

## The vicious cycle of depression

It is often the case that people who are depressed behave in certain ways that contribute to their depression, thus maintaining it. One of the main ways people maintain their depression is from being inactive. It is important to distinguish the inactivity that arises following a traumatic injury because you are no longer physically able to do certain things (e.g., you are no longer able to play your favourite sport because of a severe leg injury) and the inactivity that arises because you are feeling low or unmotivated.

### How does inactivity contribute to depression?

As you become increasingly depressed, you may notice that you are less likely to participate in the things you would have before, especially the things you previously enjoyed. You may stop seeing your friends, stop playing the sport you would usually play, or stop your favourite hobby. This begins a cycle that is known as the 'Vicious Cycle of Depression'. As you become less involved in the things that you would usually enjoy, you have fewer interactions that produce positive outcomes, and thus you feel more depressed. The more depressed you feel, the less motivated you are to engage in the kinds of activities which you might enjoy. This causes you to feel even more depressed which, in turn, causes you to become even less active. And so it goes on and on.

This vicious cycle continues until you feel very depressed and are very inactive. It may look something like this:



This vicious cycle plays an important role in maintaining depression. However, you can turn this cycle around to assist you to overcome depression. This is then known as a positive cycle. Let's look at the positive cycle for the above example.



Therapy will help you to get back into activities and re-engage in interactions that have positive outcomes, like you had prior to your traumatic injury. This can help lift your mood and lead to an improved sense of wellbeing, which motivates you to engage in more activities with pleasant outcomes.