



**CLARITY  
COGNITION®**

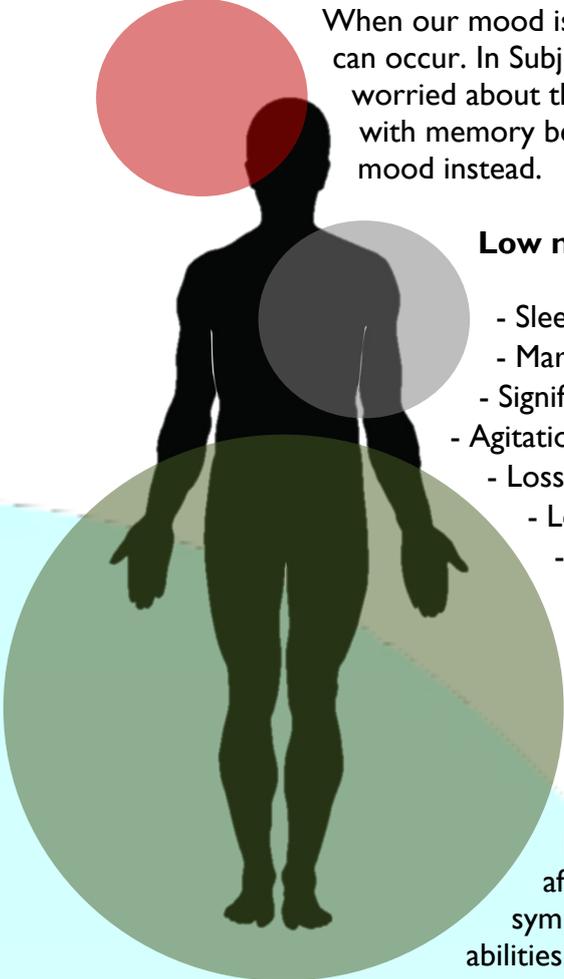
*Mood*

**CLARITY COGNITION**

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## Low Mood

Low mood has been referred to as the “*common cold of the mind*”. Feeling low, sad or depressed is incredibly common and can impact us in a variety of different ways.



When our mood is low, a variety of symptoms such as those listed below can occur. In Subjective Cognitive Impairment (SCI), where people become worried about their memory, it is common for one to recognise issues with memory before recognising that there may in fact be an issue with mood instead.

### **Low mood causes:**

- Sleep disturbance
- Marked loss of pleasure
- Significant change in appetite and changes in weight
- Agitation or feeling slowed down
- Loss of energy
- Low self-esteem
- Difficulties concentrating
- Indecisiveness
- Memory bias: selective recollection of negative items

When there is a concern over memory, it is not uncommon for low mood to play a role in maintaining these difficulties. When mood is low, it can cause us to have more negative thoughts which can consequently affect our concentration, sleep and appetite. These symptoms can have a temporary impact on our cognitive abilities.

Low mood can lead us to noticing a perceived impairment in our cognition, but often there are other things underpinning this rather than a true memory problem.

## **The Effects of Low Mood on Cognition “Common Traps”**

### **Memory Bias Trap:**

When our mood is low, this gives rise to a bias in what we remember, **recalling things that are negative** in nature rather than positive. For example, when mood is compromised, you would be more likely to recall the last time you forgot something but would be unlikely to freely recall a time where you did remember something. When our attention is focused on more negative information, this impacts our ability to focus on other things, reducing our cognitive bandwidth.

**Low mood = recall negative more than positive memories**

### Poor Concentration & Attention Trap:

A symptom of low mood is poor concentration and attention. If our concentration is poor, we cannot attend to items in the same way and this does not allow for items to be encoded or written into our memories. Without encoding, memories are not formed in the first place, so you feel you have forgotten them but in reality, you did not concentrate well enough to write them into your memory in the first place.

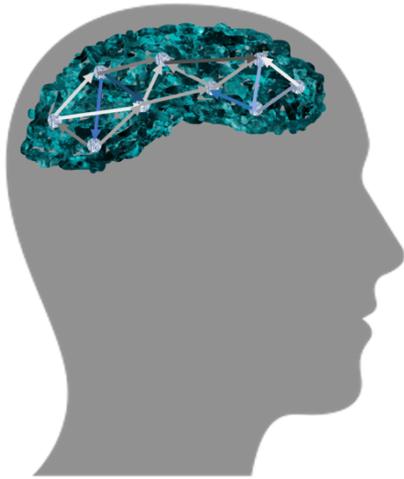
**Reduced concentration = poor **encoding** of memory**

### Poor Sleep Trap:

In low mood, it is very common for sleep to be affected. **During sleep we consolidate our memories.** When our sleep is poor, this process is disrupted which can in turn impact memory. Poor sleep is also likely to affect our concentration, again making it difficult to encode and recall memories that were never formed.

**Reduced sleep = poor **consolidation** of memory**





### Rumination Trap:

Rumination is a common thought process that occurs when our mood is low. Rumination is when we think repetitively and also passively about negative emotions and experiences, focusing on the distress associated with the experience(s). Research into rumination suggests that it can impact our ability to process information other than what we are ruminating on. In this way, our attentional focus is reduced, and we might not process other external stimuli in our environments leading to poor encoding.

