are creating new opportunities for treatment and improving existing opportunities; more and more depression self-help books being written by experts and published every year; and more and more online courses being made by experts as well. Accordingly, just because you haven’t overcome depression *yet*, it doesn’t mean that, with continuously increasing access to help, you won’t be able to overcome depression in the future.
- There are often many, *many* differences between one therapist and another – including their treatment approaches, their communication styles, and their overall knowledge and “talent” as a therapist – to name a few of many such differences. Consequently, even if

you've tried therapy in the past and haven't found it helpful, it's highly likely that there are other therapists out there who would indeed be able to help you.

- There are hundreds – more like thousands! – of self-help books written by highly knowledgeable and experienced professionals that, in all likelihood, you haven't yet read. And, if you do read them, then you will almost certainly learn countless strategies and techniques that you don't now know which could really help you to overcome depression.
- There is often a “learning curve” when it comes to effectively implementing techniques to help you overcome depression. For this reason, even if you haven't found one or more techniques in particular to be helpful in the past, it doesn't mean that, with more and more practice, you won't be able to find them helpful in the future.
- Yet another reason why you may not have found certain techniques helpful in the past but you may do in the future is because the headspace you happen to be in can determine how effective various techniques are. For example, if you're so consumed with negative thoughts, so consumed with misery and feeling so exhausted and broken that it's a struggle to get out of bed for example, then learning and effectively implementing a brand new cognitive behavioural therapy strategy will likely be beyond your present capacity. However, if you try to learn and implement that strategy when you're in a better headspace, then you may indeed find it beneficial.
- Furthermore, just because you haven't done something *yet*, or just because you aren't exactly sure how to do something *right now* (including overcoming depression, for example), it does not mean that that something isn't possible – particularly if you try really hard to do it!

Strategy #2: Reframing Your Negative Thoughts In A More Positive, Self-Compassionate And Accurate Way

When it comes to freeing yourself from your negative thoughts, the second strategy we'd like to share with you is to ask yourself:

Is there a more positive, self-compassionate, accurate way that I could be looking at things?

Asking yourself this question is an example of implementing another common cognitive behavioural therapy technique known as “cognitive reframing” or “cognitive restructuring”⁴⁸, and the reason why it can be so helpful is because there usually is indeed a more positive, self-compassionate, accurate way of viewing things!

To illustrate how cognitive reframing can work in practice, let's once again look at a handful of common examples.

Example Negative Thought #1: Thinking “I’m a failure” in response to someone posting on social media about an accomplishment they’ve achieved which you haven’t.

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *“There will always be people who are less accomplished than me in the world, and there will always be people who are more accomplished – that’s just the way it is. However, not achieving a goal that someone else has achieved does not make me a failure. After all, what other people are achieving or not achieving in their life isn’t actually relevant to me, and instead of being focused on them, I would be much better served by channelling that energy towards achieving my own goals that I’ve set for myself.”*
- *“I did not achieve that particular goal because I have different priorities in life, and was therefore focused on achieving a different goal and/or doing something else.”*
- *“If I do want to achieve the goal that this person on social media is posting about, then rather than concluding that I’m a failure for not having achieved it yet, I can look at this as a reminder that what that person has achieved is important to me, and use it as added motivation to start trying (or trying even harder) to achieve it myself.”*
- *“Even though I haven’t yet achieved all of the goals that I’ve set out to achieve in my life, if I keep working hard, then I can achieve them in time.”*

Example Negative Thought #2: *"I snapped at my daughter this morning, so that means I'm a terrible parent."*

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *"The reason I snapped at my daughter this morning was because I was really stressed about my job interview today. This is very understandable, and does not mean that I'm a terrible parent. In the 'big picture', this incident is really not a very big deal – but even still, when I see my daughter tonight I'll tell her that I'm sorry, and I'll make it up to her by bringing home her favourite chocolate."*

Example Negative Thought #3: *"I'm such a loser for struggling to do something as simple as brushing my teeth and having a shower."*

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *"Struggling to look after my personal hygiene is forgivable when I'm feeling severely depressed and am in 'survival mode'. It's a reflection of how severe my depression is at that time – not of my worth as a person."*

Example Negative Thought #4: Thinking *"I can't do anything right"* in response to making a mistake.

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *"I made a mistake just like everybody does at times, but there are also lots of things that I've done well and competently."*
- *"I unfortunately made a mistake that I didn't want to make, but instead of dragging myself down by telling myself that 'I can't do anything right', I'm going to build myself up by trying to learn from this mistake so that I don't repeat it next time – at which point, I'll give myself a pat on the back for doing things right!"*
- *"There are plenty of things that I do well and competently – it's just that right now, depression / anxiety / another mental health issue's debilitating symptoms are making it*

extremely difficult for me to function up to my usual capabilities. Unfortunately, this means that I'm prone to making more mistakes than I usually would."

- *"There are lots of things that I do well – but depression / anxiety / another mental health issue's symptoms are really intense right now, which means that I'm prone to catastrophising and viewing myself in a much more negative light than I usually would."*

Example Negative Thought #5: "I'm a burden for being in a low mood and needing support."

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *"It is OK to not be OK, and in the same way that I wouldn't judge a loved one who needs support, I shouldn't judge myself, either. After all, friends and family are there to uplift each other."*
- *"My loved ones are now supporting me just like I have supported them in the past, and just like I will support them in the future if and when they need me to."*
- *"Over time, EVERYBODY will experience difficulties in which they'll need the support of their loved ones. Right now, it's a time when I need support, and when it's my loved ones' time in the future, I'll be there to support them."*
- *"Depression / anxiety / PTSD / another mental illness is the burden – not me – and I did not willingly choose to suffer from this."*

Example Negative Thought #6: "Everybody's life is so much better than mine."

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *"When I compare my actual life – i.e. the 'good, the bad and the ugly' – to the 'highlight reel' of other people's lives, then I'm prone to thinking 'everybody's life is so much better than mine'. However, this is just a negative thought grounded in a distorted and unfair comparison – not an accurate reflection of reality."*

- *“Just like me, everybody else is fighting their own battles in life. However, because I’m much more aware of the battles I’m fighting than I am of the battles other people are fighting, it can be easy for me to forget this truth, and consequently conclude that everybody’s life is so much better than mine.”*
- *“My depression / anxiety / another mental health issue is making me view my life through a very negative, pessimistic lens right now, and consequently leading me to think that everybody’s life is so much better than mine. But, I know that depression / anxiety / another mental health issue is prone to lying to me, and trying to make me believe awful things about myself and my life that aren’t actually true.”*
- *“When I’m deep in a depressive episode / completely overwhelmed by anxiety / in intense mental pain, I’m prone to overgeneralising the pain that I’m currently in and thinking that my WHOLE life is terrible and so much worse than everybody else’s. However, just because I’m suffering at this moment, it doesn’t mean that my WHOLE life is terrible and so much worse than everybody else’s. After all, I also sometimes have good days, too.”*

Example Negative Thought #7: “Everyone hates me, that’s why I’m so alone.”

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *“I feel alone right now not because everyone hates me, but because when other people previously reached out to me, I was usually too depressed to be able to engage and interact with them – and so eventually, they stopped trying. While this is disappointing, there’s still a good chance that I can bridge the distance that’s grown between us by making sure I initiate to meet up with those people when I feel up to doing so, and also by making sure I let them know that the reason I was distant was because of my depression – not because of anything personal to do with them.”*

Example Negative Thought #8: “I’m so weak ... if I wasn’t, then people wouldn’t be telling me to ‘toughen up’.”

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *“People tell me to ‘toughen up’ not because I’m weak, but because they don’t understand what I’m going through, how exhausted depression can make you feel, and to what extent it can impact your ability to function.”*
- *“I’m actually pretty tough, because I’m dealing with an awful lot right now and rather than giving up, I’m doing my best to not let depression break me, to keep on going, and to ‘get on with life’ as well as I possibly can.”*
- *“Although the people who tell me to ‘toughen up’ don’t know it, there have been many times when depression has made me want to give up, but I haven’t. And, this is actually proof that I am strong – not weak.”*

Example Negative Thought #9: “I’m such an idiot for forgetting to take my medication!”

However, a more positive, self-compassionate and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *“I’m not an idiot – forgetting things is a common symptom of depression. I need to be much kinder-, compassionate- and forgiving of myself.”*

Example Negative Thought #10: “I’m never going to overcome depression.”

However, a more positive and accurate way of viewing this might be:

- *“Just because I haven’t overcome my depression yet, it doesn’t mean that I never will. In fact, the more I seek professional help, read depression self-help books written by experts, take online courses created by experts, live a healthy lifestyle, and do everything else I possibly can to beat my depression, then the higher and higher the chance that I eventually will!”*
- *“I will never, ever, ever, ever give up on trying to overcome my depression. And, as long as I never give up trying to overcome my depression, there’s indeed a good chance that I’ll be able to do so.”*

Example Negative Thought #11: “There is no point in being alive anymore.”

However, a more positive and accurate way of viewing this would be:

- *"I'm really, really deep in a depressive episode right now, which means that right now, my thoughts are grounded in pessimism and hopelessness as opposed to reality. If I was in a much better headspace, then I'd be able to see that life is indeed worth living."*

Strategy #3: "Putting Your Loved Ones In Your Shoes"

Another common strategy rooted in cognitive behavioural therapy⁴⁹ that can help you cope with and overcome your negative thoughts is to ask yourself:

"If a loved one was in my position, would I be thinking the same negative, critical things about them that I'm currently thinking about myself?"

Asking yourself this question can be extremely powerful, because it has the effect of distancing you from your negative thoughts and looking at them from a different, more objective angle. And, when you do this, you'll often realise that you're being really, *really* hard on yourself.

For example, if your friend didn't do as well in a set of exams as they wanted to, then would you think that they are a failure and that they will never get a good job?

If your friend snapped at their daughter, would you think that they are a terrible parent?

If your friend had depression and was struggling to brush their teeth, have a shower or do their chores, then would you think that they are "lazy", "useless", "pathetic" and/or "worthless"?

If your friend needed support because they were struggling with depression, then would you think that they are a burden?

If your friend forgot to take their medication, then would you think that they are an idiot?

If someone posted something on social media that your friend hadn't achieved yet, then would you think that your friend is "not good enough"?

In all of these instances, we're guessing that you would *not* think any of these negative, critical things about your friend – are we right? And, if this is true, then it's proof that you really are being overly critical and judgmental of yourself, and that you instead need to offer yourself much more love, care and compassion.

