**Managing Mood & Emotions**

Everybody’s eating can be affected by his or her mood and emotional state; this is entirely normal and shouldn’t be something to be concerned about. However, some people experience unusually severe moods and / or intense emotions; or are very sensitive to certain mood states and have difficulty tolerating these.

**What is a mood?**

Moods tend to be generally viewed as positive or negative, low or high. A mood state is likely to be prolonged or reinforced as certain emotions affect it. We have previously considered how Negative Automatic Thoughts (NATs) impact on mood and behaviour; also a period of low mood is likely to make you judge things more negatively, have more negative thoughts and hence experience more negative emotions, which exacerbates the low mood.

Feeling in Low mood

Increased likelihood of negative thought and judgements

May feel angry or sad towards self or others. Fearful of situation becoming out of control

Further decrease in mood

**Emotion ‘Chains’**

It may be useful to monitor your experience of emotions and your response to them.

It may be particularly helpful to identify if your emotions trigger any of the above problems i.e. vomiting, self harm, alcohol, over exercising, or problems with eating (such as restricting or binge eating).

One way of doing this is to draw out “**chains**” of the sequence of events

The example below shows a ‘chain’ of rapidly unfolding steps:-

1. The occurrence of a triggering event
* E.g. an argument on the phone with mum
1. Thoughts about this event
* E.g. “it’s not fair, she is always blaming me”
1. Emotional experience.
* E.g. anger, resentment
1. Thoughts about the emotion, followed rapidly by amplification of the emotion
* E.g. “I hate feeling angry like this”, “It’s wrong to feel angry” leading to emotional amplification and the thought “I can’t stand it, I **really** hate feeling like this,” leading to yet further emotional amplification and the thought “**I REALLY** **HATE** feeling like this, I’m bad to feel like this, I just can’t bear it any longer” leading to yet further emotional amplification and the thought “**I REALLY, REALLY CAN’T STAND FEELING LIKE THIS ANY LONGER, I’VE HAD ENOUGH**”
1. The initiation of unhelpful self destructive behaviour
* E.g. decide I’m not going to eat, exercise
1. The immediate relief from the Emotional state
* E.g. less feelings of tension, anger
1. Subsequent thoughts about what happened.
* E.g. “I am such a failure. I have no control over my eating.”

This type of pattern of coping with emotions is unhelpful for a number of reasons:

* It doesn’t help to address day to day difficulties that arise
* It leads to unpredictable behaviour
* It often worsens relationships with other people
* It keeps the eating problem going
* It makes people feel bad about them self.