

# Understanding and Coping with Depression: A Manual



## Part 2 Improve Your Mood

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# PART 2

## Improve Your Mood

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# Chapter One:

## Change Your Thinking, Improve your Mood\*

This chapter has some of the most complicated and challenging exercises you will find in the manual. It also will teach you some valuable skills. In Part 1, you learned about the connections between events, thoughts and moods. In “Change Your Thinking, Improve your Mood” we will go into more detail about identifying situations, thoughts and moods. After learning how to make connections between thoughts and moods, this chapter teaches you some new ways of thinking about situations. Although it may seem difficult, we put this chapter first because the chapters that follow build on it. Many people find it easier to change their behaviors once they have learned how to change their thinking.

Take your time with each of the six sections in this chapter. You may find it helpful to work on only one or two sections at a time. You may also find it useful to work through this chapter with a friend, therapist, or Social Worker.

\* Based on the book Mind Over Mood: A Cognitive Therapy Manual for Clients by D. Greenberger and C. Padesky © 1995.

As the Cycle of Depression diagram showed (in Part 1, page 9), there is a strong connection between thoughts, moods, stressors, and behaviors. It is often difficult to change the stressors, physical problems, or behaviors that shape our moods. Therefore, changing your thoughts is a great place to start when you want to feel better, change your behavior, or improve a relationship. Thoughts often determine our moods because once we feel a certain way, we often tell ourselves things that support and strengthen that mood.

In Part 1 of the manual we introduced you to Mr. Jones, a 72 year-old man who was recently diagnosed with depression. In Part 2 of the manual we share more of Mr. Jones's experiences with depression and his recovery.

The first time Mr. Jones went back to bingo he saw Mr. Casey, another old friend. Mr. Casey smiled and waved to Mr. Jones across the room. When bingo was over, Mr. Casey left without speaking to Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones felt upset about this. That night he could not fall asleep because he kept thinking about Mr. Casey:

“Mr. Casey didn't even say hello. He must be angry with me. Mr. Casey didn't want to talk to me because I am an old bore. Nobody wants to be around me.”

As you can see, Mr. Jones mostly focused on how he felt. He assumed Mr. Casey's reaction was because of him, and he kept playing messages of negative thoughts to himself. The thoughts were not necessarily true, yet he could not see the positive side of things.

The following is a list of things Mr. Jones did not think about, things that may have helped him feel better. Mr. Casey did not ignore him; he smiled and waved. Perhaps Mr. Casey had to go somewhere else and did not have time to chat. Perhaps Mr. Casey was feeling shy or had other things on his mind.

In fact, Mr. Casey called a few days later to say he had hoped to talk to Mr. Jones after bingo, but that he was running late to pick up his wife from her bridge club. He was calling to see if Mr. Jones would like to help him on a new project, building a crib for his next grandchild. Even then Mr. Jones thought, “He is just saying that because he feels sorry for an old goat like me.” He told Mr. Casey he was too sick to work on any projects.

As you can see, Mr. Jones is convinced Mr. Casey dislikes him, even though there is evidence to the contrary. In both situations, bingo and the phone call, Mr. Jones's thoughts influenced his mood and behavior. Like many other people with depression, Mr. Jones ignored positive information and focused on thoughts that fit his down mood. This example shows how thoughts can influence both mood and behavior. Thinking positively may have changed Mr. Jones's mood and behavior. Sometimes it isn't easy to think positive thoughts, nor is it a cure-all.

We want you to consider different angles of a situation or problem. When you examine a situation from many angles (positive, neutral, and negative) you will probably come to new conclusions. But, before we get to the conclusion part, we want to look at Mr. Jones's mood, "automatic thoughts," and evidence that supports and discounts his thoughts. By looking at these elements, you can learn how to examine your own situations, thoughts, and moods in more positive ways, ways that will make you feel less depressed.



Writing out the situation in a Thought Chart will help you see how your thoughts affect your moods.

## Section 1: Describe the Situation

In various situations there are often many different things going on at once: thoughts, feelings (moods), and behaviors (yours and others'). In order to get a clearer view of a situation it is important to understand all those factors. Answering some questions often helps separate the situational factors.