Strategy #4: Identifying Cognitive Distortions

“Cognitive distortions” are distorted thinking patterns that are grounded in some form of bias, and which commonly result in you viewing yourself and/or the world much more critically, judgementally and/or negatively than you otherwise would. And, when you're thinking negative thoughts, you're almost certainly thinking in a cognitively distorted way without even knowing it. For this reason, it's extremely important that you identify- and bring awareness to the ways in which you may be doing so.

Why?

Because if you're able to recognise that your negative thoughts are indeed cognitive distortions – as opposed to being accurate perceptions of reality – then it will suddenly become much easier for you to dismiss them and push them from your mind (or at the very least, your negative thoughts will likely lose some of their power over you).

Now, to help you do this, let's identify some cognitive distortions that commonly plague people when they're thinking negative thoughts⁵⁰.

Filter Thinking

“Filter thinking” is where you filter out all of the “good” or the “positive” in a situation, and only focus on the “bad” or the “negative”. For example:

- Filtering out all of the things you've accomplished, and thinking “*I'm a failure*” because you're exclusively focusing on one or more things that you didn't accomplish.

- Filtering out all of the positive feedback you received from someone, and thinking *"I can't do anything right"* because you're focusing exclusively on the constructive criticism they gave you to help you do better next time.
- Filtering out all of the positives you bring to a relationship, focusing exclusively on the times when you needed your partner's support instead, and consequently concluding that you're a *"burden"* and that your partner would be *"better off without you"*.
- Filtering out all of the times you said "yes" to doing a favour for someone, focusing on the one time you said "no", and then consequently concluding that you're unhelpful.

Catastrophisation

Catastrophisation is when you blow something out of proportion, and conclude that things are much worse than they really are. For example:

- Thinking *"I'm a stupid failure"* for not doing as well in your exams as you wanted to (which, while disappointing, certainly does not mean that you are a "stupid failure").
- Thinking *"my life is such a disaster ... everybody else's is so much better than mine"* in response to losing your job. However, while this is no doubt extremely disappointing for you, this situation likely isn't as disastrous, permanently bad and/or hopeless as catastrophic thoughts like *"my life is such a disaster ... everybody else's is so much better than mine"* would suggest. Instead, a less catastrophic, more accurate assessment of the situation might be *"I'm going through a really challenging time right now"* or *"this is a really difficult time for me"*.
- Thinking *"I can't do ANYTHING right"* in response to making a small mistake (which may be frustrating, but certainly doesn't mean that you can't do ANYTHING right).

Minimisation

Minimisation involves downplaying or ignoring the presence of external factors that contributed to what it is that you're feeling negative about. For example:

- Thinking "*I'm so useless*", "*I'm so lazy*" or "*I'm so worthless*" for not doing your chores, neglecting your personal hygiene or staying in bed all day – but completely discounting / ignoring the fact that you were deep in a depressive episode and feeling absolutely exhausted, which is a logical explanation for not being able to do your chores, take care of your personal hygiene or get out of bed.
- Thinking "*I'm such a terrible person*" for snapping at your partner, while completely discounting the fact that the reason you snapped at your partner was because you were feeling extremely irritable, on edge and hypersensitive as a result of your depression – which makes your actions much more understandable.
- Thinking "*I'm such a failure*" or "*I'm not as smart as everyone else is*" for not being able to work as effectively as your co-workers, while completely minimising the fact that depression can significantly compromise a person's ability to function, and that since you're struggling with depression, it's unfair to expect yourself to function as well as others who aren't struggling with depression.

Overgeneralisation

Overgeneralisation is where you make broad, big-picture statements or conclusions about something based on limited information or evidence. For example:

- Thinking / concluding "*I can't do anything right*" after making one mistake.
- Thinking / concluding "*people are such a**holes*" in response to a handful of people posting mean, abusive comments on a social media post.

- Thinking / concluding *"all men / women are bad"* in response to a handful of negative romantic relationships.
- Thinking / concluding *"marriage doesn't work"* after getting divorced.
- Thinking / concluding *"therapy doesn't work"* after trying only a handful of sessions and/or working with only a handful of therapists.
- Thinking / concluding *"it isn't possible to overcome depression"* after trying a couple of medications and reading a couple of self-help books.

Personalisation

Personalisation is where you take personal responsibility for things that aren't in your control, that have nothing to do with you, and/or that aren't your fault. For example:

- Blaming yourself and thinking that it's your fault that your partner is upset – even when what's troubling them is actually completely unrelated to you (such as in the case of them having a problem with their boss at work).
- Thinking *"that person must hate me"* if they don't respond to your text message right away – when in reality, the reason they didn't respond right away was because they'd just had an argument with their partner, and needed some time to themselves to recover.
- Thinking *"the reason I was bullied as a child is because I'm a loser / because there's something wrong with me"* – when in reality, there may've been many, *many* other reasons why you were bullied that have absolutely *nothing* to do with you, such as because the bully:
 - Was struggling with their own pain / demons / inner turmoil, which led them to act in the way that they did.
 - They're selfish.

- They have one or more toxic personality traits.
- They lack empathy.
- They had poor impulse control / they didn't know how to regulate their emotions.
- They had low self-esteem, and so they bullied you in order to feel powerful and therefore better about themselves.
- They had a distorted perception of what is "right" and what is "wrong".
- They were jealous of you.
- They were unsatisfied with their own achievements in life, and so they tried to sabotage yours so that you wouldn't "surpass them".
- They craved social approval / they wanted to try to improve their social standing.
- They're sadistic.

Emotional Reasoning

Emotional reasoning is where you reason that because you feel something, then it must be true. However, like we've said, just because you have a negative thought, it does *not* mean that that negative thought is true. In fact, like we explicitly stated, particularly when you have depression, because you'll tend to look at things through a pessimistic, self-critical lens, it's highly possible that your negative thoughts will *not* be true – which is why it's so important to bring awareness to the evidence which disputes and invalidates them.

All-Or-Nothing Thinking

"All-or-nothing" thinking (also known as "black or white" thinking) is where you view something as either one extreme or the other – instead of having a more balanced, accurate perspective. For example:

- Thinking *"I'm not as well prepared for this exam as I'd like to be, so instead of acing it, I'm going to fail"*.
- Thinking *"I know I don't look my best because I only had two minutes to get ready, so I must look terrible"*.
- Thinking *"I made one silly comment in my job interview today, so the whole thing was a complete disaster"*.

Labelling

Labelling involves branding yourself as something based on limited information or evidence. In practice, this could take the form of, for example:

- Labelling yourself as a “failure” after not achieving your goals on a handful of occasions. In this case, while you may be able to say that you failed at achieving your goals on *those particular occasions*, it would be an overgeneralisation to brand yourself as someone who is a “failure”. After all, what’s to say that you can’t achieve your goals in the future?
- Similarly, another example would be labelling yourself as a “failure” due to experiencing a disappointing setback (such as losing your job or your business going bankrupt). In these scenarios, while you may be able to say that you made some mistakes that you wish you hadn’t made and/or that you didn’t perform as well as you had wanted to, it would once again be an overgeneralisation to declare yourself a “failure”. After all, if you can learn from your mistake(s) and figure out how to perform better moving forwards, then in the future, you give yourself a good chance of achieving the success that you want.

Mind-Reading

Mind-reading is where you jump to conclusions about what someone else is thinking. And, when you have depression, this is often done in a way that leads to negative thoughts and speculations about yourself. Common examples of this include:

- Mind-reading when it comes to what someone else thinks of your physical appearance – such as thinking *"they hate my new haircut"* or *"they must notice that I've gained weight"*.
- Mind-reading when it comes to what someone thinks of your character – such as thinking *"I shouldn't have said that – they'll think I'm an idiot now"*, *"they saw me cry so they'll think I'm weak"*, or *"everyone thinks I'm a burden because I'm not as happy as I used to be"*.
- Mind-reading when it comes to the status of a relationship – such as thinking *"we're no longer friends because I arrived late to dinner"*, *"our relationship is in jeopardy because they're in a bad mood"*, or *"I have to make everything perfect for their birthday or else they'll leave me"*.

Fortune Telling

"Fortune-telling" is another example of jumping to conclusions, and takes the form of making a prediction about the future and then assuming it to be true. And, when you have depression, this most commonly involves making a *negative* prediction about the future, such as:

- Thinking *"this therapist / book / strategy, etcetera won't be able to help me"* without ever giving that therapist / book / strategy, etcetera a try.
- Thinking *"I just know that dating apps won't work for me"* without ever using one.

Strategy #5: Modifying Perfectionistic Thinking

Perfectionistic thinking involves holding yourself to unfairly high standards / having unfairly high expectations of yourself, and then thinking negatively about yourself when you don't inevitably meet them. For example:

- Thinking you're an "idiot" anytime you make a mistake. However, *"I shouldn't make mistakes otherwise I'm an idiot"* is an unfairly high standard to hold yourself to / an unfairly high expectation to have of yourself, since all human beings sometimes make mistakes.

- Thinking that you're a "failure" any time you don't achieve a goal that you set out to achieve – including if you only just miss out on achieving that goal. However, *“I should achieve all my goals otherwise I'm a failure”* is also an unfairly high standard to hold yourself to / an unfairly high expectation to have of yourself, since no human being achieves every single goal that they set out to achieve.
- Thinking that you're "not good enough" anytime you receive constructive criticism – even if it's only a little bit of constructive criticism amidst significantly more praise. However, *“I should never receive criticism otherwise it means I'm not good enough”* is once again an unfairly high standard to hold yourself to / an unfairly high expectation to have of yourself, since no human being is perfect, and consequently, no human being is too “good” or “successful” to receive constructive criticism.

If you engage in perfectionistic thinking like so, then while you can no doubt see how it can fuel negative thoughts like *“I'm an idiot”, “I'm a failure”* and/or *“I'm not good enough”*, you may also be reluctant to want to change this way of thinking – because you believe that doing so would involve “lowering your expectations of yourself” or “settling for mediocrity”, for example. However, altering your perfectionistic way of thinking does *not* have to involve “lowering your expectations of yourself” or “settling for mediocrity”, and nor would we want it to – since after all, it can indeed be extremely beneficial to have high expectations of yourself and to continuously pursue excellence! Instead, modifying your perfectionistic way of thinking can involve simply holding yourself to *fairer* standards and having *fairer* expectations of yourself. For example:

- The unfairly high standard / expectation *“I shouldn't make mistakes otherwise I'm an idiot”* could be replaced with the much fairer standard / expectation of *“I will always try my best to not make mistakes, and on the occasions when I inevitably do make a mistake as a result of being human, I will try my best to learn from it so that I don't repeat it again”*.
- The unfairly high standard / expectation *“I should achieve all my goals otherwise I'm a failure”* could be replaced with the much fairer standard / expectation of *“I will always try my best to achieve the goals that I set for myself, and on the occasions when I fall short of*

doing so like all human beings sometimes do, I'll try to learn everything I can from such a setback in order to give myself the best possible chance of achieving that goal the next opportunity I get".

