

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **SADNESS AND DEPRESSION**

**[Please note: Two depression scales are available, after the references. Readers may choose to print the text only, without these additional pages.]**

#### **Introduction**

In the current era, there is a tendency to “medicalize” the human condition (Summerfield, 2006). By this is meant, certain aspects of what was regarded as “normal” human behaviour and experience a decade ago, have been “re-badged” as medical conditions (van Praag, 2000). An example: what was formerly described as promiscuous or self indulgent sexual behaviour is being “diagnosed” in pop-psychology and some quasi-professional journals as “sexual addiction”. Some critics consider medicine is removing the burden of responsibility from the individual and encroaching on the field of morality.

Chapter 32 deals in detail with the “medicalization”. It is relevant, here, to mention an important book by Horwitz A, & Wakefield (2007): “The Loss of Sadness: How psychiatry transformed normal sorrow into depressive disorder”.

In this chapter we are concerned with certain “normal” and “abnormal” human emotional states (we will not, however, be stumbling around in the land-mined field of morality). Does it matter what is normal and abnormal? At times when the province of medicine is considered to be limited to the abnormal, yes, the distinction is important. An example: Medicare covers the cost of only certain cosmetic surgery procedures, it will cover the cost of repairing a face damaged by an accident but not the passage of time (a face-lift for loss of skin elasticity). But the contrary view, that the distinction between normal and abnormal is unimportant, can be strongly argued. The modern practitioner is expected to provide comfort and assistance to those in need, and the prevention of pathology is regarded as a greater good than its treatment. Example: the management of obesity and mild elevation of the blood pressure, neither of which are diseases, are legitimate activities for medical practitioners.

In this chapter we will look briefly at the experiences of sadness, grief and demoralization, and then spend the majority of our energy on the pathological conditions which have sadness as a prominent feature.

#### **DSM-IV and ICD-10 classification**

The current diagnostic systems in psychiatry are descriptive. McHugh (2005) states the time has come to move to an etiological perspective. His proposed etiological approach involves 4 clusters: 1) “brain disease”, in which there is disruption of neural underpinnings, 2) “vulnerability because of psychological make-up”, 3) the adoption of behaviour “that has become a relatively fixed and warped way of life”, and 4) “conditions provoked by events that thwart or threaten”.

With respect to “depression”, Cluster 1 would include psychotic, melancholic, biological and endogenous (these terms are not mutually exclusive) depression, Cluster 2 would incorporate the low mood associated with some personality types, Cluster 3 would incorporate the depression which is secondary to, or associated with, conditions including alcoholism, pathological gambling and anorexia nervosa, and Cluster 4 would incorporate the low mood of grief, situational anxiety and posttraumatic disorder. Such a system of classification would assist in determining the most appropriate professional response.

### **Sadness**

All of us have experienced sadness, the undesired emotion which accompanies undesired events, such as loss of a valued object or individual, or failure to achieve a desired goal. While healthy people report days when they are “a bit down” for no apparent reason, in healthy people, deeper and longer-lasting sadness occurs only as a reaction to events.

In the mood disorders, the mood shifts excessively in response to a minor event, or in the absence of a triggering/stimulating event, and once established the excessive/pathological mood remains.

### **Grief**

Grief is the term applied to the unpleasant experience of having lost a close person [usually a friend or family member, but this can be associated with the loss of a public figure, such as Lady Dianna]. Also, this experience can result from the loss of inanimate objects, such as a collection of valuable art works gathered over a lifetime.

Grief is emotional pain, accompanied by a longing for the return of the lost object, and a feeling of loss, emptiness and incompleteness. In Western cultures there may be crying, insomnia and loss of appetite. There may be a sense of guilt at being alive in the absence of the lost person, and auditory and visual hallucinations of the lost person are not unusual (and are not evidence of psychosis).

Culture influences both the expression and experience of grief. Some cultures have clear rules for the behaviour and dress of the bereaved, and even the precise length of the grieving/mourning process. The details may vary depending on the nature of the relationship (universally, spouses grieve longer than siblings). There are advantages to having culturally approved grieving protocols. The bereaved individual, who is distressed and finds making decisions difficult, has a clear script/ritual to follow. Adhering to the ritual ensures no one is offended during this time of emotional arousal. Also, once all steps/obligations have been fulfilled there is an official end point to the grieving, and the bereaved person is allowed/expected to return to their usual life. A structured grieving process (uncommon in Western cultures) reduces the likelihood of “delayed” or “pathological” grief.

Grief is not classified as a mental disorder in the DSM-IV. However, we have all heard reports of people who “never got over” the loss of a loved one. The loss of a

loved person is one of the great traumas of life, and may trigger a range of pathological psychological states.

The grief reaction is considered to have become “pathological” when it persists longer than usual or has unusual features (Nakamura, 1999). There is concern when the grief is not abating some months after the death. It is generally believed [in the West] the grieving process, in the case of a spouse, takes 6 to 12 months. Grief and pathological grief are yet to be fully elucidated. For example, what does “recovery” mean following the loss of a spouse of 50 years? Pathological grief is not listed in the DSM-IV; but it satisfies the DSM criteria of “distress and disability”, thus disorder status may be justified (Boelen and van den Bout, 2008).

The bereaved individual who has not eaten or slept and is inconsolable one week after the event is probably suffering excessively. While a sense of guilt at having survived is not uncommon, any delusions of guilt should be regarded as pathological.

### **Grieving widow commits suicide**

AN inconsolable widow has taken her own life almost three months to the day after her husband was killed in the World Trade Center in New York.

On December 10, Patricia Flounders, 51, fired a single shot to her head as she stood in the bedroom of the couple's dream country home in Pennsylvania, completed just three days before the terror attacks.

Her husband of 21 years, Joe Flounders — a bond trader on the 84th floor — was in the south tower when the second plane hit.

Illustration. Newspaper clipping. Pathological grief is difficult to define, but can end in suicide.

