

Preparing for a first session about depression

A first session is a conversation, not a test, and not something you can fail. You do not need a reason that sounds bad enough, or the words to explain it all.

Some people find it helps to know what usually happens. Below is how a first session usually unfolds, what helps to bring, and the worries people most often arrive with. Preparing is optional, and everything you need is on these two pages.

i For use alongside therapy, not as a substitute. This sheet is for thinking ahead about a first conversation, not for working out what is wrong on your own. The rest is built together with your clinician.

HOW A FIRST SESSION USUALLY UNFOLDS 50 minutes

1 THE FIRST FEW MINUTES Settling in

The clinician introduces themselves and explains how the session works, then asks what brings you in. Nothing is decided yet.

2 THE BULK OF THE TIME The conversation

Talking through what has been going on, at your pace. You will not be expected to have it in order, or to get through everything.

3 THE LAST FEW MINUTES A sense of next

Together you sketch what the work could look like, and the right next step. A first session is a start, not a verdict.

WORTH BRINGING, IF IT HELPS

- A few notes, if speaking on the spot feels hard
- 'What you did, and how it landed' or 'What has drifted', if done
- Any current medications, or a recent GP letter
- One or two examples of how the low mood shows up

WHAT YOU DO NOT NEED

- A clear reason, or a single thing that "caused" it
- A tidy story, in order, with no gaps
- To seem like you are coping, or to hold it together
- The energy to have prepared anything at all

THE WORRIES PEOPLE MOST OFTEN ARRIVE WITH

What if I can't say why I feel this way?

Very common. Depression can arrive without a clear cause, or with reasons that do not feel big enough to explain it. You do not need a reason to be struggling, and not knowing why is itself something the conversation can hold.

Is the first session an assessment?

No, it is the start of therapy. Part of it is spent understanding what has been going on and working out a next step together, not delivering a verdict on the day.

What if I have no energy to talk, or get upset?

Low energy and tears are part of what you are coming about, not a problem in the room. You do not have to perform being okay; the clinician can help carry the conversation when it feels hard.

YOU DO NOT NEED THE RIGHT WORDS TO START

- "I don't really know where to begin."
- "I've been feeling flat for a while and I'm not sure why."
- "My GP suggested I come."
- "I almost didn't come today."

Any of these is a fine way in. You do not have to explain yourself well, or all at once. The clinician will take it from there, and ask what they need to know.

FOUR THINGS WORTH A THOUGHT BEFOREHAND the prompts on page 2, none required

WHAT BRINGS YOU IN

What tipped you into making the appointment. There need not be one clear reason.

HOW IT SHOWS UP

Where the low mood lands and what has dropped away, in your own words.

WHAT HAS HELPED

Anything that lifted it even briefly, and what never did.

WHAT YOU WOULD WANT

One or two things that would be different if this went well.

REMEMBER You do not need to perform a first session, explain the cause, or arrive with energy to spare. Turning up is enough, notes are welcome, and the rest is built together. Page 2 has four gentle prompts to think on, if you would like to.

Four prompts, four boxes

Fill any of the boxes that help you think.

Leave the rest blank. No box is required, and the order does not matter. A few sentences per box is plenty, and notes you can read aloud are perfect. If a box feels like too much today, that is fine to leave too.

1 WHAT BRINGS YOU IN

What tipped you into making this appointment?

A few sentences in your own words. What is going on now, and what you are hoping it might help with. There does not have to be one clear reason.

2 HOW IT SHOWS UP

Where does the low mood land, and what has dropped away?

The pattern in your own words, not a checklist. Energy, sleep, interest, the things you have stopped doing, what it costs you.

3 WHAT HAS HELPED

What has helped, even a little, and what never did?

Supports, people, treatment, earlier therapy. What lifted it even briefly, what did not, what you have stopped trying.

4 WHAT YOU WOULD WANT

If this went well, what would be different for you?

Not the perfect future. One or two things a useful change might look like, in your day or how you see yourself.

WHEN YOU ARE READY

Bring this if it helps. Leave it at home if it does not.

If you would like to talk before booking a first session, the Meet and Greet is a short call to see if we are the right fit, with no obligation to continue.

MEET AND GREET

Free

15 minutes

Online or in-person

No obligation