- The unfairly high standard / expectation *"I should never receive criticism, and if I do it means I'm not good enough"* could be replaced with the much fairer standard / expectation of *"I will always pursue excellence and try my absolute best at everything I do, and in the course of doing so, like all human beings, I'm bound to receive constructive criticism from time-to-time. And, anytime this happens, I'll learn what I can from it, and use it to help me continue improving and improving so that I'm even more capable of achieving excellence moving forwards"*.

As you can see, in each of these examples, modifying your perfectionistic thinking did *not* involve "lowering your expectations of yourself" or "settling for mediocrity" – rather, it just involved being much more fair, reasonable and compassionate with yourself. And, as a result of being much more fair, reasonable and compassionate with yourself, you're much less likely to buy into negative thoughts such as *"I'm an idiot", "I'm a failure" and/or "I'm not good enough"*.

Strategy #6: Labelling Your Negative Thoughts

The sixth strategy that we'd like to share with you to help you cope with and overcome your negative thoughts is *labelling* them⁵¹. This is a common strategy in dialectical behaviour therapy⁵² – which is a specialised subset of cognitive behavioural therapy – and below, we show you a simple way that you can practice it.

Labelling Your Negative Thoughts

To practice this strategy, begin by closing your eyes, and taking a few slow, deep breaths. Then, for each of the negative thoughts that you are experiencing, label each thought as just that – *a thought*.

For example, let's say that you're having the negative thoughts "I can't do anything right" and "I'm such a loser". In this case, try repeating to yourself:

"I'm having the thought that I can't do anything right ... I'm having the thought that I'm a loser ..."

Or, *"the thought that 'I can't do anything right' has popped into my head ... and the thought that 'I'm a loser' has also popped into my head".*

This strategy of labelling your negative thoughts like so can help you to observe them as exactly what are they – *thoughts* – as opposed to *facts*. And, when you can see that your thoughts are just thoughts and nothing more, you're much less likely to buy into them so much, and as a result, they'll likely lose some of their power over you.

Strategy #7: Practicing Thought Defusion

This is a mindfulness technique which is also popular in dialectical behaviour therapy⁵³, and one that you can use to help prevent yourself from buying into your negative thoughts.

For this strategy, start by closing your eyes, taking a few deep breaths, and then, try to imagine your negative thoughts as something that's harmlessly drifting away from you. For example:

- Imagine that each of your negative thoughts are a balloon, floating away in the sky.
- Imagine that you're standing at the top of a hill or a sloping street, and that your negative thoughts are tennis balls rolling down it.
- Imagine that you're at the beach, and that your negative thoughts are birds flying by in the distance.
- Imagine yourself sitting on a street-side bench, and that your negative thoughts are cars passing by in front of you.

If you prefer another form of imagery that captures your thoughts coming and going like so, then of course, you're most welcome to use that. Either way, just visualise your negative thoughts as

being outside of your head, floating away, rolling away, passing you by, etcetera, without trying to analyse them, without trying to judge them, without trying to suppress them, without trying to overthink them and without trying to buy into them.

Strategy #8: Giving A Stronger Voice To Your “Angel” To Help Quieten Your “Devil”

Have you ever seen those cartoons where a character has an imaginary “angel” on one shoulder trying to influence them in a positive way, and an imaginary “devil” on the other shoulder trying to influence them in a negative way? Well, for some people, it can be helpful to think of the “devil on their shoulder” as being responsible for the negative, self-critical things they tell themselves, and the “angel on their shoulder” being responsible for rational, healthy self-talk⁵⁴. This can be because:

1. Viewing things in this way can help remind you that your negative thoughts are indeed just negative *thoughts* which are being told to you by the “devil on your shoulder” – as opposed to being facts that are actually true.
2. Secondly, viewing things in this way can also help remind you to give a stronger voice to the “angel on your shoulder” – which all too often, is likely being drowned out by the “devil on your shoulder”.

Appendix N: How To Practice Gratitude When You're In The Rain Zone

In Appendix H, we looked at some of the most effective ways you can practice gratitude when you're in the Storm Zone. And, in this Appendix, we're going to look at some of the most effective ways you can practice gratitude when you're in the "Rain Zone" – i.e. when your depressive symptoms are only moderately intense.

How To Practice Gratitude When You're In The Rain Zone

To cultivate gratitude when you're in the Rain Zone, we encourage you to do two things in particular:

1. Firstly, Continue Practicing The Gratitude Exercises That You Found Helpful When You Were In The Storm Zone

The reason we encouraged you to try the gratitude exercises that we shared with you in Appendix H when you're in the Storm Zone is because they're generally possible to do even with a low ability to function – *not* because the Storm Zone is the *only* time when they're effective. In other words, writing a list of things you're grateful for, keeping a gratitude journal, keeping a gratitude jar, gratefully recalling pleasant memories and making a gratitude collage can really help you to cultivate gratitude in the Rain Zone as well – so if you're finding these exercises helpful, then keep on doing them! Additionally, when you're in the Rain Zone, you can also expand their scope a little bit, and therefore use these exercises to cultivate even more gratitude. In particular, because your depressive symptoms are less severe in the Rain Zone and you have a higher ability to function, you'll in all likelihood be able to connect to more things to feel grateful for than you were able to when you were in the Storm Zone. For example, if you spent the whole day inside while you were in the Storm Zone because you didn't have the energy to leave the house, then you probably wouldn't have been able to muster much gratitude for the blue-skyed, sunny weather outside,

let's say. However, when you're in the Rain Zone and feel up to going for a walk outside, then this beautiful weather is something you can indeed feel grateful for. In this way, doing the exercises that we mentioned in Appendix H when you're in the Rain Zone will likely result in you cultivating even more gratitude than was the case when you were in the Storm Zone, and will therefore likely have an even more positive effect on you.

2. Secondly, In The Rain Zone, You'll Also Find Some Additional Gratitude Exercises Helpful As Well!

After all, due to having a higher ability to function in the Rain Zone than you had in the Storm Zone, some really powerful gratitude exercises that were likely beyond your capacity then will in all likelihood be doable now. These new exercises will help you to cultivate even more gratitude, and to cultivate that gratitude on a deeper level than you were able to do previously.

On that note, we'd now like to share with you a handful of new gratitude exercises that we think you'll find really, really helpful when you're in the Rain Zone!

1. Cognitive Reframing To Turn Negative Thoughts Into Positive Thoughts

An extremely powerful way to build gratitude is to try to reframe negative thoughts which fuel depression into more positive thoughts which uplift you. In order to do this, a helpful starting point is to ask yourself a question that's rooted in cognitive behavioural therapy⁵⁵:

Is there a more positive, grateful way that I could be viewing the situation or circumstance that I'm in?

To see how this strategy can help you cultivate gratitude, let's look at the example of the thought *"it's so unfair how _____ really hurt and betrayed me – I feel so miserable"*.

However, a more positive, grateful thought that this one could be reframed into may be: *"I'm really fortunate that _____ is now out of my life; that my awful experience with them has taught*

me a LOT about relationships; and that moving forwards, I'll be able to use this newfound wisdom and experience to have much healthier, happier relationships in the future".

Try It Yourself!

1. To cultivate more gratitude, start by writing down each of the negative- and/or depression-fuelling thoughts you're currently experiencing.
2. For each of your negative- and/or depression-fuelling thoughts, ask yourself: *Is there a more positive, grateful way that I could be viewing the situation or circumstance that I'm in?*
3. Then, try to reframe your negative- and/or depression-fuelling thoughts into more positive, grateful thoughts in the same way we showed you in the example above.

2. Make A "Different Kind Of Comparison" To Avoid Negatively Comparing Yourself To Other People

A contributing factor to a lot of people's depression is feeling miserable, unfulfilled or jealous as a result of constantly thinking about what they *don't* have, instead of feeling grateful for what they *do* have. This problem is often further exacerbated by social media, which leads many people to negatively compare their life with others', and become dissatisfied when they feel as if their own doesn't measure up. So, in order to overcome this problem, rather than negatively comparing your life to someone else's and/or focusing on what that person has that you don't, we encourage you to make a different kind of comparison – where (if it isn't too triggering for you) you instead think about the things you *do* have in your life, and imagine what it would be like to *not* have those things. For instance:

- To continue with our social media example, if you're on social media, then you presumably have either a smartphone, a laptop, and/or a tablet. Now, ask yourself: *what would life be like if I wasn't lucky enough to have these things? How would it make me feel to not have*

access to a smartphone, a laptop or a tablet – in the same way that so many other people in the world don't?

- You probably have access to food and water, as well as a comfortable place to sleep at night. *Now, ask yourself: what would life be like if I wasn't lucky enough to have these things? How would it make me feel?*
- Now think about someone you love – like your mum, your partner, or your children for example – and if it isn't too triggering for you, think about: *what would my life be like if I wasn't lucky enough to have them in it?*

We encourage you to ask yourself this question for everything in your life that you value – both the “big” things (such as your family, the roof over your head, and your job, for example), and also the “small” things (such as your favourite television series, your favourite sports team, and your favourite food, for example). We're guessing that if you really think about what your life would be like without any of these things you value, that you'll find yourself feeling much more uplifted, positive, and fortunate for the fact that you do have them – as opposed to feeling dissatisfied, jealous and unfortunate when you focus on what you don't have and negatively compare your life with somebody else's.

Additionally, if you'd like to cultivate even more gratitude for some of the things you have, then try abstaining from them for a while. For example, try going a day without using your mobile phone, a week without watching television, or a month without eating your favourite food. This period of abstinence will really highlight just how lucky you are to have those things in your life, and then when you do get them back, you're likely to feel more appreciative and grateful for them than ever!

3. Recall The Recent Times When You've Been Gifted An Act Of Kindness

It's extremely worthwhile to cultivate gratitude for your loved ones, which can help ensure that you don't take them for granted. And, when you're in the Rain Zone, one way that we think you'll

find effective as well as commensurate with your moderate ability to function is to make a note of all the recent times when your loved ones have gifted you an act of kindness. For example:

- When your partner cooked you your favourite meal to try to give you a boost;
- When your sibling texted you an inspiring, uplifting quote to try to give you some encouragement;
- When your friend let you vent to them about how difficult things have been lately;
- When your colleague bought you a coffee on the way to work;
- When your mum came over to babysit the kids so that you could have a much-needed rest.