When pathological guilt is suspected, it is important to exclude other diagnosable conditions (major depressive disorder or anxiety disorders) which may have been triggered by the loss. Along with grief counselling and support, any co-morbid disorders should be treated in the standard manner.

In a recent medico-legal case in Australia, parents who had lost a son sued for compensation. For their claim to succeed it was necessary for them to have suffered a mental disorder. Assessing psychiatrists found that these people had and were suffering greatly as a result of the loss of their son, and there were no other mental disorders. The defence argued that because grief does not appear in the DSM-IV, it was not a diagnosable mental disorder, and the parents therefore, could not be suffering a recognised mental disorder. The judge found in favour of the parents, that they were, indeed, suffering a mental disorder, even though it could not be diagnosed

using the DSM-IV. Thus, in Australia, grief/pathological grief is a mental disorder from the legal, though not from the medical perspective (Pridmore, 2005).

### **Demoralization**

Evidence suggests that demoralization is distinct from, and may be confused with major mental disorder (Clarke & Kissane, 2002).

An English dictionary definition of demoralize: “to deprive a person of spirit, courage or discipline; to reduce to a state of weakness or disorder”.

Demoralization has been most commonly discussed as a consequence of unremitting, unavoidable stress. It has most often been described in the context of chronic physical or psychiatric disorders, but is reported in a range of adverse situations (Gutkovich et al, 1999).

Frank (1974) observed that demoralization “results from persistent failure to cope with internally or externally induced stresses that the person and those close to him expect him to handle”. The features include feelings of “impotence, isolation, and despair”, damaged self-esteem, and a sense of “alienation” or “meaninglessness of life”.

Animal studies yield the notion of “learned helplessness” (Seligman, 1975). If an animal is subjected to inescapable stress (an electrified cage floor), it eventually stops trying to escape and “gives up” (quivering and inactive). It has been suggested that learned helplessness may be a model for battered wife syndrome. Learned helplessness is a better model for demoralization than depression.

Slavney (1999) observes that in demoralization, “the mood is sad, apprehensive or irritable; thinking is pessimistic and sometimes suicidal; behaviour can be passive, demanding, or uncooperative; and sleep and appetite are often disturbed.” However, he draws a comparison with grief, denies demoralization constitutes a psychiatric disorder and designates it “a normal response in certain circumstances”. (As mentioned, the distinction between normal and abnormal is of little consequence when people are distressed and seeking assistance.)

Clark et al (2000) studied hospitalized medically ill patients and found the concepts of demoralization, grief and anhedonia (the inability to experience pleasure, a central feature of depressive disorders) to be separate dimensions. They found suicidal ideation loaded on the demoralization dimension rather than the anhedonia dimension. This is consistent with the view that suicidal behaviour is related to a sense of helplessness and alienation (Patfield, 2000) rather than a direct consequence of depressed mood. More recent work (Butterworth et al, 2006) has confirmed an association between demoralization and suicidal behaviour.

De Figueiredo (1993) differentiated depression from demoralization; depression being characterized by anhedonia, and demoralization by a feelings of subjective incompetence and helplessness. In his view, demoralized people are inhibited by not

knowing what to do, while the depressed have lost the motivation and drive to do things (even though they know what needs to be done).

Gutkovich et al (1999) studied émigrés in USA. They found large proportions of people with, 1) depression and no demoralization, 2) demoralization and no depression, and 3) with both.

Commonly used psychological instruments do not allow the differentiation of demoralization from depression (Loxton et al, 2006). The recently described Four-Dimensional Symptom Questionnaire (see later; Terluin et al, 2006) addresses this issue by placing the symptoms, “can’t cope anymore” and “can’t face it anymore” in the dimension of “distress”, rather than “depression”.

Current evidence suggests that demoralization is a separate entity from depression. Of course, the adversity which triggers demoralization may also trigger depression, and demoralization may be a risk factor for depression. The appeal of the concept of demoralization is that as the condition arises out of adversity and the perception of the individual that he/she is powerless to influence his/her situation, effective management programs should be possible, using established psychotherapy principles (Clarke & Kissane, 2002).

## **Depression**

In this section, those psychiatric disorders will be outlined, in which the mood is changed in the direction of sadness/depression. It is important to be aware that in these disorders, mood change is not the only symptom; others include vegetative symptoms such as sleep and appetite change. Thus, these disorders are diagnosed using batches or patterns of symptoms.

The main disorders include major depressive disorder, bipolar depression and dysthymia. Until recent times it was thought that the depressed episodes of major depressive disorder and bipolar depression were much the same. This is now in doubt; certainly bipolar depression is frequently more difficult to treat. Dysthymia is distressing condition, but the depth or the sadness and impairment of function is less severe than major depressive disorder and bipolar depression.

## **Major depressive episode**

A major depressive episode is a batch of symptoms, and is much the same for major depressive disorder and bipolar depression. The final diagnosis of major depressive disorder (as opposed to bipolar depression) depends on whether there has been an episode of mania (pathological mood elevation) in the past.

Criteria for major depressive episode:

1. At least one of the following for at least two weeks:
  - persistent depressed mood
  - loss of interest and pleasure.
2. At least four of the following:

- significant weight loss or gain
- insomnia or increased sleep
- agitation (worrying and physical restlessness) or retardation (slowed thinking and moving)
- fatigue or loss of energy
- feelings of worthlessness or inappropriate guilt
- diminished ability to concentrate or indecisiveness
- thoughts of death or suicide.