**Rumination = negative focus and poor encoding**

### Decoding Our Thoughts

When we feel concerned about our cognition, we will most commonly recognise how that makes us feel but it can be difficult to unpack what is driving that particular feeling. It is important to note that the same events do not give rise to the same emotions for different people. What differentiates our responses is our **interpretation** of what happens.

Our interpretations come in the form of thoughts.

It is therefore not the event itself that matters, but the **meaning** of the specific event to you as individual that is important. It is this that gives rise to the varied emotional responses that we as humans experience. If an emotional response seems out of proportion, the distinctive meaning of that event to an individual explains the reaction and why we do not all react in the same way to things.

When our mood is low, it is common for more of these **negative thoughts** to occur. If we have known someone who has dementia and/or we already hold strong beliefs regarding what it might mean to have a cognitive problem, these negative thoughts often latch onto the things that we are more sensitive about. For example, it is common for those who have relatives with dementia to be more concerned about their own memory. These beliefs often develop as a result of experiences we have had throughout life and when we think of the context from which these beliefs arise, it is understandable why they can impact our mood in the way they do.

Sometimes you will be able to break free from the “traps” that are compromising your mood and cognition by yourself. However, although the notion of breaking these traps is simple, it is not always easy to put into practice.

It is not unusual to need support from healthcare professionals. If you feel that this is the case, speak to your GP and/or therapist regarding these issues. Our **Clarity Course** teaches you techniques to spot difficulties with mood, identify negative thought processes and how to override problematic thoughts to enhance mood and ultimately, your cognition.



**My thoughts and action plan, based on the information in this leaflet:**

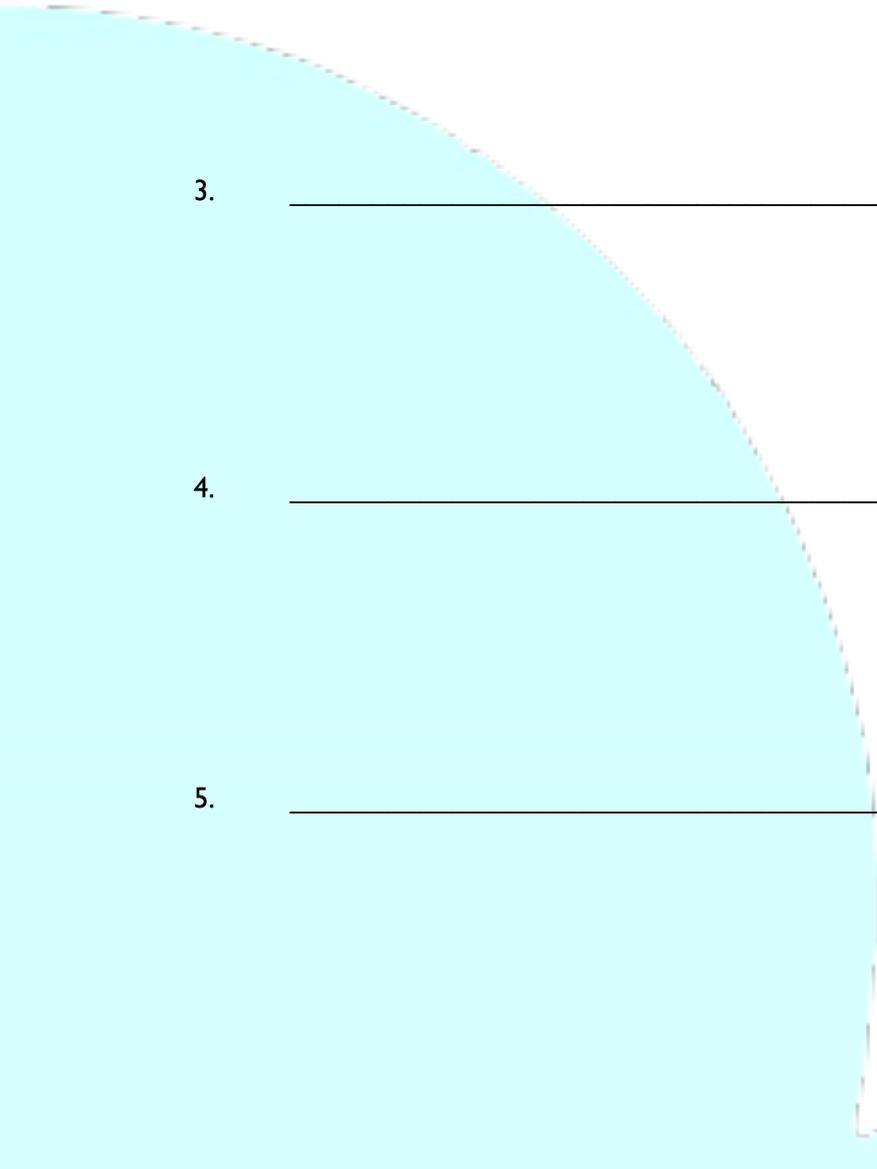
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