Having gratitude for all the acts of kindness you've been gifted is really good for your relationships, and – just like with all gratitude exercises – it's also good for your mood as well.

4. Cultivating Gratitude For Your Surroundings

When it comes to this particular exercise, you can do it at any time, but it's particularly effective when you're out and about in nature, or when you're witnessing something beautiful like a sunset, the splendour of a rainbow, or the golden leaves of a tree during autumn, for example. Moments like these don't come around every minute, so to appreciate them in all their beauty and give your spirits a lift, we encourage you to try the following mindfulness exercise: either sitting down somewhere comfortable or walking at a slow, leisurely pace, take a few deep, soothing breaths, and then gradually look for sights that appeal to your eyes. If you're at the beach for example, one might be the gentle breaking of waves on the shore. If you're in a park, it might be the golden, gorgeous autumn leaves that we mentioned before.

Then, when you've found something beautiful to focus your sight on, bring awareness to your other senses as well. For example, what do you smell? Saltwater? Freshly-cut grass? Flowers?

What do you hear? Seagulls chirping? The sound of fallen leaves crunching beneath your shoes?

Anytime you catch your mind wandering off, just bring it back to the lovely scenery around you, and notice how pleasant it is for your senses. Then, simply bask in this beauty for as long as you'd like to.

5. Cultivating Gratitude For The "Good" In The World

This exercise can be helpful if you feel misery, anger, frustration and/or hopelessness for example about the state of the world, or about some of the upsetting or devastating things that are taking place within it – such as climate change, war, corruption or poverty, for example. When situations such as these are triggering your depression, we encourage you to also try to cultivate some gratitude for the world as well, by:

1. Trying to bring awareness to all of the positive change that has taken place over time – for example, compared to even the relatively recent past, there have been enormous medical advancements, extreme poverty is falling, life expectancy is increasing, child labour is on the decline, literacy rates are rising, and more people live in a democracy than ever before. It can be worthwhile remembering this progress, because even though the world is far from perfect and there are still a *lot* of areas in which we need to improve, having gratitude for the progress that we've made can help you to feel hopeful and optimistic that we can keep on improving, and gradually make the world a better and better place to live.
2. Even when bad things happen, try to bring awareness to any positive consequences that may potentially come out of them. This is by no means designed to diminish the pain or the suffering caused by those bad things in question, or to try to pretend that those bad things aren't actually bad. Rather, it's just about trying to find any "silver lining" that may exist – which can make you feel more hopeful and positive about the future than you otherwise would. In order to do this, some relevant questions to ask yourself include:
 - a. What positive change may come out of this situation?
 - b. How may it have altered people's attitudes in a positive way?

- c. How may this bad situation prevent even worse situations from occurring in the future?
- 3. Lastly, try to bring awareness to- and cultivate gratitude for the people and organisations that are bringing about positive change in the world. An effective way of doing this is to make a list of the people and organisations you admire that are bringing about positive change, and to read over this list from time-to-time to remind yourself that there are indeed a lot of good humans out there who are fighting the good fight.

Appendix O: Mindfulness

Like we talked about in Chapter 3, practicing mindfulness can help you cope with depression when you're in the Rain Zone. So, in this Appendix, we're going to share with you:

1. Firstly, what mindfulness is, and the reasons why it can be so beneficial – particularly when you're fighting depression.
2. Secondly, we'll break down some of the most common myths surrounding mindfulness – which, unless deconstructed, can hold you back from ever practicing mindfulness.
3. Lastly, we'll share with you a variety of mindfulness exercises in an easy-to-understand, step-by-step way – so that you can start implementing them right away, and over time, start reaping some of mindfulness's many benefits.

Part 1: Understanding Why Mindfulness Can Be So Helpful

Mindfulness – in case you're not sure – is all about *being in the present moment without judgment*.

In particular, this can take the form of:

- Being mindful, without judgment, of the thoughts you're thinking in the present moment;
- Being mindful, without judgment, of the emotions you're feeling in the present moment;
- Being mindful, without judgment, of the physical sensations in your body in the present moment;
- Being mindful, without judgment, of the experience you're having in the present moment.

Now, while living in the present moment without judgment like so may not appear to be something that could be particularly beneficial to you, mindfulness has been shown to lead to reduced symptoms of depression⁵⁶; reduced probability of having another major depressive episode⁵⁷; reduced symptoms of anxiety⁵⁸; reduced symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)⁵⁹; improved ability to manage symptoms of bipolar disorder (including helping to prevent a manic or

hypomanic episode from taking place)⁶⁰; decreased likelihood of resorting to binge eating and other self-sabotaging behaviours⁶¹; improved quality of sleep⁶²; higher relationship satisfaction⁶³; reduced severity of chronic pain⁶⁴; improved ability to cope with difficult and challenging situations and experiences⁶⁵; and more peace, contentment and enjoyment in everyday life⁶⁶. And, to help you understand why, let's now talk about some of the reasons why mindfulness can be so helpful!

Firstly, mindfulness can help prevent you from getting overly attached to (and therefore impacted by) intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts⁶⁷

As you can likely relate to, if you struggle with depression, anxiety, PTSD and/or another mental health issue or illness, it's extremely common to buy into your intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts and be convinced that they're true. However, when you're mindfully aware of the thoughts you're thinking in the present moment, then it's much easier to see that your thoughts are indeed just that – *thoughts* (which may not be true) – as opposed to *facts* (which are by definition true). And, the more you're able to notice and observe your intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts as being indeed just thoughts that your mind is generating, the more you'll be able to detach yourself from them, and the less and less power they'll be able to have over you.

Mindfulness can help you prevent intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts from creeping in, and help you stop engaging in rumination about the past⁶⁸

Remember, mindfulness is all about anchoring yourself to the present moment, and focusing on nothing more than the here and now. And, while you may wonder how this can help you prevent and cope with your negative and worrying thoughts, rumination and flashbacks, there are multiple reasons why it can!

Firstly, when you're living in the present moment, then by definition, you're experiencing life as it is *right now*. Therefore (also by definition):

- You aren't ruminating about the past (which among other things, can fuel depression)⁶⁹;

- You aren't worrying about the future (which among other things, can fuel anxiety)⁷⁰;
- You aren't having negative thoughts about something unrelated to the experience you're presently having – such as in the example of being on vacation, but being unable to enjoy it because you're being filled with negative thoughts about how bad your “real life” is.

Mindfulness can help you cope with nightmares and flashbacks⁷¹

As you may be able to relate to, it's extremely common for people with PTSD and other mental health issues and illnesses to struggle with nightmares and/or flashbacks. In each of these occurrences, your brain is either conjuring up distressing experiences that don't actually exist (often the case with nightmares), or returning to distressing experiences from the past (which is the case with flashbacks, and can also be the case with nightmares as well). If you can relate, then mindfulness can help you to cope by pulling you out of your imagination / out of the past, and back into the present where you are safe.

Mindfulness can help you control your emotions⁷²

Another powerful impact of mindfulness is that it can help you control, manage and cope with difficult, challenging, painful emotions – such as overwhelm, anger, stress, fear, panic and misery, for example. In particular, we talk about some of the reasons for this below.

- Firstly, as you'll soon see, as opposed to ignoring or suppressing your present moment emotions, mindfulness involves noticing them, paying attention to them, and sitting with them. And, the more experience you get doing this, the better you'll be able to tolerate and manage your difficult, challenging, painful emotions, and the less and less power they'll have to overwhelm you. In fact, as Ellen Astrachan-Fletcher and Michael Maslar say in their book *The Dialectical Behavior Therapy Skills Workbook for Bulimia*, “from a mindfulness perspective, much of the misery that people experience in life comes from not knowing that emotional pain is tolerable”⁷³.

- Secondly, mindfulness leads to you being more aware of your emotions, which can lead to you then engaging in other coping strategies in order to mitigate the intensity of difficult, challenging, and/or painful emotions (as opposed to having them grow and grow and therefore become more and more unmanageable).
- Thirdly, as you'll soon see, mindfulness can help you separate your experiences from the judgments you have about them (remember our definition of mindfulness: being in the present moment without judgment). And, since it's so often your *judgments* about your experiences – as opposed to those experiences themselves – which fuels your emotions, then this mindfulness skill can help you to better control your emotions.
- Fourthly, like we've said, mindfulness is predicated on focusing, wholly and completely, on the present moment. And, when you're feeling overwhelmed and stressed out because there's a hundred other tasks that you feel like you need to attend to in addition to the one task that you're presently trying to work on, then this skill can be extremely helpful at keeping you solely focused on the present task at hand, and thereby preventing you from getting distracted, overwhelmed and stressed out by everything else.

Mindfulness helps prevent you from engaging in self-sabotaging behaviours and acting impulsively in ways you'll later regret⁷⁴

When you're struggling with difficult, challenging, painful emotions, then it's common to engage in self-sabotaging behaviours and to act impulsively in ways that you'll later regret. Some examples include:

- Binge eating;
- Having angry outbursts or lashing out at people;
- Substance abuse;
- Spending money in ways you can't afford;

- Self-harm.

However, mindfulness can help prevent you from engaging in behaviours such as these, because:

- Like we've talked about, mindfulness can help you prevent and cope with intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts; cope with flashbacks and nightmares; and manage difficult, challenging, painful emotions – all of which will help reduce your urge to engage in self-sabotaging and impulsive behaviours that you'll later regret.
- When you're engaging in self-sabotaging behaviours and acting impulsively in ways you'll later regret, you're usually acting based purely on your *emotions*. However, as you'll soon learn, practicing mindfulness can lead to you being in a state known as *wise mind*⁷⁵ – which is a state where you're acting and making decisions not just based purely on your *emotions*, but also based on *rational thought*. And, as a result, when you're in “wise mind”, you're much, much less likely to engage in self-sabotaging and impulsive behaviours that you'll later regret.

Mindfulness helps you get more enjoyment out of positive experiences⁷⁶

When your mind is wholly focused on an enjoyable experience, then that enjoyable experience isn't being ruined by, for example, anxious thoughts about the future, negative thoughts about the past, the overwhelm you're experiencing at work, or anything else that isn't related to the here and now.

Mindfulness helps you to focus and concentrate better⁷⁷, and also to remember things⁷⁸

Mindfulness helps you to focus and concentrate better because, like we've said, mindfulness involves centring your attention on whatever you're doing in the present moment – which can prevent you from becoming distracting by all the thoughts, emotions, etcetera that aren't part of the present moment. Furthermore, centring your attention on the present moment can also help with the memory difficulties that can be associated with depression, bipolar disorder and other

mental health issues – since your mind is much more focused on what you’re doing, and much less clouded by intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts, for example.