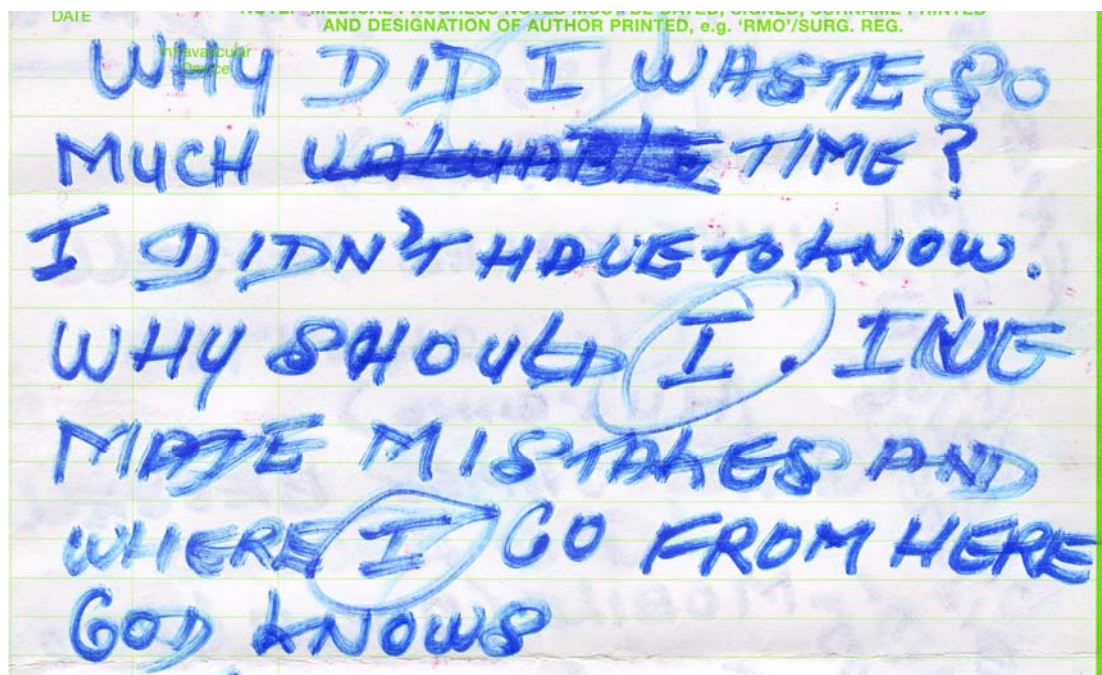


Illustration. This was written by a 65 year old female with severe depression. Depressed people do not write a lot of notes, they usually lack energy and initiative. This is a rare example of someone with unjustified guilt feelings (as a result of depression). She is self critical, stating that she has wasted time. She circles the letter "I" on two occasions, to emphasise that she is the one at fault. She states that she has made mistakes, and she is uncertain/pessimistic about the future.

### Major depressive disorder

Major depressive disorder is diagnosed when there is/has been one or more major depressive episodes and no history of mania or hypomania.

This serious disorder causes great suffering and may end in suicide. The prevalence in Western societies is 5.4 to 8.9 % (Narrow et al, 2002). A recent modelling study found that close to half the population can expect one or more episodes of depression in their lifetime (Andrews et al, 2005). The prevalence of depressive disorder is twice as common in females. The average age of onset is in the mid-20s.

80% of people who suffer a major depressive episode will have recurrent episodes. The clinical course of depression is not as favourable as commonly believed. In fact,

at one year follow up, only 40% of patients are symptom free, 20% have some residual symptoms, and the final 40% still have depressive disorder. It has long been believed that 15% of people with either major depressive disorder or bipolar disorder die by suicide, however, recent work gives the much lower figure of 3.4% (Blair-West & Mellsoop, 2001)

### *Aetiology*

Abnormalities in a range of neurotransmitter have been proposed, including serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine, GABA, acetylcholine, somatostatin, corticotrophin releasing factor, and substance P. Other agents which have been described in abnormal amounts include brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF: Kapczynski et al, 2008) and plasma ceramides (lipid components of neuron membranes; Garcia-Garcia et al, 2011), and abnormal immune responses (Li et al, 2011a).

The predominate view has been that abnormalities of the monoamine neurotransmitters are the primary deficit in mood disorders. However, glutamatergic transmission is now receiving some attention (Zartate et al, 2010). This has been encouraged by the success of ketamine, to induce rapid improvement in severe depressive disorder (Diazgranados et al, 2010a&b).

[Glutamate is the most abundant excitatory neurotransmitter in the brain. It acts in the presynaptic, post synaptic neurons, and the glia, in an arrangement which has been called the “tripartite glutamatergic synapse”. A large number of receptors and other structures are involved. It is probable that both NMDAR antagonism and AMPAR activation are involved in ketamine’s antidepressant effects. However, an exciting report in Nature (Autry et al, 2011) indicates that NMDAR agonists exert an antidepressant action by increasing the synthesis of brain-derived neurotrophic factor. Metabotropic Glutamate receptors [mGluRs] modulators are also being investigated for antidepressant actions.]

Heritability of depression is estimated to be in the range 31-42% (Ebmeier, et al, 2006). No single gene has been identified. A multitude of genes with small effect are likely to be involved, which interact with environmental factors.

In addition to genetic factors, other risk factors include neurotic personality traits, low self-esteem, early onset anxiety, a history of conduct disorder, substance misuse, adversity, interpersonal difficulties, low parental warmth, childhood sexual abuse, low education, lifetime trauma, low social support, divorce and stressful life events (Kendler, et al, 2006).

### *Post-mortem studies*

Anterior cingulate cortex – cortical and layer thickness was not changed. In a post-mortem study of anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) in mood disorder, although layer thickness was unchanged, there was decreased density of glial cells across all layers. The density of pyramidal neurons and the shapes of neurons differed in some layers (Gittens and Harrison, 2011). Thus, morphometric alterations in glial and pyramidal neurons in mood disorder were demonstrated.

### *Neuroimaging*

Some neuroimaging reports on “depression” do not make a clear distinction between MDD and bipolar disorder depression. Such studies are mentioned under this heading. Studies of bipolar depression listed below, under that heading.

