Before You See the Doctor: A Checklist

This checklist brings together the lists from Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 13. It isn't a test and doesn't give a score. It helps you tell your story clearly in a short appointment.

Don't wait for an appointment if:

- you have thoughts of suicide, a plan, or have just harmed yourself;
- you hear or see things others don't, or hold beliefs that frighten the people close to you;
- you haven't been able to eat, drink or sleep for several days;
- you've had several days of surging energy, barely sleeping and racing thoughts;
- you've recently had a baby and feel confused or suspicious, or have thoughts of harming yourself or the baby.

What to bring

☐ Your two-week mood diary
☐ A completed PHQ-9
☐ A list of every medicine, contraceptive, herbal remedy and supplement you take, with doses and start dates
☐ This checklist, filled in

Your one-sentence summary

For example: *"For three months I've felt low and lost interest nearly every day, I'm sleeping badly, and it's starting to affect my work."*

_____

_____

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The four questions (Chapter 1)

- How long has it lasted? ____
- Has it spread into sleep, appetite, energy or concentration? ____

- Do I still enjoy anything? Do I feel worthless? ____
- How are work, home and relationships affected? ____

Hard-to-spot changes (Chapter 9)

☐ Much more irritable or quick to anger
☐ Drinking, smoking or using drugs more
☐ Overworking, or neglecting work or study
☐ Unexplained headaches, stomachaches or back pain
☐ Forgetful, trouble concentrating
☐ Thinking "what's the point?" or "I'm a burden"

A map of your life's periods (Chapter 4)

- Past periods of low mood: ____
- Unusual "up" periods (very little sleep without tiredness, talking a lot, spending a lot): ____
- Recent losses and major events: ____
- Family members with depression, bipolar disorder, alcohol problems or suicide: ____

Body file (Chapter 5)

☐ Weight gain or loss without trying
☐ Feeling cold or hot, dry skin, hair loss
☐ Numbness or tingling
☐ Loud snoring, pauses in breathing at night
☐ Changes in periods, hot flashes
☐ New illnesses in the past two years (including COVID-19): ____
- Alcohol per week: ____

Questions for your doctor

- How severe is my depression: mild, moderate or severe?
- Do I need tests for thyroid, blood count, iron, B12 or blood sugar?
- Could any medicine I take be affecting my mood?
- For my level, which treatments are suitable? What are the pros and cons of each?
- How soon should I expect to feel better? What happens if I don't?
- When should I come back?

If medication is suggested (Chapter 13)

- What are the common side effects? Will it affect my sex life, weight or sleep?
- Does it interact with the medicines and supplements I take?
- I've had periods of unusually high energy, or a relative has bipolar disorder. Does that matter?
- How long should I take it? When I want to stop, what's the plan for reducing the dose?