Describing a Situation

- ◆ Where was I?
- ◆ What was I doing?
- ◆ What happened?
- ◆ When did it happen?
- ◆ Who was I with?

Example: Mr. Jones's Situation

Where was I? At the community center

What was I doing? Playing bingo

What happened? Mr. Casey did not speak to me

When did it happen? When the game was over

Who was I with? No one.

The answers can be summarized like this: "I was at the community center playing bingo. After the game, Mr. Casey left without speaking to me."

*✍* Now it is your turn. Think of a recent situation. In the spaces below, practice describing your situation.

Where was I? \_\_\_\_\_

What was I doing? \_\_\_\_\_

What happened? \_\_\_\_\_

When did it happen? \_\_\_\_\_

Who was I with? \_\_\_\_\_

Summarize your situation:

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Now that you have described your situation, let's describe your mood.

## Section 2: Identify and Describe Your Moods

Before you can change your mood, it helps if you can identify specifically how you feel during and following a situation. Sometimes this is difficult. Remember Mr. Jones's moods, at first he said he was "upset." "Upset" is not a complete description; he could be upset from anger, sadness, or anxiety. When Mr. Jones thought about it more he realized that feeling "upset" was a result of feeling hurt and disappointed. Often moods can be identified with one word. If you find yourself needing a few words to describe your mood, you may be describing a thought instead. Below is a list of words that describe moods. When you try to figure out how you are feeling, you may want to refer to this list. You may also add to the list any moods we have not included.

Moods				
Angry	Anxious	Ashamed	Cheerful	Depressed
Disappointed	Disgusted	Embarrassed	Enraged	Excited
Frightened	Frustrated	Guilty	Happy	Humiliated
Hurt	Insecure	Irritated	Loving	Nervous
Panicky	Proud	Sad	Scared	Sorrowful
Add any moods not listed _____				

After you identify your mood in a given situation, we suggest you rate the intensity of that mood. We all feel moods differently at different times, sometimes a little and sometimes very strongly. When you rate the intensity of your mood, it will alert you to how different situations affect your mood.

When Mr. Jones first tried to identify and rate his moods, he did not think that happy would apply. But, thinking back on the entire situation that night, he realized that he felt a little happy to be playing bingo again. Like Mr. Jones, most of the time you will be able to identify more than one mood that you experienced during a situation. Don't stop thinking about how you felt in a situation once you have identified one mood. Take a few minutes to think over all of the things that were going on before, during and after the situation. Most likely you had different moods at different times.

For example, Mr. Jones believed that he had three moods on bingo night.

Mood	Rating
Happy	2
Disappointed	8
Hurt	9

Use this scale to help rate your moods.

Mood Scale										
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
None		A little			Some			A lot		Most I've ever felt

 Look back at the situation that you identified on page 4. What moods can you identify feeling during that time? What ratings would you give to those moods? If you need to, refer to the list of moods on page 5 and the mood rating scale above.

Mood	Rating

Now let's talk about "automatic" thoughts.

### Section 3: Identify Your Automatic Thoughts

As we saw in the case of Mr. Jones on bingo night, he had a number of quick thoughts. For example, his reaction to Mr. Casey’s departure was “I’m a bore” and “Nobody wants to be around me.” As an outsider observer, there is no reason to believe that Mr. Casey was trying to convey either of these things. Yet the thoughts came to Mr. Jones in an instant. We call these “automatic thoughts.” Automatic thoughts are the words and images that pop into your head during a situation. Mr. Jones’s thoughts were true and real for him, but if someone else knew what he was experiencing, they would probably be surprised by his conclusions.

One way Mr. Jones can make better sense of his moods is to identify specifically what his thoughts, particularly his automatic thoughts, were at the time. Mr. Jones’s automatic thoughts provide important clues about why Mr. Jones felt strong moods of hurt and disappointment and only a little happiness. Below is a “Thought Chart” that Mr. Jones used to help him identify some of his automatic thoughts.

#### THOUGHT CHART

Situation	Mood/Rating	Automatic Thoughts
I was at the community center playing bingo. After the game, Mr. Casey left without speaking to me.	Hurt 9 Disappointed 8 Happy 2	I thought we were friends. Mr. Casey doesn't like me. Mr. Casey is angry with me. I'm an old bore. The people I know are not really friends. No one really wants to be around me. I knew bingo would be bad.