White matter hyperintensities (or white matter lesions) are discrete regions which appear brighter on T2-weighted MRI scans (reflecting a localized change in water content in that tissue). While hyperintensities are associated with increasing vascular disease and age, they have a clear association with major depressive disorder and bipolar depression (Videbech, 1997). A longitudinal study demonstrated that matter changes pre-date, and therefore may be causally related to the development of depressive symptoms (Teodorczuk et al, 2007).

MDD diffusion tensor imaging studies (DTI) have shown wide spread white matter abnormalities in first-episode medication naïve patients (Wu et al, 2011).

Ventral tegmentum (a primary component of the subcortical reward/aversion circuitry) was examined in MDD using DTI. Microstructural abnormalities were demonstrated (Blood et al, 2011).

Hippocampal reduction (using MRI) has been demonstrated in MDD (Campbell et al 2004; Saylam et al, 2006).

Anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) has received much attention. ACC based neural network (including various other areas of prefrontal cortex, amygdala, hippocampus, striatum and thalamus) may have a central role in mood disorders (Drevets and Savitz, 2008). This group found ACC gray matter reduced in size, blood flow and metabolism. This group had also demonstrated gray matter loss in the ACC to be due to reduction of glia.

They remind us that repeated stress can lead to dendritic atrophy and reduction in glial cells (in rodents). This may result from increased glutamate stimulation and glucocorticoid release. The ACC contains cortisol receptors (which turn off cortisol), and damage to the ACC could result in a positive feedback loop with ever increasing cortisol release, and emotional dysregulation.

ACC of people with major depressive disorder, has been found to contain low concentrations of glutamate, glutamine and Glx (a composite measure, mainly glutamate and glutamine) during depressive episodes, in a meta-analysis of magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS) studies (Luykx et al, 2011).

Resting cerebral metabolism (using PET) and scores on the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS) in MDD have been compared (Milak et al, 2005). Total HDRS scores correlated positively with activity in a large bilateral ventral cortical and subcortical region that includes limbic, thalamic and basal ganglia structures. Distinct correlation patterns were found with 3 individual HDRS factors. Psychic depression correlated positively with metabolism in the cingulate gyrus, thalamus, and basal ganglia. Sleep disturbance correlated positively with metabolism in the limbic

structures and basal ganglia. Loss of motivated behaviour was negatively associated with parietal and superior frontal cortical areas.

In summary, neuroimaging studies in mood disorder are yielding rich scientific information, but this has not yet been translated into clinical applications. There is widespread loss of white and gray matter and alterations in chemical composition and metabolism. ACC has received particular attention, and loss of glia in this structure has been suggested.

### *Cognition*

In acute major depression, 63% of people have cognitive difficulties (compared to 3.3% of controls,  $p < 0.001$ ; Afridi et al, 2011). Attention/concentration is the domain most commonly affected, followed by memory disturbance.

Neurocognitive deficits may be present during remission, and are independent of mood status (Neu et al, 2001; Jaeger et al, 2006).

### *Treatment*

The etiological approach of McHugh (2005) assists in treatment.

Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy which may be effective in mild depression. The theoretical basis of CBT is that depressive symptoms arise from dysfunctional beliefs and thought processes which are the result of past experience and learning. CBT aims to identify these negative thoughts and replace them with informed and logical thinking habits.

Medication is recommended in the treatment of moderate and severe depression and in mild depression where psychotherapy has failed to provide improvement. Medication may be given in addition to psychotherapy.

ACC measurement (using MRI) has been suggested as a predictor of antidepressant treatment response (Chen et al, 2007).

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which increase the concentration of serotonin in the synaptic clefts (fluoxetine, paroxetine, fluvoxamine, citalopram and sertraline), are the most widely used. Dual action agents increase availability of both serotonin and norepinephrine (venlafaxine and mirtazapine) are perhaps more potent than the SSRIs.

Older medications include the tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) are less commonly used at the current time, because they have more side-effects and present a greater risk in overdose. However, they are effective and continue to be used by some specialist practitioners.

In recent years, the NMDAR antagonist, ketamine, has been administered intravenously for rapid remission of MDD, which has not been responsive to other treatments (Diazgrandos et al 2010b)

Other non-drug physical treatments of unremitting depression include electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS).

Chapter 16 (Antidepressant drugs) provides additional information.

### **Bipolar depression**

Much of what appears under the heading of MDD also applies in bipolar depression, that is, the depressed phase of bipolar disorder (the other phase being mania, or the lesser version, hypomania).

Bipolar disorder will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 9. Here, brief mention will be made of bipolar depression.

In the mid 1960's the conclusion was drawn that bipolar disorder (formerly manic depressive psychosis) and major depressive disorder (also termed unipolar depression) are different disorders (Perris, 1966).

Over recent years it has become clear that much bipolar depression has been misdiagnosed as major depressive disorder. This is important as there are treatment implications. For example, bipolar depression is more treatment resistant, and bipolar depression should not be treated with an antidepressant as monotherapy, because of the risk of precipitating an episode of mania (Post, 2006).

Accordingly, there have been attempts to identify clinical features which may differentiate bipolar depression from major depressive disorder. To the present time there has been limited success. The best researched list of features indicating bipolar depression comes from Mitchell et al, (2004):

- signs of psychomotor retardation
- feelings of worthlessness, unvarying mood, marked anhedonia
- leaden paralysis, hypersomnia, past psychotic symptoms during depression
- absence of anxiety, initial insomnia, tearfulness, and tendency to blame others.

#### *Cognition*

Neurocognitive deficits have been quantified (Czobor et al, 2007).

#### *Histology*

Post-mortem study of the hippocampus in bipolar disorder has shown specific alteration of interneurons, including a reduction in somal volume and numbers (Konradi et al, 2011). Hippocampal interneurons modulate the activity of principal hippocampal neurons, so this finding will have clinical consequences.