Part 2: Busting Some Of The Widespread Myths About Mindfulness

Unfortunately, there are a variety of myths surrounding the practice of mindfulness, which often serve to discourage people who could benefit from it from ever giving it a try. So, before sharing some helpful mindfulness practices with you, let’s bust some of its most common myths.

MYTH: “Mindfulness takes up a lot of time”

This myth prevents many people from ever dipping their toes into mindfulness, because they don’t believe that they’ll ever have time for it. However, while mindfulness can indeed be practiced for as long as you want to, even a few minutes of mindfulness can still be beneficial⁷⁹.

For example, if you were mindfully focused on the conversation throughout the five minutes when you called your partner during your lunch hour, then it likely would’ve resulted in you enjoying the interaction much more than you otherwise would have, and to therefore having a positive effect on your mood. However, if you weren’t mindfully focused on the conversation throughout its five minute duration and were instead distracted by the overwhelm you felt at work and the worrying thoughts you had about the meeting with your boss later that afternoon, then, for example:

- You may’ve come across to your partner as disengaged in what they were saying – which may’ve led to them feeling hurt and lonely.
- You’ve would’ve been more likely to snap at your partner when they didn’t deserve it – which would’ve likely also led to them feeling hurt, and to you perhaps having your overwhelm and stress compounded with feelings of shame and regret, as well as negative thoughts like *“I’m such a bad partner”*.

To give you another example, let’s say that you have a flashback to a traumatic experience, and are therefore feeling scared and panicked as a result. In this instance, you could spend a few

minutes doing the 5-4-3-2-1 mindfulness exercise which we'll share with you shortly, that involves bringing to your awareness five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. This only takes a few minutes like we said, but it can be extremely helpful at pulling you out of that traumatic past experience, and back into the safety of the present moment.

MYTH: “Mindfulness requires closing your eyes and sitting cross-legging at a beach, at a park, in your bed, etcetera”

As we alluded to in the above two examples – and as we'll demonstrate shortly when we share with you various strategies to help you practice mindfulness – you can practice mindfulness anywhere, at any time. After all, mindfulness is simply being, without judgment, in the present moment – remember? And, as a result, you can practice mindfulness when you, for example, eat, shower, walk, cook, read, work, talk to someone or do anything else – just by focusing, without judgment, on whatever you happen to be doing in that moment.

MYTH: “Mindfulness is all about relaxing and feeling more at peace”

While mindfulness can indeed result in you feeling more relaxed and at peace – as well as lead to many other benefits like we've mentioned – mindfulness is about, without judgment, anchoring yourself in the present moment. Like we've also mentioned, if you happen to be experiencing painful emotions in the present moment, then mindfulness can involve sitting with the painful emotions that you happen to be feeling. And, while this can help you to better tolerate and manage them in the long-run, in the present moment, sitting with painful emotions can indeed feel like the very opposite of “relaxing”.

MYTH: “In order to practice mindfulness, you need to be religious”

While some religions promote mindfulness, you certainly don't have to be religious in order to practice mindfulness. After all, like we've repeated multiple times now, mindfulness simply

involves being, without judgment, in the present moment – which is something that absolutely anyone can do!

Part 3: Exercises You Can Practice To Become More Mindful

So thus far, we've talked in depth about the benefits of mindfulness, and we've also busted some of the most common myths about mindfulness that can hold you back from practicing it. Now, we're going to share with you nine exercises that you can practice to become, without judgment, more mindful of the present moment – including the thoughts you're thinking, the emotions you're feeling, the physical sensations in your body, and the experience you're having. We believe you'll find these exercises extremely helpful – however, as you learn about and practice these exercises, please bear in mind that:

- When you practice mindfulness – particularly when you're just starting out – it's common for your mind to wander, and for you to therefore lose touch with the present moment. If this happens, then please don't worry, conclude that you are “bad” at mindfulness, or decide that it doesn't work. Instead, remind yourself that your mind wandering is perfectly natural, and any time you notice it happening, simply refocus your attention back to the present moment. The more you practice doing this, the more you'll be training your mind to stay focused on the present – and as a result, you'll find that your mind will wander less and less frequently (or, put another way, you'll find it easier and easier to stay anchored to the present). In this way, “being mindful” is a skill like anything else, and the more you're able to practice and perfect it, the more benefits you'll be able to reap.
- Although we just said this, it's worth mentioning again that it's important to practice! The more you practice mindfulness, the more and more you will benefit from it.

And, with that being said, let's now share our first mindfulness strategy with you: the 5-4-3-2-1 technique!

The 5-4-3-2-1 Mindfulness Technique

The first mindfulness exercise we'd like to share with you only takes a few minutes, and you can begin it by sitting down or lying somewhere comfortable, and simply taking a few deep breaths ... breathing in through your nose ... and then out through your mouth ... in through your nose ... and then out through your mouth. Then, while you continue to do so, gradually try to make yourself aware of:

- **5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE:** For example, the table in front of you, the nice painting on the wall, the fridge magnet you bought on vacation, the clear blue sky outside, and the leafy green tree across the road.
- **4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL:** Once you've gotten in touch with five things you can see, then – while you continue breathing in through your nose, and out through your mouth – try to bring awareness to four things you can feel. For example, the chair that's holding up your weight, your clothes against your legs, the soft carpet beneath your feet, or a loose strand of hair brushing against your face.
- **3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR:** Next, bring awareness to three things you can hear. For example, the tik-tok of a clock, a bird chirping outside, or the sound of your children playing in the living room.
- **2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL:** Then, try to get in touch with two things you can smell. If you try but don't find yourself able to smell anything, then try to summon up your two favourite smells. For example, the scent of freshly cut grass, or the aroma of a steaming mug of hot chocolate.
- **1 THING YOU CAN TASTE:** Lastly, try to be mindful of one thing you can taste (or imagine yourself tasting).

Like we said, this exercise only takes a few minutes, but it's really effective at grounding you in the present moment. In fact, it's such a helpful mindfulness strategy that when The Depression Project posted it on its Facebook page, it went viral, and was shared over 1.5 *million* times!

Mindfulness During Simple, Everyday Activities

A really great time to practice mindfulness is when you're doing simple, everyday activities. To see how you can do this in practice, let's have a look at two different examples!

- **Mindful Eating**

Once you've found a peaceful place to sit, set your meal in front of you. Before you take your first bite, take a moment to think about the food you're going to eat. Focus on the way your food looks. What are its colours? What shapes does it take? Focus on the way your food smells. How would you describe it? Focus on the way your food feels. What kind of texture does it have? Is it soft? Is it solid? If it's a sandwich for example, how does it feel to hold it? If it's soup, how does it feel to lift up a spoonful? Finally, focus on the way it will taste. As you bring the first bite towards your mouth, anticipate it. How does your body react? What sensations do you feel? Where do you feel them? Next, take your first bite. Chew your food slowly. What is its temperature like? What flavours stand out to you? What is your favourite aspect of your food? Also, notice how it stimulates your other senses and body parts. For example, if it's crunchy, you might feel it in your ears. If it's spicy, you might feel it on your lips. Then, notice how the texture of your food changes as you chew it, and finally, concentrate on the sensation of swallowing. How does it feel going down your throat? Eat each and every bite this way — mindfully — until you finish your meal.

- **Mindful Showering**

Just like with mindful eating, when you're having a shower, try to be as present in the moment as possible. Start by focusing on how the water feels against your skin. Is it warm or cool? How about the water pressure? Is it strong, gentle, or somewhere in between? What does the soap feel like? Is it smooth or gritty? Does it lather when it makes contact with your body? How does your shampoo smell? And, how does it make you feel? For example, as you massage it into your scalp, do you begin to feel more wakeful? Or, does it make you sleepy? Just as with mindful eating, take your time with this exercise. Clean yourself thoroughly and savour the experience. Any time you catch your mind wandering, just return your thoughts to the present moment in the shower, and refocus on the water hitting your body, the soap gliding over your skin, and the other ways that

your five senses are being stimulated. Do this for the entire duration of your shower before towelling yourself off.

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Like we said before, you can practice mindfulness in this way with practically any of the simple tasks you do each day – such as when you’re washing the dishes, brushing your teeth or cooking dinner, for example. All you need to do is focus wholly on the task at hand, and bring awareness to how it’s engaging each of your senses.

The Body Scan

This mindfulness exercise will help you become more in touch with the physical sensations that can be felt in your body, and is one that you might find particularly convenient to do when you’re lying on your back in bed in preparation to sleep. In saying that, though, you can of course do this exercise at any time of the day, and if you prefer, you can also do it sitting up as opposed to lying down.

Now, to begin with, sit or lie somewhere comfortable, close your eyes, and then take a few long, deep, soothing breaths. Then, bring awareness to your feet, and to any physical sensations you can feel there. For example, if you’re lying down, can you feel the comfortable contact of your heels on the bed? If you’re sitting up, can you feel the contact of your soles on the floor? What about your toes and the tops of your feet? Can you feel any tingling sensations?

Next, move your awareness up your body to your legs. Do you notice any physical sensations in your ankles? Are they in contact with anything? Can you notice any tingling? How about your calves – can you feel any physical sensations around that area? Perhaps a little bit of muscle tension or a little bit of an ache and some fatigue if you’ve recently done a lot of walking? And, what about your thighs? What physical sensations do you notice there?

Next, move your awareness to your bottom, and continue scanning your body like so until you’ve reached your scalp – just noticing any physical sensations that are present along the way. If you can’t notice any physical sensations that are present for various body parts, then that’s OK – after

all, the goal is not to feel as many physical sensations as possible, but rather, just to become more mindful of whatever physical sensations happen to be present.

Mindful Listening

In the same way that you can eat mindfully, shower mindfully, and do other simple, everyday tasks mindfully, it's also possible to listen mindfully when you're having a conversation with someone. In fact, mindful listening can be particularly beneficial, because if you're not focusing on what someone you're speaking to is saying – for example, because you're only focusing on what you want to tell them or because you're distracted by something else that's unrelated – then it can result in misunderstandings, and ultimately lead to conflict, hurt feelings, and other negative consequences. So, when you're talking to someone, really try to listen mindfully, by centring all of your focus on that person and what they are saying.

Labelling Your Intrusive, Negative And/Or Worrying Thoughts

To practice this mindfulness strategy, begin by closing your eyes, and taking a few slow, deep breaths. Then, for each of the intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts that you are experiencing, label each thought as just that – a *thought*.

For example, let's say that you're having the negative thoughts “*I can't do anything right*” and “*I'm such a failure*”. In this case, try repeating to yourself:

“I'm having the thought that I can't do anything right ... I'm having the thought that I'm a failure ...”

