WHO CAN HELP?

**Depression Alliance Scotland**
Help and support for people experiencing depression and low mood.
Tel: 0845 123 23 20
Website: www.dascot.org

**Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland**
Information, help and support for people with chest, heart and stroke conditions.
Advice Line: 0845 077 6000
Website: www.chss.org.uk

**British Heart Foundation Scotland**
Information, help and support for people with heart conditions.
Heart Helpline: 0300 330 3311
Website: www.bhf.org.uk

**Samaritans**
Confidential, emotional support 24/7 to those experiencing despair, distress or suicidal feelings
Helpline: 08457 909 090 24 hours
Website: www.samaritans.org.uk

**Breathing Space**
A free confidential helpline to call when feeling down or stressed
Helpline: 0800 83 85 87
Website: www.breathingspace.co.uk

**Stresswatch Scotland**
Supports recovery from stress, anxiety and related conditions
Helpline: 01563 574 184
Email: info@stresswatchscotland.org
Website: www.stresswatchscotland.org

**Living to the Full**
A free online life skills course developed in Scotland based on cognitive behaviour therapy
Website: www.livinglifetothefull.com

**Living Better**
Improving mental health and wellbeing of people with long term conditions
More information on the project can be found at: www.livingbetter-scotland.org.uk

HEART DISEASE & MOOD

Many people who have heart disease find that they experience low mood, depression and anxiety. Research has found that one in five people with heart disease are likely to experience depression and anxiety. Considerably more than in the general population.

There are many reasons why this may be but whatever the cause, if you have heart disease and are finding your mood is affected, you don't have to feel like this; there are things you can do to feel better.

Unfortunately many people don't seek help because they don't recognise the symptoms and don't realise that this is what is going on. Many people don't want to speak about how they feel because they are scared of being labelled mentally ill.

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Why do I feel low?
• When you are diagnosed with heart disease it is common to experience powerful emotions.
• It can be frustrating learning to live with a longer term health condition particularly if you’ve not had any health concerns before.
• You may feel fed up with the changes to your lifestyle and having to visit your clinic and GP regularly.
• You may feel isolated from your friends and family and feel like you can’t take part in activities you used to share as easily as before.

How does my mood affect my heart disease?
• Many people with low mood feel they can’t be bothered to do things they really need to do. This inactivity can make you feel even lower or more stressed leading to a vicious cycle.
• Feeling low can affect your motivation to address any lifestyle issues that may be contributing to health.
• Feeling low may cause you to not take important medication that has been prescribed for you.
• Feeling low can encourage you to turn to more harmful behaviour such as over eating, smoking and drinking alcohol for comfort and stress relief.

HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY LOW MOOD?

Talk about it
When you feel low or anxious, it can be difficult to tell someone else how you feel. You may feel that people don’t want to listen to you being miserable. However talking about how you feel to your friends, family, doctor or practice nurse is an important step on the road to recovery. You could also call a helpline; we’ve listed some in the Who Can Help? section in this leaflet.

Your GP
One way to get help is to speak to your GP. Building up a good relationship with your GP can be a real help in getting better. If you feel that it is difficult to speak to him or her, it may be worth finding out if there is another GP in your practice who knows more about depression or who is easier to talk to. It is perfectly acceptable to make an appointment to see a different GP in the same practice.

Antidepressants
Antidepressant drugs work by increasing the levels of certain chemicals in the brain. There are many different types of antidepressants and different people will respond to different drugs. Some antidepressants, in particular older drugs, can cause weight gain and so it’s important to keep an eye on your weight and speak to your GP if you have any concerns or side effects.

Talking Therapies
There are different talking therapies available, including cognitive behavioural therapy, psychotherapy and counselling. These can help you explore why you feel like you do and how to change it. You can get therapy through the NHS, voluntary organisations or privately.

Support Groups
Self-help support groups enable you to meet others who feel like you do. This can help you feel less alone. Depression Alliance Scotland runs groups for people who feel low; you don’t need a diagnosis of depression. Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland (CHSS) heart groups offer people living with heart disease a chance to meet and share experiences with others. This includes emotional support as many other people at the group will have also experienced low mood or stress.

Increase physical activity
Exercise, especially structured physical activity, has been found to alleviate depression. You will have to speak to your GP before starting a programme of exercise. Many CHSS heart groups have an exercise element.

Learning to control anxiety can help
It is very good to learn to relax so that you can call on this feeling when you get anxious. Things you can do to help yourself relax include exercise, meeting friends, learning a relaxation technique, reading a good book, playing with your pets, having a long bath, whatever helps you switch off. Learning breathing control will help you cope if you feel anxious or paniczy. You can download free anxiety control training modules from Living Life to the Full, a free online life skills course.

Alternative therapies
Therapies like acupuncture, tai chi, reflexology and yoga can help some people relax and feel better about themselves.

Food
Eating a healthy balanced diet can help lift your mood. Factsheets about eating healthily and food and mood are available from organisations listed.