#### *Neuroimaging*

A meta-analysis of brain structure in people with bipolar disorder (CT and MRI; Kempton et al, 2008) incorporating the results of almost 100 studies (3509 patients) found, 1) bipolar disorder was associated with increase lateral ventricle enlargement

( $P=8 \times 10^{-7}$ ), and 2) increased rates of deep white matter hyperintensities ( $P=2 \times 10^{-5}$ ). In comparison with controls, patients had a lateral ventricular enlargement of 17%, and a deep white matter hyperintensities rate of 250%. Thus, these structural findings can be accepted as being beyond doubt.

Gray matter defects are widespread (Li et al, 2011b). Progressive hippocampal, parahippocampal and cerebellar gray matter loss has been associated with deterioration in cognitive function and illness course (Moorhead et al, 2007).

Corpus callosum (CC) MRI studies in bipolar disorder have been reviewed (Arnone et al, 2008), finding decreases in CC areas, and suggesting reduced integration of the hemispheres.

### *Treatment*

Mood stabilizing drugs (with which we attempt to clamp the mood in the euthymic position, that is, neither too high nor too low) are central to the treatment of bipolar disorder. They include lithium carbonate, the anticonvulsants carbamazepine, sodium valproate, and lamotrigine, and some atypical antipsychotics, including olanzapine, quetiapine and perhaps others.

As mentioned, antidepressants may trigger manic swings in vulnerable people. Thus, there is reluctance to treat bipolar depression with an antidepressant without first commencing a mood stabilizer.

When treating bipolar depression, some experts (R M Post, personal communication) first add a second mood stabilizer, in particular, one with known antidepressant action. If there is little response, an antidepressant is then tried. In patients known to have been catapulted into mania by antidepressants in the past, other choices include making the patient as comfortable as possible and waiting for natural resolution of the episode, or moving to TMS or ECT.

The NMDAR antagonist, ketamine, has been administered intravenously for rapid remission of bipolar depression, with good effect (Diazgrandos et al 2010b). However, this remains an experimental treatment.

### **Dysthymia**

There are no blood or other objective tests for the mental disorders. This makes psychiatry difficult (and interesting). Objective tests would be particularly useful in the area between normal sadness and major depressive disorder. The question has long been debated: is there a disorder in this space, and if so, what are its characteristics?

Personality will be discussed in chapter 10. Personality is the constellation of behaviour/reactions which make us different from each other. Just as individuals differ in their capacity for honesty and generosity, so too, do they differ in their capacity for cheerfulness, optimism and energy. Those who by nature/make-up are at

the low end of the cheerfulness scale may be described as possessing a depressive type of personality.

The prognosis of major depressive disorder is less than ideal. 30-50% of patients will still have substantial residual symptoms after adequate first-line treatment, and a poor outcome occurs in at least 25% of patients at 12 years follow-up (Surtees & Barkley, 1994).

Thus, in the space between no mood problems and major depressive disorder, we could expect to find some individuals possessing a depressive type of personality and others with partial remission of major depressive disorder. In addition, minor forms of depression, once termed “existential depression”, “hysteroid dysphoria” and “atypical depression”, may occupy this space. These terms have been largely replaced by the term dysphoria.

The DSM-IV and ICD-10 use the term dysthymia (bad mood). The diagnostic criteria include low-grade depressive symptoms, similar to those of major depressive disorder, but insufficient to satisfy that diagnosis, and persisting for at least 2 years.

The prevalence is estimated to be about 3% of the population (Weissman et al, 1988) and as with major depressive disorder, dysthymia is twice as common in women.

This is a chronic condition. Onset may be during to late childhood. A large proportion have experienced, or will go on to develop a major depressive episode.

While some distress which occupies the space between normal and major depressive disorder is associated with maladaptive personality features, dysthymia may be associated with considerable personality strengths. Many sufferers are self-critical rather than self-excusing, and dedicate themselves to work. Dedication to work may be an etiological factor, as this could lead to excessive stress, it could be the expression of a personality structure which predisposes to depressive disorders, or it may be a means of coping with the low-self esteem and diminished sense of purpose, which can characterize depressive disorder.

Dysthymia may be a variant of major depressive disorder. There are higher than expected rates of major depressive disorder among the relatives of people with dysthymia. Reduced rapid eye movement (REM) latency is a marker of major depression, and this has also been observed in dysthymia (Akiskal, et al, 1980). Finally, there are accounts of the treatment of people suffering dysthymia with antidepressants, leading to hypomanic episodes.

### *Treatment*

Somewhat surprisingly, given that psychotherapy is said to be indicated in “mild to moderate depression”, psychotherapy as the sole treatment of dysthymia yields relatively poor results (Markowitz, 1994). The SSRIs are useful. Most are treated with a combination of an SSRI and cognitive-behaviour orientated therapy (to assist with self-esteem and adjustment).

### **Four-dimensional symptom questionnaire (4DSQ)**

The 4DSQ is a new tool (Terluin et al, 2006). It quantifies 4 different mental states (distress, depression, anxiety, and somatization).

The authors draw a distinction between “distress”, which is conceptualized as a normal reaction to stress, and depression, anxiety and somatization, which are conceptualized as “abnormal” or psychiatric disorders.

(Somatization, the tendency to experience medically unexplained somatic/bodily symptoms, to attribute them to physical illness and to seek medical help (eg, dizziness, upset stomach, palpitations, and muscular aches). Mild forms can occur as a “normal” reaction to stress, while severe forms occur as psychiatric (somatoform) disorders.)

Terluin et al (2006) describe distress as being “the most basic, most general, most ‘normal’ expression of psychological problems”. It is characterized by worry, irritability, tension, listlessness, poor concentration, sleep problems and demoralization. These authors point out that distress accompanies (and to some extent, obscures) the disorders of depression, anxiety and somatization.

