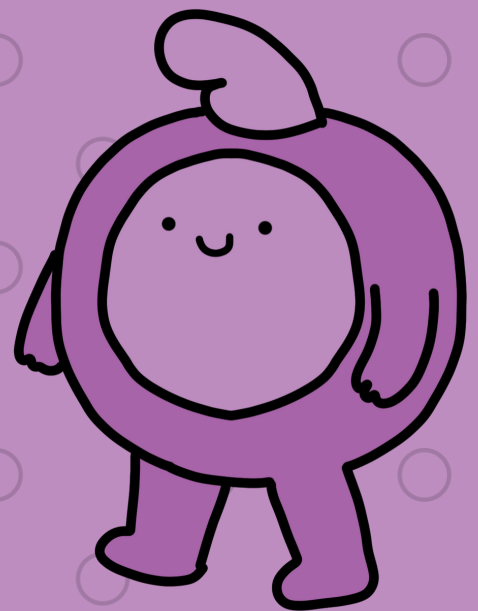


supporting a child with low mood

A 3 session guide for
parents/families

Session 1



Information for Parents/Families

The resources and strategies detailed in these booklets are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). CBT is evidence based which is why we use it to help children and young people who are struggling with low mood – we know it can work.

These three booklets are made up of three sessions which aim to help you to help your child with their low mood. It involves working openly and collaboratively with your child and needs a commitment to use the strategies repeatedly and consistently. By doing this, you can help your child to feel better.

Every child is different, and the amount of time it takes for these strategies to help with your child's mood will be different for everyone. What is important is that you stick to it. By making these strategies part of everyday life, you can start to see big, positive changes.

It is recommended that you complete a session (booklet) each **week** with your child, with exception of session one which should be spread over **two weeks**. This gives you chance to spread tasks over several days rather than trying to do it all at once.

Using these Booklets

The first part of each booklet provides an overview of the session including what you should do for each activity, how to spread each activity over several days and some top tips for getting the most out of each task.

The main part of each booklet is made up of the resources you will need in order to carry out each activity with your child. All activities are based on CBT strategies which are evidence based and help children to better manage their mood and feel better.

Further Help

Remember!

You are never alone in supporting your child with their mental health and if you feel they need specialist support you can make a referral to your GP or directly to your local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

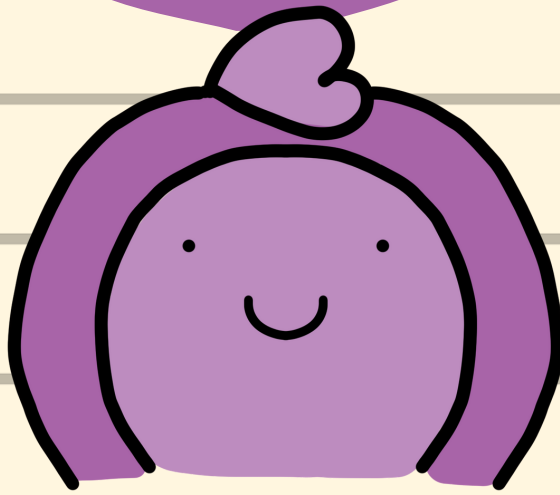
Session One: Overview

This session should be spread over 2 weeks.

