

Appendix 1:

Useful information about Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Adolescents (IPT-A)

IPT-A is a treatment for young people with depression, which looks at your relationships with the people around you. It is important to pay attention to our relationships because how we feel often has a lot to do with how we are getting on with other people. Sometimes feeling down is a response to what is going on in our relationships and at other times our relationships become more difficult when we are low and have lost interest in the people close to us. IPT-A helps you to make sense of the difficulties you are experiencing and to understand how your relationships with other people contribute to how you feel. By helping you to sort out the main problems that trip you up with other people we expect your mood and interest to improve too.

IPT-A is especially helpful with the kinds of things young people often find difficult when they are depressed:

Not getting on with an important person in your life: No relationship is perfect, but sometimes an important relationship at home or at school can get really stuck in disagreements or

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arguments and it becomes very upsetting to be part of. You might start to feel hopeless about finding a way to sort it out.

Changes in your life that affect your routines and the people around you: Life changes all the time and you can suddenly find yourself in a situation that is unfamiliar and perhaps frightening, like when you change schools, fall out with friends or families breaking up. When this happens it can feel like a whole new set of challenges comes along and you might not be sure how to cope with it all.

When someone important in your life dies: It is entirely natural to feel sad when someone we care about dies. Sometimes this is so difficult that we struggle to adjust to life without that person and it is as if we put life on hold because we miss them so much, and this makes it really hard to be close to the other people who are around us.

Difficulty in starting or keeping relationships going: Sometimes relationships are difficult because of what is missing, for example not having enough people around us or not feeling as close to other people as we would like. Not having someone to spend time with or to turn to when you are feeling sad, or even when you are happy, can make life feel very difficult and lonely and might lead you to feel overwhelmed by having to do everything on your own.

What does IPT-A involve?

Everyone's therapy will be a bit different. Sometimes IPT-A is used with a trained therapist. This book will guide you through the main ideas and how to use them with the support of your family and friends. It can help you between sessions if you are working with a therapist too.

How long will it last?

If you are seeing a therapist IPT-A is usually offered over twelve to sixteen sessions. Your parents or carers will also be invited to three additional sessions, which you might also want to join. Your therapy sessions will be weekly and will last for fifty minutes. If you are using this book you can work through it at your own pace but giving yourself three or four months to make the changes that are suggested is a reasonable estimate of how long this might take. You will be involving your IPT-A team at every step.

Getting started

Many young people find it difficult to talk about their problems, and it is important that your IPT-A team show you that they can be trusted, and can help you manage if you talk about things which upset you or about which you feel embarrassed.

Talking openly about yourself, perhaps for the first time, can feel difficult and you may be worried about what your IPT-A team thinks about you. Your IPT-A team will be interested in how you are getting on with using this approach together and will help you to make sense of any worries you may have about getting started. They should give you the feeling that they know that this can be difficult and that they are interested in understanding what life is like for you.

Your team should make it very clear that they are interested in hearing about what is and what isn't working for you and your relationship with them. If difficulties do arise your team should take these seriously and find a way of working them out with you.

Getting a picture of what you need

Your team will need to get as good a picture as they can of what you are finding difficult in your life and how this is affecting you and people close to you. You will be asked to discuss some questions in each chapter, but you only need to give as much information as you feel comfortable with. Many people find that as the process gets going they are able to talk more openly, and in the early stages you shouldn't find yourself under pressure to say more than you want.

In the first chapters of this book you will be asked both about your symptoms and also about the people in your life. This is because IPT-A is interested in understanding how difficulties in your relationships may have contributed to your depression. Your team will be asked to help you to think about what is going well and what isn't going so well in your relationships to help you to decide which relationships it would be most useful to focus on for the next few weeks.

How will you know that it is working?

Each week you will complete a symptom wall and rate how close you feel you are to achieving your personal goals. Your team will be able to do the same every few weeks and you will talk about your responses. These will give you both a better idea of the sorts of problems you have as well as how difficult these are for you. By completing the symptom wall each week it will help you and your team see what progress you are making. By including your teams' thoughts about this you will also see how other people understand what it is like for you right now. This is very useful, because not everyone makes progress at the same rate. If the symptom wall

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show that IPT-A isn't helping as much as you hoped it gives you and your team a chance to think about why this might be and how you can work together to improve the way IPT-A helps you with your problems.

Once you and your team have gained a clearer picture of the relationship difficulties that are connected with your symptoms, you will agree on the main areas that IPT-A will help you to focus on. Bearing in mind that you want to feel better as soon as possible, your team will also help you to think about what you want out of using IPT-A and to identify realistic goals. You will track your progress towards these goals each week and your team will support you in working towards them at a pace that is right for you and will help you to keep going if you experience any setbacks along the way. You can find more information about using questionnaires and goals at www.minded.org.uk (Type 'David Trickey' into the search box to find some very helpful sessions).

How can your team help you?

Your team will help in a variety of ways that will include:

- Being active and helping you to do more enjoyable things
- Thinking through the questions in each chapter with you
- Helping you to keep focused on the relationship problem(s) you agreed to work on
- Helping you to develop new relationships that can provide the support you need
- Supporting you in making positive changes in your life
- Helping you to understand how you are feeling and find ways to tell other people about it so that they can help you or to get back into routines that you used to enjoy but that have been

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more difficult to keep up with when you have been feeling low

Not everyone in your team will do all of these things. You will select your team members to make sure you have different kinds of support when you need it.

Medication and IPT-A

It is quite common to use IPT-A alongside medications such as anti-depressants, if you have a lot of symptoms or they have lasted for a long time. For some young people this may be more helpful than receiving either treatment alone. You should discuss this with your parents/carers and a medically trained professional, like your GP or a child and adolescent psychiatrist who will help you to make the best decision for you. You can find more information about mental health medication at www.headmeds.org.uk.

You can find more information about IPT-A at www.iptuk.net and at www.minded.org.uk (Type IPT-A into the search box).