They propose that with the features of distress extracted, depression is characterized by anhedonia and “depressive thoughts” (eg, “everything is meaningless”, “would be better off dead”). Similarly, the core features of anxiety are considered to be irrational fears, anticipation and avoidance.

The 4DSQ is an exciting recent development. The attempt to distinguish normal reactions (distress) from pathological states (depression and anxiety) is commended. This tool is free for non-commercial use in health care and research ([www.emgo.nl/researchtools/4dsq.asp](http://www.emgo.nl/researchtools/4dsq.asp)).

### **Hamilton depression rating scale**

Many different scales are used in the assessment of depression. The Hamilton Depression Rating Scale (HDRS, or HAM-D (D for depression); Hamilton also created an anxiety scale) has been widely used for more than 5 decades (Hamilton, 1960). It is rated by trained professionals.

The HDRS is not used to make a diagnosis, but to rate severity. Serial ratings over time reflect change (hopefully, improvement). The diagnosis must be made before the HDRS is applied. Because it relies on many vegetative symptoms, the HDRS is not applicable when there is a concurrent severe medical disorder.

The original HDRS consisted of 21 items, however, a shorter 17 item version is commonly used.

Even though the HDRS is not used for diagnosis, many researchers have come to equate a score of 8 with remission. To ensure subjects have at least moderate depression, many studies require an entry score 18.

## A COPY OF THE HDRS FOLLOWS THE REFERENCES

### Montgomery Asberg depression rating scale

The Montgomery Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS; Montgomery & Asberg 1979) is a second important depression scale. It followed almost two decades after the HDRS, but has been widely used over the last quarter of a century.

In contrast to the HDRS, the MADRS focuses less strongly on the somatic symptoms of depression, and more strongly on items such as concentration difficulties, tension, lassitude, pessimistic and suicidal thoughts.

The initial hope was that being less focused on somatic symptoms, the MADRS would be more sensitive to change than the HDRS. This has not been substantiated.

## A COPY OF THE HDRS AND MADRS FOLLOW THE REFERENCES

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# **HAMILTON DEPRESSION RATING SCALE (HAM-D)**

**Hamilton M.  
A rating scale for depression**

**Journal of Neurology,  
Neurosurgery and  
Psychiatry 1960: 23:56-62**

Patient Information												
Patient			Date	Day	Mth	Year	Time	Hour	Min			
Personal notes												

TICK APPROPRIATE BOX FOR EACH ITEM

<p><b>1. Depressed mood</b> This item covers both the verbal and the non-verbal communication of sadness, depression, despondency, helplessness and hopelessness.</p>	
<p><b>0</b> - Neutral mood.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>1</b> – When it is doubtful whether the patient is more despondent or sad than usual, e.g. the patient vaguely indicates to be more depressed than usual.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>2</b> – When the patient more clearly is concerned with unpleasant experiences, although he still is without helplessness or hopelessness.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>3</b> – The patient shows clear non-verbal signs of depression and/or is at times overpowered by helplessness or hopelessness.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>4</b> – The patient’s remarks on despondence and helplessness or the non-verbal ones dominate the interview in which the patient cannot be distracted.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2. Self-depreciation and guilt feelings</b> This item covers the lowered self-esteem with guilt feelings.	
<b>0</b> – No self-depreciation or guilt feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – Doubtful whether guilt feelings are present, because the patient is only concerned with the fact that he, during the actual illness, has been a burden to the family or colleagues due to reduced work capacity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – Self-depreciation or guilt feelings are more clearly present because the patient is concerned with incidents in the past prior to the actual episode, e.g. the patient reproaches himself small omissions or failures, not to have done his duty or to have harmed others.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – The patient suffers from more severe guilt feelings. He may express that he feels that the actual suffering is some sort of a punishment. Score 3 as long as the patient intellectually can see that his view is unfounded.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – The guilt feelings are firmly maintained and resist any counterargument, so that they have become paranoid ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>3. Suicidal impulses</b>	
<b>0</b> – No suicidal impulses.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – The patient feels that life is not worth while, but he expresses no wish to die.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – The patient wishes to die, but has no plans of taking his own life.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – It is probably that the patient contemplates to commit suicide.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – If during the days prior to the interview the patient has tried to commit suicide or if the patient in the ward is under special observation due to suicidal risk.	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 - 6: Note: Administration of drugs – sedative or others – shall be disregarded.