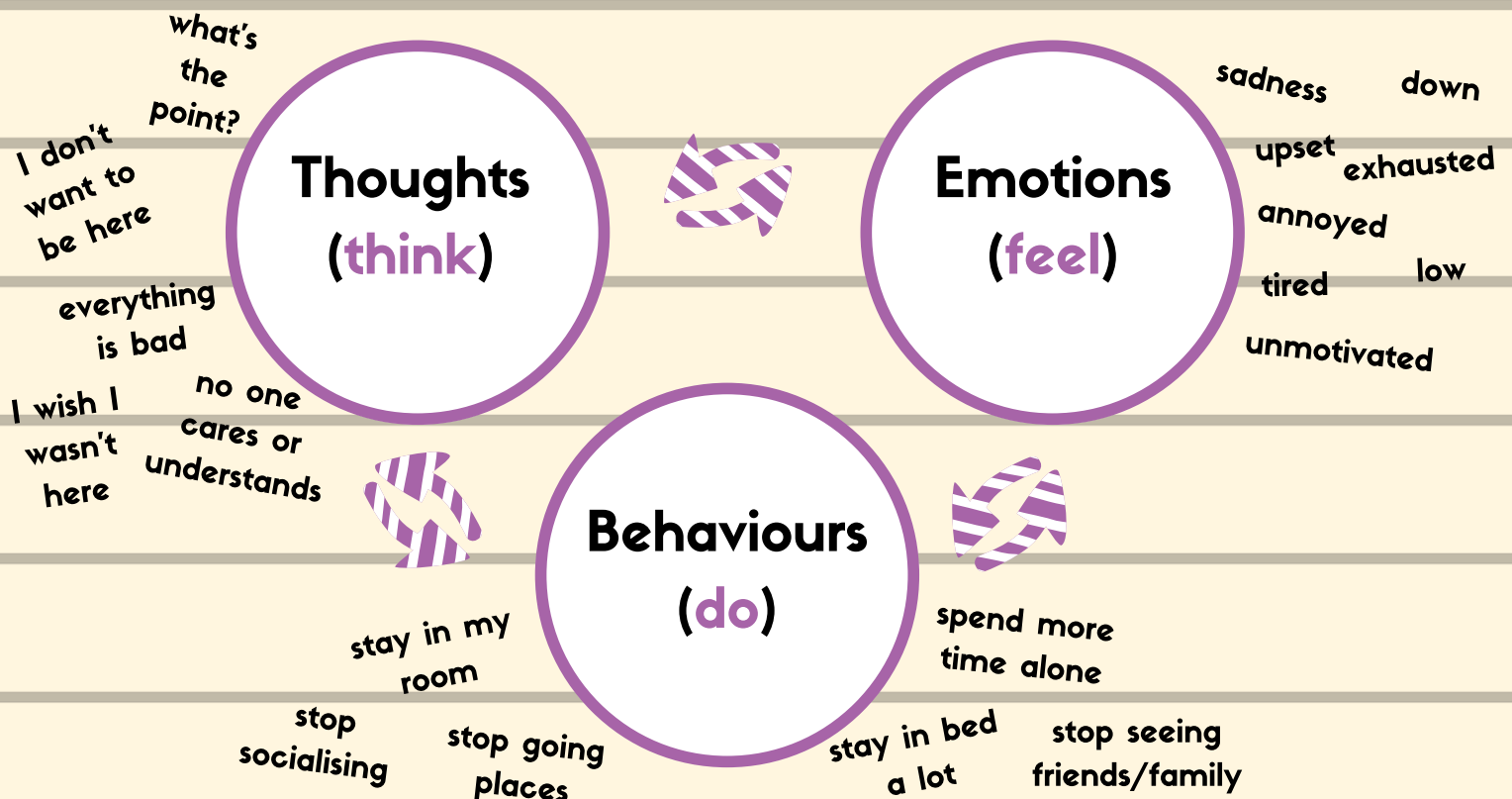
When	What to do	Top Tips
Day 1	Read the information about low mood and Behavioural Activation.	Make sure you have a good understanding of this before discussing it with your child.
Day 2	Go through the 'what is low mood?' and 'symptoms of low mood' sections with your child. Encourage them to circle the symptoms they recognise in themselves or make a list of their symptoms.	If your child doesn't want to write these down or circle them, they might want to make a list on a tablet/laptop or they might want to draw pictures instead. Use what you know about your child to make it engaging and interesting for them.
Day 3	Go through the Behavioural Activation section together. Complete the 'behavioural activation cycles' section together.	Try to use open questions to encourage your child to think about the cycles. For example, ask, <i>What have you stopped doing? What would you like to do? If you felt happier, what would you be doing? How do you feel? Give examples if needed.</i>
Day 4 (+ 7 days of monitoring)	Discuss the activity diary with your child and begin the daily activity monitoring together. For each activity, think ACE : encourage your child to rate their sense of achievement (A) , their closeness to others (C) and their enjoyment (E) from 0-10. This is important for the next session.	It can be useful to keep the activity monitoring worksheet somewhere prominent so you and your child don't forget to fill it in. For example, put it up on the fridge or keep it near the TV. Fill it in as often as possible (at the very least, at the end of each day).
Day 10	Complete the 'What did you learn this week?' section.	Either do this together or complete separately before discussing afterwards.