Mr. Jones also wrote out the situation after Mr. Casey's call.

### THOUGHT CHART

Situation	Mood/Rating	Automatic Thoughts
This morning Mr. Casey phoned to ask for my help on a carpentry project.	Angry 5 Sad 8	Why is he calling me? First he ignores me, now he wants my help. Mr. Casey doesn't really want my help. He doesn't really like me. He just feels sorry for me. I wouldn't be able to help with anything anyway. I am too old and sick to do any projects.

#### Identify Automatic Thoughts

- ◆ What thoughts popped into your head during and after the situation?
- ◆ Before you started feeling badly, what thoughts were going through your head?
- ◆ What conclusions did you make about the situation?
- ◆ What conclusions did you make about yourself or your future?
- ◆ What other situations did this incident make you think of? Did it bring up bad memories?
- ◆ What conclusions did you make about others involved in the situation or other people you know?

✍ Use the situation and moods you described on pages 4 and 5. Fill out the Thought Chart and identify your own automatic thoughts. Use the above questions to help you recognize your automatic thoughts. Use another sheet if you need more space.

Situation	Mood/Rating	Automatic Thoughts

On the next page you will learn how to recognize your "hot thought".

## Section 4: Recognize your Hot Thought

As you can see from Mr. Jones’s Thought Chart, he had a number of automatic thoughts for each situation. Automatic thoughts frequently trigger our moods. When you have a strong mood, you can be sure that if you can identify your automatic thoughts they will give clues about your reaction and mood. Not all of our thoughts strongly affect our moods, and certain automatic thoughts are more powerful than others in creating a mood. Since our goal is to positively influence mood, we want to know which ONE of the many automatic thoughts is most responsible for shaping a particular mood. We call the automatic thought that is most closely connected to your emotion a “hot thought.” Once we are able to pinpoint the hot thought, we can look at it carefully and think about how it might be changed. Let’s look at Mr. Jones’s automatic thoughts and see if we can identify his hot thought.

Since Mr. Jones’s strongest emotion was feeling hurt, he wanted to see which automatic thought was most responsible. Although, “I thought we were friends” was the first thought that caused him to feel hurt, “No one really wants to be around me” was what really hurt the most. “No one really wants to be around me” seemed to be the most responsible for his mood. Mr. Jones marked the hot thought with an ✕.

### THOUGHT CHART

Situation	Mood/Rating	Automatic Thoughts
I was at the community center playing bingo. After the game, Mr. Casey left without speaking to me.	Hurt 9	I thought we were friends.
	Disappointed 8	Mr. Casey doesn't like me. Mr. Casey is angry with me.
	Happy 2	I'm an old bore. The people I know are not really friends. No one really wants to be around me. ✕ I knew bingo would be bad.

In the phone call situation, Mr. Jones identified his primary mood as sadness. Mr. Jones thought most of his automatic thoughts contributed to his feeling sad. At first, he wanted to mark most of the automatic thoughts. Then he remembered that his therapist said if he found multiple thoughts that seemed hot, try to figure out which was the hottest. The thoughts on the bottom half of the list all made him sad. But he decided

that thinking about his poor health and limitations made him think about many projects in his life that he could no longer do. “I am too old and sick to do any projects” makes him the most sad of all of the automatic thoughts, so he calls it his hot thought.

### THOUGHT CHART

Situation	Mood/Rating	Automatic Thoughts
This morning Mr. Casey phoned to ask for my help on a carpentry project.	Angry 5 Sad 8	Why is he calling me? First he ignores me, now he says wants my help. Mr. Casey doesn't really want my help. He doesn't even really like me. He just feels sorry for me. I wouldn't be able to help with anything anyway. I am too old and sick to do any projects. ✕

✍️ Go back to your own Thought Chart on page 8. Think through each of the automatic thoughts and determine which one made the biggest contribution to your mood. Mark your hot thought with an ✕.