<b>4. Initial insomnia</b>	
<b>0</b> – Absent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – When the patient 1 (1-2) out of the last 3 nights has had to lie in bed for more than 30 minutes before falling asleep.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – When the patient all 3 nights has been in bed for more than 30 minutes before falling asleep.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>5. Middle insomnia</b> The patient wakes up one or more times between midnight and 5 a.m. (If for voiding purposes followed by immediate sleep rate 0).	
<b>0</b> – Absent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – Once or twice during the last 3 nights.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – At least once every night.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>6. Delayed insomnia = Premature awakening</b> The patient wakes up before planned by himself or his surroundings.	
<b>0</b> – Absent.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – Less than 1 hour (and may fall asleep again).	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – Constantly – or more than 1 hour too early.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>7. Work and interests</b> This item includes both work carried out and motivation. Note, however, that the assessment of tiredness and fatigue in their physical manifestations is included in item 13 (general somatic symptoms) and in item 23 (tiredness and pain).</p> <p><b>A. At first rating of the patient</b></p>	
<b>0</b> – Normal work activity.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – When the patient expresses insufficiency due to lack of motivation, and/or trouble in carrying out the usual work load which the patient, however, manages to do with reduction.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – More pronounced insufficiency due to lack of motivation and/or trouble in carrying out the usual work. Here the patient has reduced work capacity, cannot keep normal speed, copes with less on the job or in the home; the patient may stay home some days or may try to leave early.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – When the patient has been sick-listed, or if the patient has been hospitalised (as day activities).	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – When the patient is fully hospitalised and generally unoccupied without participation in the ward activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>B. At weekly ratings</b></p>	
<b>0</b> – Normal work activity, a) The patient has resumed work at his normal activity level: b) When the patient will have no trouble to resume normal work.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1a)</b> – The patient is working, but at reduced activity level, either due to lack of motivation or due to difficulties in the accomplishment of his normal work: <b>b)</b> The patient is not working and it is still doubtful that he can resume his normal work without difficulties.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2a)</b> – The patient is working, but at a clearly reduced level, either due to episodes of non-attendance or due to reduced work time: <b>b)</b> The patient is still hospitalised or sickened, participates more than 3-4 hours per day in ward (or home) activities, but is only capable to resume normal work at a reduced level. If hospitalised the patient is able to change from full stay to day-patients status.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – When the patient has been sick-listed, or if the patient has been hospitalised (as day activities).	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – When the patient is fully hospitalised and generally unoccupied without participation in the ward activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>8. Retardation (general)</b>	
<b>0</b> – Normal verbal activity, normal motor activity with adequate facial expression.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – Conversational speed doubtfully or slightly reduced and facial expression doubtfully or slightly stiffened (retarded).	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – Conversational speed clearly reduced with intermissions, reduced gestures and slow pace .	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – The interview is clearly prolonged due to long latencies and brief answers' all movements very slow.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – The interview cannot be completed, retardation approaches (and includes) stupor.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>9. Agitation</b>	
<b>0</b> – Normal motor activity with adequate facial expression.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – Doubtful or slight agitation, e.g. tendency to changing position in chair or at times scratching his head .	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – Fidgeting, wringing hands, changing position in chair again and again. Restless in ward, with some pacing.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – Patient cannot stay in chair during interview and/or much pacing in ward.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – Interview has to be conducted “on the run”. Almost continuous pacing. Pulling off clothes, tearing his hair.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>10. Anxiety (psychic)</b>  This item includes tenseness, irritability, worry, insecurity, fear and apprehension approaching overpowering dread. It may often be difficult to distinguish between the patient's experience of anxiety ("Psychic" or "central" anxiety phenomena) and the physiological ("peripheral") anxiety manifestations which can be observed, e.g. hand tremor and sweating. Most important is the patient's report on worry, insecurity, uncertainty, experiences of dreadfulness, i.e. the psychic ("central") anxiety.</p>	
<b>0</b> – The patient is neither more nor less insecure or irritable than usual.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – It is doubtful whether the patient is more insecure or irritable than usual.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – The patient expresses more clearly to be in a state of anxiety, apprehension or irritability which he may find difficult to control. It is thus without influence on the patient's daily life, because the worrying is still about minor matters.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – The anxiety or insecurity is at times more difficult to control, because the worrying is about major injuries or harms which might occur in the future, e.g. the anxiety may be experienced as panic, i.e. overpowering dread. Has occasionally interfered with the patient's daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – The feeling of dreadfulness is present so often that it markedly interferes with the patient's daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>11 Anxiety (somatic)</b>  This item includes physiological concomitants of anxiety: All feeling states should be rated under item 10 and not here.</p>	
<b>0</b> – When the patient is neither more nor less prone than usual to experience somatic concomitants of anxiety feeling states.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – When the patient occasionally experiences slight manifestations like abdominal symptoms, sweating or trembling. However, the description is vague and doubtful.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – When the patient from time to time experiences abdominal symptoms, sweating, trembling, etc. Symptoms and signs are clearly described, but are not marked or incapacitating, i.e. still without influence on the patient's daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – Physiological concomitants of anxious feeling states are marked and sometimes very worrying. Interferes occasionally with the patient's daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – The feeling of dreadfulness is present so often that it markedly interferes with the patient's daily life.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>12. Gastro-Intestinal</b> Symptoms may stem from the entire gastro-intestinal tract. Dry mouth, loss of appetite and constipation are more common than abdominal cramps and pains. Must be distinguished from gastro-intestinal anxiety symptoms (“butterflies in the stomach” or loose bowel movements) and also from nihilistic ideas (no bowel movements for weeks or months; the intestines have withered away) which should be rated under 15 (Hypochondriasis).</p>	
0 – No gastro-intestinal complaints (or symptoms unchanged from before onset of depression).	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 – Eats without encouragement by staff and food intake is about normal, but without relish (all dishes taste alike and cigarettes are without flavour). Sometimes constipated.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 – Food intake reduced, patient has to be urged to eat. As a rule clearly constipated. Laxatives are often tried, but are of little help.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>13. General Somatic</b> Central are feelings of fatigue and exhaustion, loss of energy. But also diffuse muscular aching and pains in neck, back or limbs, e.g. muscular headache.</p>	
0 – The patient is neither more nor less tired or troubled by bodily discomfort than usual.	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 – Doubtful or very vague feelings of muscular fatigue or other somatic discomfort.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 – Clearly or constantly tired and exhausted and/or troubled by bodily discomforts e.g. muscular headache.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p><b>14. Sexual interests</b> This subject is often difficult to approach, especially with elderly patients. In males try to ask questions concerning sexual preoccupation and drive, in females responsiveness (both to engage in sexual activity and to obtain satisfaction in intercourse).</p>	
0 – Insufficient information or uncertainty. No loss of interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 – Probable loss of interest related to depression.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 – Certain pronounced loss of interest related to depression.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>15. Hypochondriasis</b> Preoccupation with bodily symptoms or functions (in the absence of somatic disease).	
<b>0</b> – The patient pays no more interest than usual to the slight bodily sensations of every day life.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – Slightly or doubtfully more occupied than usual with bodily symptoms and functions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – Quite worried about his physical health. The patient expresses thoughts of organic disease with a tendency to “somatise” the clinical presentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>3</b> – The patient is convinced to suffer from a physical illness which can explain all his symptoms (brain tumour, abdominal cancer etc), but the patient can for a brief while be reassured that this is not the case.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> – The preoccupation with bodily dysfunction has clearly reached paranoid dimensions. The hypochondriacal delusions often have a nihilistic quality or guilt associations: to be rotting inside; insects eating the tissues; bowels blocked and withered away, other patients are being infected by the patient’s bad odour or his syphilis. Counter-argumentation is without effect.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>16. Loss of insight</b> This item has, of course, only meaning if the observer is convinced that the patient at the interview still is in a depressive state.	
<b>0</b> – The patients agreed to having depressive symptoms or a “nervous” illness.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>1</b> – The patient still agrees to being depressed but feels this to be secondary to non-illness related conditions like malnutrition, climate, overwork.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> – Denies being ill at all. Delusional patients are by definition without insight. Enquiries should therefore be directed to the patient’s attitude to his symptoms of Guilt (item 2) or Hypochondriasis (item 15), but other delusional symptoms should also be considered.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>17. Weight loss</b> Try to get objective information. If such is not available be conservative in estimation.	
<b>A. At first interview this item covers the whole actual period of illness.</b>	
0 – No weight loss.	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 – 1-2.5 kg weight loss.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 – Weight loss of 3 kg or more.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>B. Weekly interviews</b>	
0 – No weight loss.	<input type="checkbox"/>
1 – 1-2.5 kg weight loss.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 – 1 kg or more per week.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**MONTGOMERY-ASBERG  
DEPRESSION RATING SCALE  
(MADRAS)**

