



# How are you?

## **A guide to psychological resources for coping with MS**

Having MS is a challenge and can affect not only physical abilities but also emotional wellbeing. The unpredictability of the illness and the changes that come with it mean that constant readjustment is needed. It is unfortunately very common for people with MS to experience psychological distress due to these challenges. This ranges from mild mood changes to depression and anxiety.

This leaflet is designed to give you an overview of what help is available to deal with low mood or worry.

*Many people are worried about the impact of the disease, not only on themselves but also on their partners and children.*



*Dr Eli Silber, Consultant for MS, King's College Hospital*

First things first: What can I do to improve my mood?

Before going on to discuss therapy or medication, there are several basic things that we know can help your mood.



## Time

adjusting to a diagnosis of MS can be upsetting and difficult. This is completely normal and as time passes, it is likely to get a bit easier.



## Looking after yourself

eating well, sleeping enough and getting some exercise all help.



## Social Support

being around friends and family is very important.



## Activities

the more you can keep doing some activities you enjoy, the better.

*I have worked very hard to balance life, invest in my diet and both my mental and physical health, so i feel I am doing ok with my MS as a result of my own hard work. Diet and exercise are key to managing fatigue and energy, but finding the right balance is tough at first. I say go for a walk every day or do something you can do daily and build up weekly. Exercise is good for the body and mind: win-win combination!*



Melissa, (Person with MS)

## What if these don't work for me?

If you are struggling to improve your mood or worry, it is a good idea to talk to your health professional. Together you can think about the best way of tackling the problem. The options include:

-  -Self-help
-  -Talking Therapies
-  -Antidepressants



## Self-help

If you don't need talking therapies/medication, using self-help resources is a good option. See the end of this booklet for a guide to some some of the many resources available.



## Talking therapies

If you are experiencing more persistent anxiety or low mood, different types of talking therapy can be helpful. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is one therapy that has been found to be effective for helping people with MS among others that have been proved to be helpful. These can be used in combination with medication – your GP or MS clinician can advise you.



## How do I access talking therapies?

Access to therapies varies by area, but there are many routes into therapy.

- 1) You can self-refer to your local improving access to psychological therapies (IAPT) service.  
<https://www.iapt.nhs.uk/services> or ask your GP about this and they can refer you.
- 3) Some branches of the MS Society can help you access voluntary counsellors.
- 2) Your specialist MS nurse or GP may be able to refer you for talking therapies.



## What is CBT?

CBT is a form of talking therapy that helps you to understand and change how your style of thinking affects your mood and your actions. In short, it helps you notice self-defeating cycles of thought, emotion and action and offers new ways of coping.

## Antidepressant Medication

Antidepressant medication targets low mood by adjusting the balances of neurotransmitters in the brain. There are a number of different types of antidepressant medication that work in different ways. It can also be used for other purposes, e.g. pain and bladder control. It is most effective alongside a talking therapy.



### Antidepressant Medication Facts

These medicines are not addictive

Each drug works in about 60% of people  
a lack of response to one medication does not mean that you will not respond to another



They may take up to 4 weeks to take effect and can make you feel worse initially

They can work for both anxiety and depression

### I need more help now!

If you are feeling concerned about yourself, please do not hesitate to speak to your GP or the MS team who can help guide you towards treatment. Remember if you feel overwhelmed there are services that you can contact: NHS Direct (0845 46 47); the MS Resource Centre Helpline (0800 783 0518); The Samaritans (08457 90 90 90). We know that MS places exceptional demands on you and there may be times when you feel totally unable to cope. If so, please use the above resources or contact your GP or local Accident and Emergency Department out of hours.



## Practical advice and support

### Books

-  - **MS and Me: A self-management guide to living with MS** by Nikki Embrey and Lynn Fox
-  - **Coping with MS: A practical guide to understanding and living with MS** by C Benz & R Reynolds
-  - **Overcoming Multiple Sclerosis: An evidence-based guide to recovery** by George Jelinek

### Online resources

-  - <http://www.mstrust.org.uk> *A good resource from the MS Trust*
-  - <http://www.mstrust.org.uk/information/stayactive/> *A link to advice on exercise and MS*
-  - [www.stayingsmart.co.uk](http://www.stayingsmart.co.uk) *A website to help with cognitive problems, giving strategies for memory, word recall, attention tips and techniques*
-  - [www.msarc.co.uk](http://www.msarc.co.uk) *An MS resource centre with a link to a MS telephone counselling service*
-  - <http://www.msdecisions.org.uk/> *A website helping you make informed decisions about treatment options*
-  - [www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-resources/supportive-adjustment-ms](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-resources/supportive-adjustment-ms) *Supportive Adjustment in MS an 8 session manual using cognitive behavioural therapy principles*
-  - [www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-resources/coping-when-somebody-close-you-has-ms](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-resources/coping-when-somebody-close-you-has-ms) *-SaMS for Carers*
-  - [www.msqa.org.uk](http://www.msqa.org.uk) *helpful information and advice about Ms fatigue and cognition*

## Worry and anxiety

### Books

-  - **Overcoming Anxiety** by Helen Kennerley
-  - **Overcoming Anxiety: A Five Areas Approach** by Dr Chris Williams
-  - **Managing Stress, Teach Yourself Health and Wellbeing** by Terry Looker
-  - **The Worry Cure** by Robert Leahy ISBN No 978-0-7499-27240

### Online resources

-  - <http://www.mind.org.uk/help/> *useful information on anxiety on the website of well-known mental health charity MIND*
-  - [www.getsomeheadspace.com](http://www.getsomeheadspace.com) *a website for meditation and mindfulness with free guided meditation\**
-  - [www.your-wellbeing.net/category/cds/](http://www.your-wellbeing.net/category/cds/) *a website for wellbeing with NHS approved relaxation CDs, tapes and downloads*

\*recommended by patients at King's College Hospital

## Low mood and depression

### Books

-  -Overcoming Depression and Low Mood: A Five Areas Approach by Dr Chris Williams
-  -The Compassionate Mind by Paul Gilbert
-  -The Happiness Trap: How to Stop Struggling and Start Living by Russ Harris
-  -Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Process and Practice of Mindful Change by Steven Hayes, Kirk Strosahl and Kelly Wilson
-  -Overcoming depression by Helen Kennerly

### Online resources

-  -[www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)
-  -<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/problems/depression.aspx>  
*advice and information from the Royal College of Psychiatrists*

## Further CBT Resources

### Books

-  -Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy by David D Burns
-  -Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Dummies by Rhea Branch and Rob Willson
-  -Managing Your Mind by Tony Hope and Gillian Butler
-  -Mind over Mood by Christine Padesky and Dennis Greenberger
-  -Get out of your Mind and Into your Life. The New Acceptance and Commitment Therapy by Hayes and Smith

### Online resources

-  -[www.getselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.getselfhelp.co.uk) a CBT self-help website with handouts, worksheets and guidance notes
-  -[www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp](http://www.ntw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp) a website from Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS providing good psycho-educational resources, worksheets, booklets and videos
-  -[www.ccc.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.ccc.health.wa.gov.au) a resource from The Centre for Clinical Interventions providing workbooks for depression and anxiety

## Support Group

-  -[www.shift-ms.org](http://www.shift-ms.org) a social network run by its users where young people with MS meet, share experiences and support each other\*
-  -<http://www.mssociety.org.uk/ms-support/support-groups/> a group for people with MS
-  -<http://www.carersuk.org> a website with information and support for carers

\*recommended by patients at King's College Hospital

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