Or, *“the thought that 'I can't do anything right' has popped into my head ... and the thought that 'I'm a failure' has also popped into my head”.*

This strategy of labelling your intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts like so can help you to observe them as exactly what are they – *thoughts* – as opposed to *facts*. And, like we mentioned earlier, when you can see that your thoughts are just thoughts and nothing more, you're much

less likely to buy into them so much, and as a result, they'll likely lose some of their power over you.

Thought Defusion

This is another mindfulness technique you can use to prevent yourself from buying into intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts. For this one, once again close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and then, try to imagine your thoughts as something that's harmlessly drifting away from you. For example:

- Imagine that each of your distressing thoughts are a balloon, floating away in the sky.
- Imagine that you're standing at the top of a hill or a sloping street, and that your thoughts are tennis balls rolling down it.
- Imagine that you're at the beach, and that your thoughts are birds flying by in the distance.
- Imagine yourself sitting on a street-side bench, and that your thoughts are cars passing by in front of you.

If you prefer another form of imagery that captures your thoughts coming and going like so, then of course, you're most welcome to use that. Either way, just visualise your thoughts as being outside of your head, floating away, rolling away, passing you by, etcetera, without trying to analyse them, without trying to judge them, without trying to suppress them, and without trying to change them.

Judgment Defusion

Just like intrusive, negative and/or worrying thoughts can fuel depression, anxiety, anger and a range of other issues, so can judgments. For example:

- Judging other people commonly leads to feelings of anger⁸⁰ (such as if you think "*that person who cut me off on the highway is such an a**hole!*").

- Judging yourself can contribute to depression⁸¹ (such as if you think “*I’m so pathetic for giving in to my urges and binge eating*”, or “*I’m so lazy for spending all day in bed*”).
- Judging an experience can fuel anxiety and panic (such as when you think “*this is such a disaster!*”).

However, when it comes to mindfulness, there is no place for judgments. After all, mindfulness is about being in the present moment with your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations and the experience you’re having – *whatever they happen to be*. By its very nature, therefore, mindfulness is nonjudgmental⁸². Furthermore, if you’ve lost yourself in judging someone else, judging yourself, or judging an experience, then you’re no longer anchored in the present moment⁸³. To come full circle now, this is why at the beginning of this Appendix, we defined mindfulness as “being in the present moment *without judgment*”.

With all of that being said, an extremely beneficial mindfulness exercise is *judgment defusion*. This is the same as the thought defusion exercise that we just showed you, but instead of imagining your thoughts floating away, rolling away or passing you by, etcetera, you imagine your judgments doing so.

Mindfully Sitting With Your Emotions

To practice this exercise, once again get yourself comfortable, close your eyes, and take a few slow, deep breaths. Then, focus your attention on how you feel right now, starting with considering whether overall, you feel “good”, “bad” or somewhere in the middle. Then, once you’re aware and in tune with how you feel in general, go deeper, and try to pinpoint the specific emotions you feel. For example:

- Do you feel anger?
- Do you feel fear?
- Do you feel content?

- Do you feel worry?
- Do you feel excitement?
- Do you feel unease?
- Do you feel shame?
- Do you feel panic?
- Do you feel calm?
- Do you feel envy?
- Do you feel heartache?
- Do you feel resilient?
- Do you feel sadness?
- Do you feel anticipation?
- Do you feel disappointed?
- Do you feel upset?
- Do you feel confident?
- Do you feel determined?

Really try to pinpoint the specific emotions you feel, and once you've done so, observe them without judgment, without trying to suppress them, and without trying to change them. As you do so, it's common to find that your emotions are similar to waves at the beach – rising in magnitude, reaching a peak, and then decreasing⁸⁴. Try to see this cycle through for the emotions you're feeling, observing where they're at on the wave until they diminish. Then, once they've done so, bring this exercise to a close by breathing deeply to help you relax, focusing all of your attention on each breath as you do so.

Just like when it came to your thoughts and judgments, practicing sitting with your emotions like this is really useful – because the more you do so, the more you’ll likely find that you’re able to tolerate and control them, and the less and less power they’ll have to overwhelm you⁸⁵.

Being Mindful Of Whether You’re In “Wise Mind” Or “Emotion Mind”

In dialectical behaviour therapy, you can be said to be in “emotion mind” when you’re thinking and making decisions based purely on how you feel⁸⁶ – i.e. on your emotions. And, as you can likely relate to, when you’re thinking and acting based purely on intense, overwhelming emotions, it can result in your thoughts becoming distorted and irrational, and lead to you making unhealthy decisions that you’ll later regret.

On the other hand, you can be said to be in “wise mind” when you’re thinking and making decisions based not just on your emotions, but also on rational thinking⁸⁷. Or, to put it another way, “wise mind” is the balance between “emotion mind” and “reasonable mind”. In this way, when you’re in “wise mind”, you’re much more likely to act in your own best interests, and to make healthy decisions that benefit your life⁸⁸.

For the above reasons, it can be extremely beneficial to be mindful of whether you’re in “wise mind” or “emotion mind” – particularly when you’re making decisions. Now, in order to know whether you’re in “wise mind” or “emotion mind”, try asking yourself the following questions:

- *How strong are my emotions right now?* If your emotions are intense and overwhelming, then it’s a strong sign that you’re in “emotion mind”. When you’re in “wise mind”, they’ll feel much more manageable and controllable.
- *Am I taking into account the facts of the situation?* If you’re not, then it’s another sign that you’re in “emotion mind”, because when you’re in “wise mind”, then by definition, you have a balance between your emotions and rational thoughts. For example, in “emotion mind”, you may think *“I snapped at my daughter this morning, so that means I’m a terrible parent”*. However, in “wise mind”, you would weigh your guilt about snapping at your daughter with the facts of this situation – such as, for example, the fact that throughout

the previous week you've helped your daughter with her homework, cooked her favourite dinner and taken her and her friends to the movies (all of which proves that you're actually a very good parent); and also the fact that no parent can act perfectly all of the time, and that acting imperfectly at times does *not* make you a terrible parent. Therefore, in "wise mind", while you may still feel guilty for snapping at your daughter and regret at having done so, you wouldn't feel as if you're a "terrible parent", since this doesn't match the situation's facts.

- *Is my mind often changing about a particular decision?* If you're thinking about making a decision and your mind is constantly changing about what to do, then it's a sign that you're in "emotion mind" – since it may be your fluctuating emotions that are causing your mind to go back and forth on what to do. However, if you've been sitting with a decision for a while and your mind has remained made up about what to do, then it's a sign that that decision is a product of "wise mind".
- *Have I weighed the pros and the cons of this particular decision?* Weighing the pros and the cons of a decision before acting can help lead you out of "emotion mind" and into "wise mind".

Appendix P: Journalling When You're In The Rain Zone

Like we mentioned in Chapter 3, journalling can be really beneficial when you're in the Rain Zone, because it can help you to:

- Get a cathartic release;
- Gain some clarity over your thoughts, feelings and everything you're going through;
- Regulate your emotions and better cope with depression.

On that note, below are some journal prompts you may find helpful to consider and then write out your response to when you're in the Rain Zone.

- *What symptoms of depression am I experiencing right now?*
- *If my best friend was in my present circumstance, what would I say to encourage them, empower them and make them feel better?*
- *In what ways is depression currently making it difficult for me to function? Consequently, what tasks are now much more challenging than they would otherwise be (for example, working, parenting, doing the chores, etcetera)?*
- *While battling depression, what challenging tasks have I done recently that I ought to give myself a pat on the back for and be proud of (for example, going to work, parenting, and/or doing the chores – all of which can be really, really difficult while struggling with depression)?*
- *What could I do right now to feel more in control of my depression and better cope with its symptoms?*
- *What negative thoughts am I currently experiencing? And, what is the evidence to suggest that they're not actually true?*

- *In what ways could depression currently be distorting my perception of things, and causing me to view them in a more negative, pessimistic and/or self-critical way than I otherwise would? What's a more positive, optimistic and compassionate way of viewing things instead?*
- *On a scale of 1-10, how burned out do I feel right now? What could I do to help restore my energy?*
- *Is there anything that I'm currently shaming myself for? If so, then would I be as critical and judgmental of my best friend if they were in the position that I'm currently in? If not, then what does that tell me?*
- *What are some things that I can be grateful for right now?*
- *In what ways am I currently practicing self-care? And, in what ways could I take better care of myself, and therefore be in a better position to fight back against depression?*
- *What could I do to give myself more time to practice self-care each day?*
- *Do I currently over-commit myself (for example, to other people, to work, to extracurricular events, etcetera)? If so, in what ways do I do this? And, what are some boundaries I could implement to prevent this from happening, and therefore reduce the likelihood of me becoming burned out and exhausted?*
- *Are there any "environmental factors" which are currently triggering my depression (for example, work, or one or more toxic relationships)? If so, in what ways is this happening? And, what are some things I could do to better cope with these triggers?*
- *On a scale of 1-10, how overwhelmed do I feel right now? What are some shortcuts I could take to reduce this overwhelm, and/or who could I ask for help in order to ease my burden?*
- *When I'm struggling with depression, what's one thing I could do to better serve my needs?*
- *What's something I could do right now that would make me feel more empowered?*

- *Am I exercising very much? If not, how could I add a little bit more exercise into my week?*
- *On a scale of 1-10, how well am I sleeping right now? And, what are some strategies I could implement to get a better night's sleep?*
- *What would my "highest self" do to navigate the challenges that I'm facing right now?*

Appendix Q: Practicing Self-Care When You Have Depression

When many people think of self-care, they often associate it with its most "obvious" acts – such as lying in a bathtub, lighting scented candles around a room, or getting a massage, for example. And, while self-care can include these acts, it is also much, much, *much* more than this – especially when you're fighting depression. In particular, when you have depression, a solid, robust self-care plan involves:

- **Practicing "Mental Self-Care"**: I.e. learning and implementing strategies to help separate yourself from negative thoughts; think more positively; become "unstuck" from something that you may be ruminating about; and stimulate your mind in an enjoyable way.
- **Practicing "Emotional Self-Care"**: I.e. learning and implementing strategies to help you get some respite from the painful emotions you're feeling, give your mood a boost, and prevent yourself from getting burnt out and/or from your depression deteriorating.
- **Practicing "Physical Self-Care"**: I.e. learning and implementing strategies to help you, among other things, feel more energetic, and take care of your physical health as well.
- **Practicing "Social Self-Care"**: I.e. learning and implementing strategies to help you have positive interactions with the people around you.
- **Practicing "Spiritual Self-Care"**: I.e. learning and implementing strategies which contribute to you feeling as if you have a purpose in the world and that your life has meaning.
- **Practicing "Practical Self-Care"**: I.e. learning and implementing strategies to help you feel comfortable, safe, cared for and in control of your life.