What is Low Mood?

Anyone can get Low Mood. It is the most common psychological problem. It varies from person to person and stressful or difficult things can trigger it or it can seemingly come out of nowhere. We all feel sad from time to time but usually the feeling passes. With Low Mood, these feelings of sadness just seem to go on and on and it's hard to see a way to feel happy again.



Low Mood can affect how you **feel**, how you **think** and things that you **do**. It's all linked together.



Symptoms of Low Mood

Feeling Hopeless, Sad & Guilty

Feeling low for a long time can make us focus on the bad things in life, making us feel hopeless, sad, or like nothing is good. We might also feel guilty for thinking this way.

Concentration

Low Mood slows our bodies and brains down meaning we might struggle to concentrate or make decisions. We might also feel like we're 'clumsier' than normal or might forget things easily.

Negative Thoughts

Feeling low is linked to negative thinking for example, you might think that nothing is good, that you don't want to be here anymore, or you might have thoughts about hurting yourself. These are really upsetting thoughts but are a very common symptom of low mood.

Change in Appetite

Cortisol (our stress hormone) is released by the brain when we feel low - this might mean we don't feel hungry. Or, we might also comfort eat and eat more than usual.

Sleep

Changes to our hormones can make it difficult to get to sleep. Equally, negative thoughts could also stop you getting to sleep. You might also notice you're sleeping more or sleeping through the day because you don't have much energy.

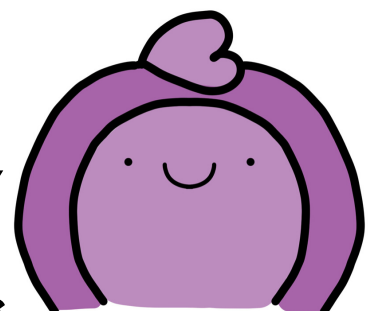
Aches and Pains

Low mood and pain share nerve pathways in the spinal cord and also share chemicals in the brain. This means we might feel aches and pains in our muscles due to feeling low.

Lack of Energy

Low mood drains our bodies of energy, making us feel tired and drained. This might mean we feel too tired to do the things we'd usually want to do.

Understanding your symptoms of low mood is the first step to getting better. Remember, though these symptoms are upsetting, they are a **NORMAL** reaction.



Behavioural Activation

Behavioural Activation is an intervention used to help people who are struggling with low mood. It is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and there is lots of evidence and research that shows it works! The main idea behind Behavioural Activation is that, when low in mood, we get stuck in a vicious negative cycle. To feel better, we therefore need to change something in the cycle so that it becomes a positive cycle.

The Vicious Cycle

feel low

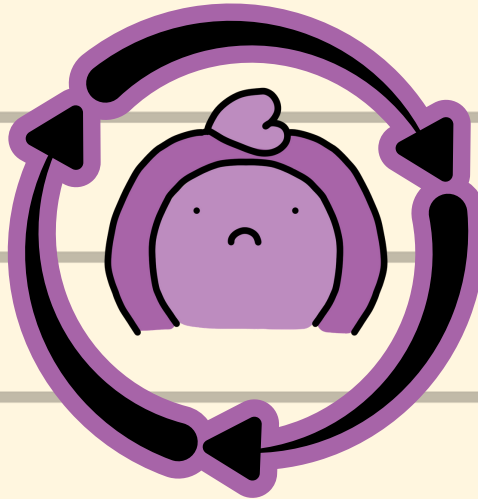
Feel low, down and sad.

