

SELF-AWARENESS TOOL

Fill out the following questionnaire each evening over the course of a few days. When filling out the questionnaire, it may be helpful to think of a specific life area in which you are currently experiencing sadness.

WHAT SPARKED YOUR SADNESS?

■ What was the event that made you feel sad?

Example: I heard that I didn't get the job I had applied for

SELF-AWARENESS TIP:

See if you can identify a pattern of some common events that make you feel sad. What is it specifically about these events that makes you feel sad? Is there a common theme between them all?

■ What other feelings did you experience in addition to sadness?

Example: Loneliness, despair, frustration, fear

SELF-AWARENESS TIP:

Our emotions act as guides to show us where our needs are not being met or where we perceive they are not being met. By considering the wider emotional picture you may be able to pinpoint what you feel is missing for you at the moment and contributing to your experience of sadness. For example, if you feel sad and lonely – is your need for connection not being met? Can you take any practical action to help yourself feel more connected to people?

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

- Write down all the thoughts that you had when you were feeling sad – be as specific as you can.

Example: “This is hopeless, I’m never going to get the job I want”

SELF-AWARENESS TIP:

Sometimes when our mood is low our perspective on situations can get distorted. We may overemphasise the negative consequences of an event, be overly critical of ourselves and others or feel like there is no hope for the situation improving. Ask yourself whether your thoughts reflect the reality of the situation? Use our [Tackling What Keeps Sadness Going](#) resource to help you do this in a structured way.

- Did you give yourself some time to properly acknowledge and experience the feeling of sadness? Or did you try to distract yourself?

SELF-AWARENESS TIP:

Sadness is not a negative emotion. It’s a natural response to certain situations and only becomes a concern when it is experienced on a sustained basis. When something upsets you, it’s much healthier to actually accept and let yourself experience the feeling of sadness than to try and deny the emotion through distracting yourself. Crying can actually be a healthy release in a situation where you feel sad. Next time you feel sad see if you can take a few minutes to fully accept, acknowledge and experience the feeling before taking action.

- When you were feeling sad, what actions did you take?

Example: Called a friend to talk, went to sleep, went on a night out, smoked a cigarette

SELF-AWARENESS TIP:

Try to categorise your actions into helpful or unhelpful actions. Quick fix strategies like smoking or eating chocolate may make you feel better in the short term but will not resolve the actual reason as to why you are feeling sad. Can you do something positive to feel better emotionally (like talking to a friend)?

- How long have you been feeling sad for? Did your feeling of sadness arise from a specific event? Have you been feeling consistently sad for a number of weeks?

SELF-AWARENESS TIP:

Prolonged periods of sadness may require some expert support and guidance to resolve. If you have experienced many of the following over a number of weeks, it might be helpful to seek advice from your GP.

- Difficulty concentrating
- Inability to experience pleasure
- Increase in self-critical thoughts with a voice in the back of one's mind providing a constant barrage of harsh, negative statements
- Sleep disturbance or unable to fall back to sleep
- Feeling fatigued after 12 hours of sleep
- Decrease in appetite or food loses its taste
- Feelings of guilt, helplessness and/or hopelessness
- Thoughts of suicide
- Increased isolation
- Missing deadlines or a drop in standards
- Change in personality
- Increased sexual promiscuity
- Increased alcohol or drug use