On that note, in this Appendix, we're going to share with you some specific strategies you can implement to help you practice "mental self-care", "emotional self-care", "physical self-care", "social self-care", "spiritual self-care" and "practical self-care"!

Pillar #1: Mental Self-Care

The first of the six pillars of self-care that we're going to talk about is "mental self-care" – or in other words, self-care when it comes to your thoughts and your mind. This type of self-care is extremely important, because like we touched upon beforehand, it can help you to:

- Separate yourself from negative thoughts that make you feel worried, hopeless or worthless, for example;
- Think more positively and optimistically instead;
- Become "unstuck" from something that you may be ruminating about;
- Stimulate your mind in an enjoyable way.

With that being said, let's now look at a variety of different ways that you can practice "mental self-care".

1. Set Aside Time To Address Your Thoughts

As you may be able to relate to, many people with depression try to ignore-, distract themselves from-, or bury their thoughts – particularly negative ones – in the hope that they'll eventually go away.

However, this is *not* how thoughts work!

Why?

Because one of the major functions our thoughts serve is to help us navigate our way through the world. For this reason, if we have a problem or something that's troubling us, it's natural for our thoughts to gravitate towards whatever that is – to try to process what's going on and figure out a solution. Consequently, your thoughts cannot be suppressed forever – they *need* to come out – and as soon as you stop distracting your mind from them, they inevitably will. Not only that, but when they eventually do come out, they're also likely going to be much more intense and

unmanageable than they would have been if rather than trying to ignore-, distract yourself from- or bury your thoughts for so long, you'd instead set aside time to periodically address them.

Now, in terms of *how* to actually address your thoughts, you could, for example:

- Implement the strategies we shared with you in Appendix M;
- Journal – like we've also talked about throughout this book.

2. Talk Kinder To Yourself

In addition to setting aside time to address your thoughts, the second "mental self-care" practice we want to share with you is to *talk kinder to yourself*. This is also really important to try your best to do, since as you no doubt know, when you have depression, it's extremely common to talk to yourself in very self-critical, abusive and uncompassionate ways. For example, by calling yourself:

- A "loser";
- A "failure";
- "Worthless";
- A "burden";
- A "screw-up";
- "Useless";
- "Stupid".

For this reason, "mental self-care" when you have depression involves doing your best to silence this critical and abusive voice, and instead talk to yourself much more kindly. In practice, a couple of ways you could do this include:

- Firstly, changing any negative statements you make about yourself such as "*I'm a loser*", "*I'm worthless*", etcetera to "*I feel like a loser*", "*I feel worthless*", etcetera. Even

better: Change "I'm a loser", "I'm worthless", etcetera, to "I feel like a loser right now", "I feel worthless right now", etcetera. This is a simple, cognitive behavioural therapy-based "thought defusion" strategy to help you gain some separation from your negative thoughts, and remind yourself that they are just that – *thoughts* – as opposed to *facts*.

- Secondly, as you may be able to relate to, when the symptoms of your depression are very severe, it's common to feel extremely exhausted – and as a result, doing the "little things" such as having a shower, buying groceries or taking the trash out for example can become extremely overwhelming, and feel akin to climbing a mountain. For this reason, we really encourage you to make a point of *congratulating yourself for doing the "little things"*. In particular, when you're feeling exhausted as a result of your depression, we really encourage you to make a point of congratulating yourself when you, for example:
 - Get out of bed
 - Have a shower
 - Brush your hair
 - Survive another day
 - Tick something off your to-do list
 - Go for a walk
 - Do the grocery shopping
 - Cook a meal
 - Do the dishes
 - Do the laundry
 - Journal
 - Go to work

- Shave
- Brush your teeth
- Give yourself a compliment
- Reach out to a friend
- Change your clothes
- Respond to messages
- Collect your mail

3. Do Things That Stimulate Your Mind In A Positive Way

In addition to setting aside time to deal with your thoughts and talking kindly to yourself, you'll also find it helpful to engage in activities that stimulate your mind in a positive way. For example, by:

- **Reading a novel** – to engage in something foreign to you rather than staying stuck in your own head with your negative thoughts.
- **Reading a self-help book** – to learn strategies to help you cope with and overcome depression.
- **Reading a non-fiction book, listening to a lecture or watching a documentary** – to learn about something new, interesting and/or important; as well as to get a break from your depressive thoughts.
- **Consuming inspirational content** – to make you feel more positive, uplifted and hopeful.
- **Doing something that's intellectually challenging like a crossword, a jigsaw puzzle or learning a new language** – to not only give you some separation from negative and intrusive thoughts, but to also help trigger positive thoughts and a feeling of accomplishment as a result of doing something difficult.

Pillar #2: “Emotional Self-Care”

The second pillar of self-care that's really important for you to address when you have depression is "emotional self-care" – or in other words, self-care when it comes to your feelings. This type of self-care is really important, because it can help you to:

- Get some respite from any painful / consuming emotions you're feeling;
- Give your mood a boost;
- Combat feelings of numbness;
- Prevent you from getting burned out, from snapping over "something small", and/or from your depression deteriorating.

With these benefits in mind, in order to practice “emotional self-care”, you can:

- Journal (see Appendix P).
- Talk to someone you trust – which can be extremely cathartic; give you a different perspective on your emotions; and can result in you feeling much more calm, positive, hopeful and connected.
- Practice mindfulness (see Appendix O).
- Do things that bring you joy – e.g. painting a picture, going to a dance class, learning a musical instrument, etcetera. Taking part in activities which you find pleasurable like so can help give you a break from your depression and all the painful emotions you're feeling; give your mood a boost; and as a result, be an effective way of “re-charging your emotional batteries”.
- Retreat to a “safe space”. This can look very different for different people, but a few examples include a comfortable couch where you can curl up with your favourite cup of tea and a good book; a bathtub surrounded by aromatic candles that you can close your eyes and soak in; or a warm bed with a soothing weighted blanket, which you can climb

under and watch your favourite television show. Retreating to a “safe space” like so can really help you to feel safe, to calm down, and to give your spirits a boost – so if you haven’t got one yet, then we really encourage you to set one up!

- Take a “time-out” if you need it – since this can help you re-charge your batteries when you feel depression's emotions compounding and compounding, and therefore help prevent your depression from spiralling downwards.

Pillar #3: “Physical Self-Care”

The third pillar of self-care when it comes to depression is "physical self-care", which can involve, among other things:

- Implementing strategies to increase your energy levels – since struggling with depression can be completely exhausting.
- Taking care of your physical health – which, when you have depression, can often be a challenge to do.
- Connecting your body with the world around you – since when you have depression, it's possible to feel extremely *disconnected* from the world around you.

With that being said, let's now look at some ways you can practice "physical self-care" when you have depression.

1. Exercise (Or At Least Move Your Body)

Exercising is really, *really* important when you have depression – not just for your long-term physical health, but also because it can help you cope with depression as well. This is because:

- Exercising releases dopamine in your brain – which is the chemical found in a lot of anti-depressant medications.

- Exercising can also increase your energy levels – which, like we mentioned above, can often be lacking when you're struggling with depression.

In saying that though, when we talk about exercising, sometimes people with depression get upset, and respond with something like:

"But that's a ridiculous suggestion – because when you're deep in a depressive episode, you feel completely and utterly exhausted. So, how on Earth can I go for a run or lift weights at the gym like I usually would? That's just crazy!"

And, those people have a point, which is why we always say that when you're feeling depressed, exercise does *not* have to be as strenuous as going for a run or lifting weights at the gym, for example. Instead, we just encourage you to do *whatever you feel capable of doing at any given moment in time*. For example:

- If you don't feel up to going for a run, then you could try going for a walk around the block.
- If you don't feel up to going for a walk around the block, then you could try going up and down a flight of stairs in your home or apartment block.
- If you don't feel up to going up and down a flight of stairs, then you could try walking to a different room and back.
- If you don't feel up to walking to a different room and back, then you could try stretching in bed.

Like we said, just do your best to do whatever you feel capable of, since even small amounts of exercise and body movements can:

- Release a little dopamine in your brain;
- Give you a little boost of energy;
- Reduce body aches and pains that can be brought about due to lack of movement.

2. Practice Good Sleep Hygiene

To learn a variety of strategies to help you practice this form of “physical self-care”, please see Appendix K.

3. Eat Healthily

This is another important component of "physical self-care", because:

- When you eat healthily, you'll tend to feel more energetic than you would if you didn't eat healthily.
- Binge eating or "comfort eating" to give yourself some relief from your depression can lead to feelings of shame, worthlessness and self-hatred.
- Eating healthily is of course good for your long-term physical health.

Now, we know eating healthily can sometimes be difficult when you have depression – most commonly because it can be difficult to prioritise a healthy diet when you're grappling with intense symptoms of depression; and because, like we said above, “comfort eating” is a common way of coping with depression. However, we really encourage you to do your best.

4. Engage In Additional “Energy-Boosting” Activities

Like we've talked about, depression can often drain your energy – and for this reason, it's important to engage in "energy-boosting" activities which can replenish it. Now, we've already mentioned a few such activities – like trying to exercise, get a better night's sleep and eat healthily – however, we encourage you to think about what other energy-boosting activities you can engage in as well.

For example, does listening to upbeat music tend to give your energy levels a boost?

Does watching a motivational video on Youtube?

Does reading inspirational quotes?

Like we said, have a think about the kinds of things that give your energy a lift, and then try to work those energy-boosting activities into your daily routine.

5. Try Your Best To Take Care Of Your Personal Hygiene

Because of how completely and utterly exhausted depression can make you feel, it's common for people in a depressive episode to neglect taking care of their personal hygiene – including forgoing brushing their teeth, bathing, and/or wearing clean clothes, for example. Additionally, when you're in a depressive episode, taking care of your personal hygiene can also feel pointless, because you may feel as if:

- No-one will notice if you don't take care of your personal hygiene, since you have no intention of leaving your home;
- You may have bigger problems to worry about;
- Even if you are able to work up the energy and motivation to look after your personal hygiene, you may still think that it "won't make a difference to anything".

However, taking care of your personal hygiene when you're fighting depression is really worth trying your best to do, since it can benefit you by:

- Helping you feel more empowered;
- Contributing to you having a more positive sense of self;
- Helping you feel more "in control" of your depression and your life;
- Helping you feel more physically (and even emotionally) comfortable during an intense depressive episode.

