

# Positive Psychology for Overcoming Depression: A Bibliotherapy Intervention

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## First self-help book for depression based on positive psychology – by Miriam Akhtar



## Study Design

- UK based RCT lasting 8-weeks
- 115 participants recruited via Action for Happiness website/social media
- Allocated PP or CBT self-help book for depression
- Participant must have:
  1. Symptoms of depression (e.g. BDI-II score above cut off)
  2. No current depression treatment

	PP Book	CBT Book
Week 1	Positive Emotions: The upward spiral to well-being	Mindful Preparations for Working with Depression
Week 2	Savouring the Moment	Switching our Minds to Kindness and Compassion
Week 3	The Attitude of Gratitude	Changing Unhelpful Thoughts and Feelings: Balance and Compassion
Week 4	Meditation: The mindful approach	Styles of Depressive Thinking: How to Develop Helpful Styles
Week 5	Learning Optimism: Psychological self-defense	Writing Things Down: How to do it and why it can be helpful
Week 6	Resilience: The road to recovery	Changing Behavior: A compassionate approach
Week 7	Positive Connections: Other people matter	Developing Supportive Relationships with Ourselves
Week 8	From strength to strength: You at your best	Stop Criticizing and Bullying yourself: How to treat yourself with compassion

## Sample Characteristics

	PP Book	CBT Book
N =	56	59
Age*	41.73	37.34
Gender	83.93% Female	89.83% Female
Ethnicity	80.39% White British	91.49% White British
History of Depression	46.43% Previous History	59.32% Previous History
Mildly depressed	21.43%	16.95%
Moderately depressed	33.93%	42.37%
Severely depressed	44.64%	40.68%

\* Significant differences noted between the conditions for Age only

## Measures

**Beck Depression Inventory** - Scores range = 0-63, 14-19 = mild, 20-28 = moderate & 29 – 63 = severe depression

**Subjective Happiness Scale** - Score range 0 – 7, high scores = higher happiness

**Satisfaction with Life Scale** – Score range 7 – 35, scores under 20 = dissatisfaction, scores over 20 = satisfaction

**Positive & Negative Affect** – Score range = 10 - 50, with high scores indicating higher levels of positive/negative affect

**Psychological Well-being Scales** – Scores range from 7 – 42, high scores indicate greater psychological well-being

### Baseline

Measure	PP Book	CBT Book
Depression	27.75	29.19
Subjective Happiness	3.60	3.52
Satisfaction with Life	14.73	16.61
Positive Affect	20.77	21.61
Negative Affect	28.43	29.88
Psychological Wellbeing – Autonomy	24.20	24.39
Psychological Wellbeing – Environmental Mastery	22.98	22.77
Psychological Wellbeing – Personal Growth	28.32	28.85
Psychological Wellbeing – Positive Relations	26.82	27.03
Psychological Wellbeing - Purpose in Life*	23.46	25.37
Psychological Wellbeing – Self-Acceptance	18.27	19.32

Measure	PP Pre N = 56	PP Post N = 29	CBT Pre N = 59	CBT Post N = 17
Depression	27.75	18.52	29.19	23.88
Subjective Happiness	3.60	3.89	3.52	3.92
Satisfaction with Life	14.73	20.24	16.61	18.24
Positive Affect	20.77	29.43	21.61	25.42
Negative Affect	28.43	23.79	29.88	28.24
Psychological Wellbeing – Autonomy	24.20	27.14	24.39	28.41
Psychological Wellbeing – Environmental Mastery	22.98	26.11	22.77	28.41
Psychological Wellbeing – Personal Growth	28.32	31.21	28.85	31.24
Psychological Wellbeing – Positive Relations	26.82	28.61	27.03	26.94
Psychological Wellbeing - Purpose in Life	23.46	26.34	25.37	27.59
Psychological Wellbeing – Self-Acceptance	18.27	22.17	19.32	21.94

### 4 – week follow-up

- Mixed between/within ANOVA's 2X2 performed
- Depression – significant main effect for time  $F(1,42) = 25.31$ ,  $p = 0.00$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.38$  but no effect for condition – meaning that both conditions experienced a decrease in depression over the 4-weeks and there was no significant difference in this decline between those who used PP or CBT
- Same result found for Satisfaction with Life, Positive Affect, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth, Purpose in Life & Self-Acceptance
- No significant change in subjective Happiness, Negative Affect or Positive Relations from time 1 to time 2 for either book

### Discussion

- Both books reduced depression and improved well-being in 4 weeks, with 10% of the initial sample no longer depressed
- No difference in efficacy between the books – PP self-help is as effective as an established CBT self-help book
- But - High levels of non-response to follow-up questionnaire – especially for CBT book? Why?