

Depression: Rating Your Mood

When you have depression, it may seem like you're sad or numb all day long and you may not even know where to start when your doctor asks how you've been feeling.

Mood tracking can be a powerful tool in understanding the patterns of your depression. It can help you become aware of the people and situations that affect your mood in both good and bad ways. And learning to recognize these emotions is one way to start feeling less controlled by depression.

Mood tracking is pretty simple. Why not try it now? All you need is a pen and a piece of paper. If you need to go get them, just pause the video.

Ready? Okay think about something that happened yesterday or today that brought up a strong feeling. It could be just a small thing. Make a short note about what happened. Then write down how it made you feel. Feelings can usually be described in one word. If you had more than one feeling, list them all.

Now rate how strong or intense each feeling was on a scale of 1 to 10. A 1 means I felt it a little and a 10 means I felt it a lot.

Here's an example. Kim wrote, Broke my favorite mug. Next to that, she wrote "upset," which she rated an 8.

When Kim feels upset, it may be because she's telling herself, You always ruin things. You're a failure. By noticing and naming her feelings, Kim can start to uncover the self-defeating thoughts behind them, thoughts that may be feeding her depression.

How you keep track of your mood is up to you. You can make a chart on your computer or use an online tracker or smart phone app but plain old pencil and paper work too. Do whatever's easy for you.

Tracking your mood may sound like a big job, but it doesn't have to be. You may have mood shifts several times a day. Don't try to do them all, just pick two or three. Try tracking for a few weeks, and see what you learn. You may be surprised by the feelings that pop up and the patterns you notice.

Mood tracking can help you gain a greater sense of control over your mood and that can be an important step toward getting better. Share your tracking with your doctor or therapist, who can help you take the next steps.