#### Identify Your Hot Thought

- ◆ Which automatic thought seems most closely connected to your mood?
- ◆ Is there one thought you keep repeating in your mind?
- ◆ Does one particular thought make you think about other stressful situations?
- ◆ Which thought evokes many emotions?
- ◆ Which thought causes you to think poorly about yourself, your life or your future?

## Section 5: Find Evidence For And Against The Hot Thought

When we have negative automatic thoughts, we often connect them to additional information that confirms or strengthens our conclusions. When Mr. Jones thought about Mr. Casey's abrupt departure, he focused on the idea that no one wanted to be around him. He thought about how much time he spent alone and how the people he knew did not seem like true friends. These thoughts confirmed his hot thought and made him feel more hurt. Mr. Jones may have felt better if he thought about experiences in his life that contradicted his conclusion. This next section shows you how to look beyond the immediate situation and find evidence that does and does not support the hot thought. We have added a column to the Thought Chart for you to write down "Evidence For And Against The Hot Thought." Think about your hot thought and then write other interpretations of them. Write down whatever comes to mind. Later you can go back and cross off things you don't think are "true".

### Evidence Collecting Questions

- ◆ What experiences show that this thought is not completely true all of the time?
- ◆ If my best friend or someone I loved had this thought, what would I tell them?
- ◆ What would someone who knows me well say to me about this thought? What evidence would they point out to suggest my thoughts were not 100% true?
- ◆ When I have felt this way in the past, what did I think about that helped me feel better?
- ◆ Have I been in this type of situation before? What is different between this situation and previous ones?
- ◆ Are there any small things that contradict my thoughts that I might be overlooking, or thinking are not as important?
- ◆ Are there any strengths or positives that I am ignoring?
- ◆ Am I jumping to any conclusions in my automatic thinking that are not completely supported by the evidence?
- ◆ Am I blaming myself for something over which I do not have complete control?

Look for factual evidence. It is easy to think that your explanation of a situation is a fact. For example, Mr. Jones wrote down “Mr. Casey ignored me.” This is his interpretation. Actually, “Mr. Casey left without speaking to me” would be the fact. Be careful of exaggerating. If you write statements that have words like “always,” “never,” “everyone,” “no one” and so on, they are probably not facts even though they may feel that way to you. The questions in the box on page 11 may help you find evidence against your hot thoughts.

On the next page we show you all of the evidence Mr. Jones collected for and against his hot thought “No one really wants to be around me.” You will notice that a couple of the items in the Evidence For column have been crossed out. Mr. Jones realized after he wrote them down that they were not facts.

In the “evidence for and against” column Mr. Jones wrote about situations and times that did not apply only to the situation with Mr. Casey. It is important to note this. Mr. Jones’s hot thought triggered a lot of feelings based on one situation (“No one really wants to be around me.”) Examining different situations helps Mr. Jones to see that his hot thought was not true 100% of the time. Let’s look at Mr. Jones’s Thought Chart.

## THOUGHT CHART

Situation	Moods	Automatic Thoughts	Evidence For and Against the Hot Thought
<p>I was at the community center playing bingo. After the game, Mr. Casey left without speaking to me.</p>	<p>Hurt 9 Disappointed 8 Happy 2</p>	<p>I thought we were friends. Mr. Casey was rude because he doesn't like me. Mr. Casey is angry with me. I'm an old bore. The people I know are not really friends. <b>No one really wants to be around me. X</b> I knew bingo would not be great.</p>	<p><del>Mr. Casey ignored me.</del> Mr. Casey left without speaking to me. I haven't done many social things lately. I rarely get any invitations. My son only visits when he needs a place to stay and we argue a lot. <del>I don't have any friends.</del> I do not have many friends. Mr. Casey smiled and waved. Mr. Adams was glad to see me at the library and invited me to bingo. My friends live far away. Some of my friends don't know I am interested in getting involved in things. My neighbor says she likes chatting with me.</p>

✍ Now you can continue working on the thought chart by focusing on the evidence for and against the Hot Thought. Use the questions on page 11 if you need to.

