

Depression – The ‘Vicious Cycle’ that keeps it going

Negative thoughts are almost always present when we are feeling low or depressed. In that sense, negative thoughts are ‘normal’ – they are part of feeling depressed, which happens to all of us during our lives. However, if your depression goes on for a long time or keeps returning then it may be your negative thoughts themselves that are triggering your depression, or making it worse or longer lasting.



People prone to depression often think in a biased, negative way about themselves (‘I’m no

good / I am useless’), about the world (‘Nobody cares about me / every one else is too busy to bother about me’) and about the future (‘Nothing will change / my life will always be like this’)

What makes these thoughts even more difficult to tackle is the fact that they are usually:

1. Automatic – they just pop into your head without any effort on your part.
2. Distorted – they do not fit the facts.
3. Unhelpful – they keep you depressed and make it difficult to change.
4. Believable – it does not occur to you to question or challenge them.
5. Persistent – they are very difficult to switch off or get rid of.

In people prone to depression these negative thoughts can stop you from doing the things that you would normally do. As a result you may feel low or depressed which may trigger more negative, self-critical thoughts. So, a ‘vicious cycle’ develops that keeps the depression going and makes it worse.

The diagram below shows an example of a ‘vicious cycle’ at work. These cycles can often be triggered by stress from the outside world – other people giving us a hard time; problems at work; children playing up – or they can be triggered by problems inside ourselves that we cannot control, such as physical illness or chronic disability or health problems. These vicious cycles can also make self-help difficult, so it is important to be aware of them and challenge them.