Pillar #4: “Social Self-Care”

In the context of depression, "social self-care" can be thought of as having positive connections with other people. This is something that's extremely, *extremely* important, because:

- *Negative* interactions with people is a major factor that contributes to depression.
- It's common for people to struggle with "depression loneliness" – which at The Depression Project, is the term we use to describe the feelings of loneliness that are particular to depression. It includes:
 - The loneliness that people with depression commonly feel due to being physically alone (which most often occurs because depression can lead to social withdrawal).
 - Secondly, it includes the loneliness that people with depression often experience even when they're surrounded by people – due to feeling as if no-one understands (or even knows about) what they're going through.

Now, let's look at how you can practice “social self-care”.

1. Distance Yourself From Toxic People

When you have depression – or at any time for that matter – an important part of self-care involves distancing yourself from toxic people who negatively affect you. This can include people who, for example:

- Set standards for you that they always fall short of themselves.
- Discourage your growth.
- Make you feel ashamed of your depression rather than helping you through it.
- Make you feel the need to suppress your positive emotions, personality and/or “true self” around them.

- Manipulate you to meet their own needs at the expense of your own.
- Never apologise or take responsibility for any of their wrongdoings.
- Monopolise conversation and never let your voice be heard.
- Ignore, dismiss or fail to acknowledge your feelings.
- Blame you for things which aren't your fault.
- Are jealous of you.
- Are never there for you – despite you always being there for them when they need you.
- Use you for their own personal gain.
- Dismiss or invalidate any perspective you have which doesn't align with their own.
- Control you, are possessive of you, and/or try to micromanage you.
- Continuously drag up your past and try to use it against you.

Like we said, if there are people in your life who are treating you this way, then it's really important that you distance yourself from them, and keep your interactions with them to a minimum.

2. Implement Boundaries

Implementing boundaries with respect to other people is also an important part of "social self-care", since boundaries can help protect you from:

- Having your wants and needs sabotaged;
- Being taken advantage of;
- Becoming burned out and exhausted;
- Having your depression worsen.

To see the types of boundaries you can implement in your life, let's have a look at the following examples.

A) Boundaries On Your Time

Let's say that your friend rings you up and asks if you can spend the upcoming Sunday helping them move house. Now, if doing so wouldn't sabotage your own needs and wants, exhaust you, or cause you any other form of harm, then it's great to help your friend out and say "yes"! However, there are many scenarios in which saying "yes" would come at a cost to you, and why as a result, it won't be in your best interests to do so. For example:

- Because you want to spend Sunday morning at church, and even though you could theoretically skip it, you really want to go.
- Because you've had a tiring week at work, and you want to have a proper sleep-in on the weekend to help re-charge your batteries and prepare you for the next week.

In these instances, for the benefit of your own self-care, an effective boundary to implement would be one on your time. For example, by saying to your friend:

"I'd be happy to help you move – but I'm only free from 12 o'clock onwards."

B) Boundaries With Your Possessions

In this instance, let's say that your friend asks to borrow \$200 from you. Now, there may be many occasions in which you'd be happy to loan your friend the money – in which case, no problem! However, there may also be many instances in which you don't want to do so. For example:

- If your friend has borrowed money from you in the past but has never paid you back.
- If you feel like you can only afford to loan them \$100.

In these cases (as well as many others), to avoid you doing something that you aren't comfortable with, you could establish boundaries with respect to your possessions. For example, by telling your friend:

- *"I'm sorry, but you still owe me money from before, and until you pay that back, I'm not comfortable loaning you anymore."*
- *"I'd be happy to loan you \$100 – but right now, I can't afford to give you anymore than that."*

C) Boundaries Based On How You Feel

To return to our first example, let's say that your friend asks you to help them move house on Sunday. Now, like we said earlier, if you have other things you want to do on that day, then you can establish boundaries with regards to your time (i.e. you can restrict your availability to the times when you're happy to help out). However, there might also be occasions when you don't have any other commitments on, but for whatever reason, you just don't feel like spending the day helping your friend move. This could be, for example, because you can feel a depressive episode coming on, and you know that the best thing you can do for yourself is to have a quiet day at home practicing self-care. In this case, the best thing you can do to protect yourself is say "no" to your friend – for no other reason than because you simply don't feel like helping them move house.

D) Boundaries Based On Your Likes And Dislikes

In this example, let's say that your friend invites you to go and watch a football match with them, when little do they know, you don't actually like watching football at all. In this case, if you really want to spend time with that particular friend, then you may decide to say "yes". However, if you know that you just wouldn't enjoy the match at all even in your friend's company, then rather than going just to please them, you could instead say:

"I'd love to spend time with you, but to be honest, I really don't like football. Is there something else you feel like doing that we would both enjoy?"

Even though you're not actually stating it, responding in this way implicitly enforces the boundary that you will not do things that you don't like doing, just so that you can please someone else.

E) Boundaries Based On Your Values

This type of boundary is all about what behaviours you will, and will not tolerate from other people.

For example:

- *I will not allow my partner to talk to me disrespectfully. If they do, then rather than keeping silent because I don't want to upset them, I will speak up and tell them that I won't accept this behaviour.*
- *I'm more than willing to help my friends out when they'd like me to, but in return, I expect them to be appreciative – not to just use me and take my support for granted. I deserve better than that, and if that's how they're going to behave, then they don't deserve my help or my friendship.*
- *I will always do my best to make my partner happy, and to help them get their needs and wants met. However, in return, I expect them to do their best to make me happy as well, and to help me get my needs and wants met too.*
- *I deserve to be treated as well as I treat other people, and I will not settle for anything less.*
- *I have no room for toxic people in my life, so if someone behaves selfishly towards me or in a way that shows they have no regard for my needs, wants or values, then I'm going to disassociate myself from that person.*

Having boundaries based on your values are arguably the most important boundaries you can have to stop people from mistreating you, and to surround yourself with people who will treat you with

the respect, love and care you deserve. For this reason, it's really, *really* important that you carefully think about what your own value-based boundaries are and then implement them!

F) Boundaries On Topics Of Conversation

Let's say you have someone who constantly rings you up to complain about their life – which is something that you find extremely negative and draining. In this scenario, it's beneficial to put in boundaries to protect yourself from this, such as by:

- Telling them how their constant complaining makes you feel, and how while you'd be happy to help them try to constructively solve the problems in their life, you're no longer willing to continue listening to them doing nothing but complain.
- Alternatively, you could listen to them, but simply stop the conversation when you've had enough of it.

3. Try To Establish Positive Connections With Others

In addition to distancing yourself from toxic people and implementing boundaries to prevent yourself from having your wants and needs sabotaged, from being taken advantage of, from becoming burned out and exhausted, and from having your depression worsen, "social self-care" also involves establishing positive connections with other people. And, like we said earlier, this is particularly true for people with depression, since due to "depression loneliness", positive connections with others is something that a lot of people with this illness unfortunately don't have.

Now, in terms of how to do this, we recommend that you:

- **Firstly, make a point of reaching out to your loved ones when you feel up to it.** Of course, since depression can result in social withdrawal, there are likely going to be times when you'd rather be by yourself than interact with the people you love. However, during the times when you aren't feeling as crippled by depression, it's really worth reaching out to the people you love and spending quality time with them.

- Secondly, we encourage you to connect with people who understand your depression - which can also contribute to you feeling less alone, and more supported. And, if you don't feel as if anyone you currently know understands your depression, then we encourage you to think about connecting with other people who have depression through an online depression support group – of which thankfully, there are many!

Pillar #5: “Spiritual Self-Care”

When many people think of "spiritual self-care", they often assume it's related to religion. And, while practicing religion can be part of "spiritual self-care" if you want it to be, "spiritual self-care" involves so much more, including:

- Having a purpose in the world;
- Leading a meaningful life;
- Feeling fulfilled.

On that note, let's now have a look at a couple of different ways that you can practice "spiritual self-care" when you have depression.

1. Journalling

Now, we know we've mentioned journalling in the context of helping you "mentally"- and "emotionally self-care" earlier on, but it can also help you "spiritually self-care" as well. This is because journalling can help you become more aware and in-tune with your feelings surrounding "spiritual issues", such as:

- What your purpose is;
- Whether or not you're living a meaningful life;
- How fulfilled you are.

In particular, below are some specific journal prompts which can help you "spiritually self-care":

- *What are some things in my family life that give me meaning, fulfillment, and purpose?*
- *What are some things in my work life that give me meaning, fulfillment, and purpose?*
- *What are some hobbies that give me meaning, fulfillment, and purpose?*
- *What are some areas of "personal growth" I'm working on that are giving me meaning, fulfillment, and purpose?*
- *How could I make more time for the things that really matter to me?*
- *How can I continue to cultivate more meaning, fulfillment and purpose in my future?*
- *What are some daily habits I can practice that will help make me more connected with the world and my place in it?*
- *What could I do to be more "present" each and every day?*
- *What are some good things about the present moment which I can be grateful for?*
- *What are some areas of my life that are lacking in clarity? How can I gain more clarity in these areas?*
- *What would my "highest self" do to navigate the challenges I'm facing right now?*
- *How can I give myself more space to get in touch with my inner wisdom?*

2. Maximise The Time You Spend On Your Passion(s)

No matter what your passions is – whether it's a hobby, a sport, charity work, learning a new language or just spending time with your loved ones – it's really good for your "spiritual self-care" to spend as much time doing that special something as possible. After all, in addition to filling you with purpose, meaning and fulfilment, engaging with your passion will also:

- Significantly boost your mood;

- Help recharge your batteries;
- Diminish burnout;
- And, as a result of all of the above, it will help to keep your depression at bay.

Pillar #6: “Practical Self-Care”

Last but not least, “practical self-care” involves doing the things that need to get done in order to help you feel comfortable, safe, cared for and in control of your life. Under our definition, it can include, for example:

- Doing your chores so that you have a clean home to live in (such as cleaning the dishes, washing your clothes, etcetera).
- Taking care of your finances so that you can support yourself (and perhaps others).
- Going to the doctor if you're feeling sick, so that you can get better and return to your normal life.
- Asking for support when you need it – to help you avoid feeling overwhelmed, stressed out and unable to cope.

And, when you're fighting depression, a critically, *critically* important component of "practical self-care" is doing the things that you need to do in order to survive-, cope with- and ultimately heal from your depression.

This can include, for example:

- Implementing survival strategies in the Storm Zone, coping strategies in the Rain Zone and healing strategies in the Cloud Zone;
- Going to therapy;
- Reading self-help books;

- If applicable, taking your anti-depressant medication;
- Reaching out for help so that you can be supported.

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