**Montgomery S, Asberg M  
British Journal of Psychiatry  
1979; 134:382-389**

Patient Information								
Patient		Date	Day	Mth	Year	Time	Hour	Min
Personal notes								

TICK APPROPRIATE BOX FOR EACH ITEM

<p><b>1. Apparent sadness</b>                  Representing despondency, gloom and despair (more than just ordinary transient low spirits), reflected in speech, facial expression and posture. Rate by depth and inability to brighten up.</p>	
<p><b>0</b> = No sadness.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>2</b> = Looks dispirited but does brighten up without difficulty.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>4</b> = Appears sad and unhappy most of the time.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>6</b> = Looks miserable all the time, Extremely despondent.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>2. Reported sadness</b> Representing reports of depressed mood, regardless of whether it is reflected in appearance or not. Includes low spirits, despondency or the feely of being beyond help and without hope.	
<b>0</b> = Occasional sadness in keeping with the circumstances.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Sad or low but brightens up without difficulty.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Pervasive feelings of sadness or gloominess. The mood is still influenced by external circumstances.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Continuous or unvar4ying sadness, misery or despondency.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>3. Inner tension</b> Representing feelings of ill-defined discomfort, edginess, inner turmoil, mental tension mounting to either panic, dread or anguish. Rate according to intensity, frequency, duration and the extent of reassurance called for.	
<b>0</b> = Placid. Only feeling inner tension.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Occasional feelings of edginess and ill-defined discomfort.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Continuous feelings of inner tension or intermittent panic which the patient can only master with some difficulty.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Unrelenting dread or anguish. Overwhelming panic.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>4. Reduced sleep</b> Representing the experience of reduced duration or depth of sleep compared to the subject's own normal pattern when well.	
<b>0</b> = Sleeps as normal.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Slight difficulty dropping off to sleep or slightly reduced, light or fitful sleep.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Moderate stiffness and resistance.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Sleep reduced or broken by at least 2 hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>5. Reduced appetite</b> Representing the feeling of a loss of appetite compared with when-well. Rate by loss of desire for food or the need to force oneself to eat. .	
<b>0</b> = Normal or increased appetite.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Slightly reduced appetite.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = No appetite. Food is tasteless.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Needs persuasion to eat at all.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>6. Concentration difficulties</b> Representing difficulties in collecting one's thoughts amounting to an incapacitating lack of concentration. Rate according to intensity, frequency and degree of incapacity produced.	
<b>0</b> = No difficulties in concentrating.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Occasional difficulties in collecting one's thoughts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Difficulties in concentrating and sustaining thought which reduced ability to read or hold a conversation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Unable to read or converse without great difficulty.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>7. Lassitude</b> Representing difficulty in getting started or slowness in initiating and performing everyday activities.	
<b>0</b> = Hardly any difficulty in getting started. No sluggishness.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Difficulties in starting activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Difficulties in starting simple routine activities which are carried out with effort.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Complete lassitude. Unable to do anything without help.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>8. Inability to feel</b> Representing the subjective experience of reduced interest in the surroundings, or activities that normally give pleasure. The ability to react with adequate emotion to circumstance or people is reduced.	
<b>0</b> = Normal interest in the surroundings and in other people.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Reduced ability to enjoy usual interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Loss of interest in the surroundings. Loss of feelings for friends and acquaintances.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = The experience of being emotionally paralysed, inability to feel anger, grief or pleasure and a complete or even painful failure to feel for close relatives and friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>9. Pessimistic thoughts</b> Representing thoughts of guilt, inferiority, self-reproach, sinfulness, remorse and ruin.	
<b>0</b> = No pessimistic thoughts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Fluctuating ideas of failure, self reproach or self-depreciation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Persistent self-accusations or definite but still rational ideas of guilt or sin. Increasingly pessimistic about the future.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Delusions of ruin, remorse or irredeemable sin. Self-accusations which are absurd and unshakable.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>10. Suicidal thoughts</b> Representing the feeling that life is not worth living, that a natural death would be welcome, suicidal thoughts and preparation for suicide. Suicide attempts should not in themselves influence the rating.	
<b>0</b> = Enjoys life or takes it as it comes.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>2</b> = Weary of life. Only fleeting suicidal thoughts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>4</b> = Probably better off dead. Suicidal thought are common and suicide is considered as a possible solution, but without specific plans or intentions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>6</b> = Explicit plans for suicide when there is an opportunity. Active preparations for suicide.	<input type="checkbox"/>