### THOUGHT CHART

Situation	Moods	Automatic Thoughts	Evidence For and Against the Hot Thought

## Section 6: Think of Alternative Thoughts

By this point, you have had a chance to look at your situation carefully. You have found evidence that supports and contradicts your reaction to the situation. Now you will look at both sides and make a new conclusion that takes both sides into consideration. You will take into account both negative and positive thoughts. With new information you may change your interpretation because the alternative thought is usually more positive than the first automatic thoughts you had about the situation. You may find that your perspective on the situation has changed only slightly, or perhaps you see the situation in a whole new light. Here are some helpful questions that may help you come up with alternative thoughts.

### Think of Alternative Thoughts

- ◆ Looking at the evidence I have listed in the “Evidence For” and “Evidence Against” sections, is there an alternative way of thinking about or understanding my situation?
- ◆ Write one sentence summarizing both pro and con evidence for my Hot Thought. Does combining the pro and con take into account all the information I have gathered?
- ◆ If my friend was in this situation and had this information how would I explain the situation to him/her?
- ◆ If my Hot Thought is true, what is the best outcome? What is the most realistic outcome?
- ◆ Who can I ask to help me think of other ways of understanding my situation?

Once you have worked out some alternative thoughts, the final part of this exercise is to rate your mood again. Now that you have collected evidence and have taken a new look at the situation, let's see whether your new view improves your mood. Rate your mood using the same scale shown on page 6.

Let's see how Mr. Jones completed his Thought Chart.

## THOUGHT CHART

Evidence For and Against the Hot Thought	Alternative Thoughts	Mood Now
<p><del>Mr. Casey ignored me.</del>            Mr. Casey left without speaking to me.            I haven't done many social things lately.            I rarely get any invitations.            My son only visits when he needs a place to stay and we argue a lot.  <del>I don't have any friends.</del>            I do not have many friends.            Mr. Casey smiled and waved.            Mr. Adams was glad to see me at the library and invited me to bingo.            My friends live far away.            Some of my friends don't know I am interested in getting involved in things.            My neighbor says she likes chatting with me.</p>	<p>Mr. Casey smiled and waved, and he left without speaking to me.            I rarely get any invitations, but Mr. Adams invited me to bingo tonight and next week.            I haven't done many social things lately because some of my friends live far away and some of my friends don't know I want to get involved again. I suppose I could call a few people.            I do not have many friends, but Mr. Adams seemed glad to see me at the library and I met some new people at bingo.</p>	<p>Hurt 5             Disappointed 3             Happy 4</p>

Mr. Jones did not use every piece of evidence in writing his alternative thoughts; notice how he combined two or more facts into one statement. Although Mr. Jones did not fully believe every alternative thought, after completing the thought chart he felt more convinced that the situation was not as terrible as he had first thought. After writing his alternative thoughts, he realized he felt less hurt and disappointed and a bit happier than he had when he had first thought about the situation. Mr. Jones filled out Thought Charts for other situations. By doing them regularly he learned that many situations that made him feel down or angry initially were not as simple as he had thought. After practicing with the Thought Charts, he discovered he was able to quickly gather evidence for and against his automatic thoughts and think of more alternative thoughts on his own.

✍ Recopy your “Evidence” columns from page 14. Review both sections and write your alternative thoughts. Refer to the box on page 15 to help you create alternative thoughts. Once you have completed the alternative thoughts section, look back at the moods you chose and rated on page 6. After you consider your alternative thoughts, re-rate your moods. Note if they change.

### THOUGHT CHART

Evidence For and Against the Hot Thought	Alternative Thoughts	Mood Now

Now you have learned how to complete the Thought Chart. Filling out Thought Charts can help you get a clearer view about what happens in different situations. Completing the Thought Charts takes practice. We encourage you to use them.

## Summary

1. Thoughts have a powerful effect on mood. By changing your thoughts, you can change how situations affect you.
2. Looking at how situations affect your mood will show you how your thoughts and moods are linked.
3. People often have “automatic” reactions to situations. Learning when and how these reactions happen to you can give you more control over your thoughts and reactions.
4. Evidence that both supports and contradicts your “automatic” thoughts will give you more information.
5. Considering more information will help you re-think the situation.
6. A careful examination of the situation can give you a more realistic perspective and help change your mood.

# Congratulations

on

completing the Change Your Thinking section. Filling out the Thought Charts takes a lot of hard work. It is a

major accomplishment!!