Feel tired and exhausted.

Feel bad or guilty.

Feel unmotivated.

Feel hopeless or like nothing will get better.



do less

Slow down physically and mentally.

Do less things that you'd normally do.

Avoid seeing/socialising with friends/family.

Find it difficult to find motivation to do things.

get less out of life

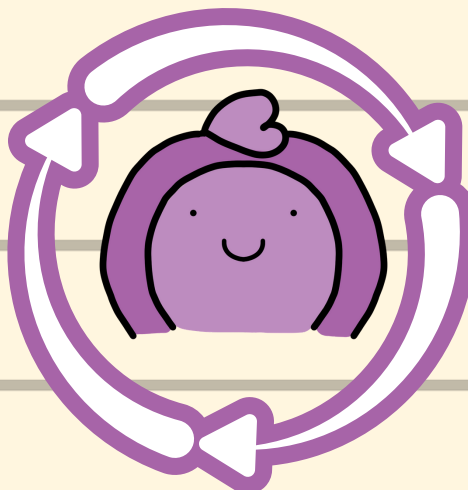
Stop getting enjoyment from life, stop feeling any sense of achievement and feel isolated from others.

The longer we're stuck in the vicious cycle, the lower and more unhappy we feel. This then makes it more and more difficult to do things and means we get even less out of life.

Breaking the Cycle: Do More to Feel Better

A proven way to break this cycle is to start **DOING** more meaningful and enjoyable activities. This can be very difficult at first but we know that activity helps us to feel happier, distracts us from negative thoughts, makes us feel more motivated, improves our concentration, and makes us feel less tired. This is why we say **DO MORE TO FEEL BETTER!**

do more of
what matters



feel better
and happier

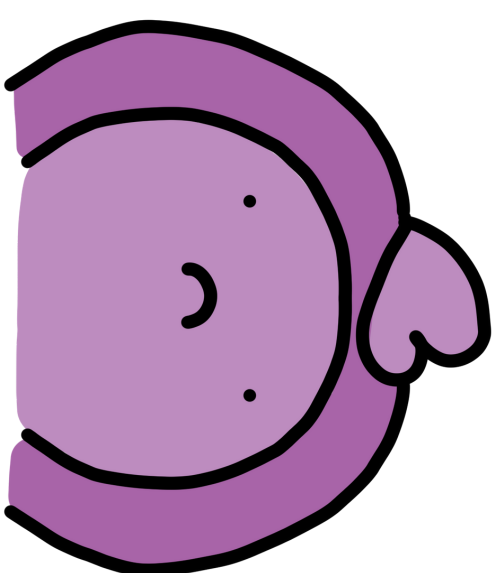
get more from life

This can be hard to do at first, but the more you do it, the happier you will feel, the closer you will feel to others and the more you will feel a sense of achievement.

Behavioural Activation Cycles

Fill in the Negative behavioural activation cycle based your current **feelings** and **behaviours** (the things you do).

**my negative
cycle**

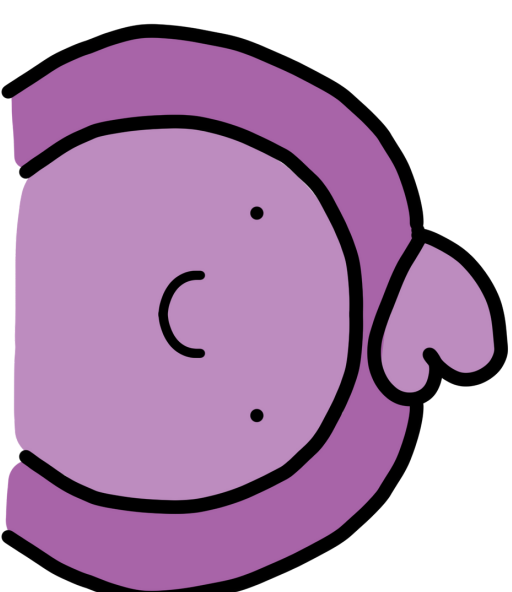


my feelings are:



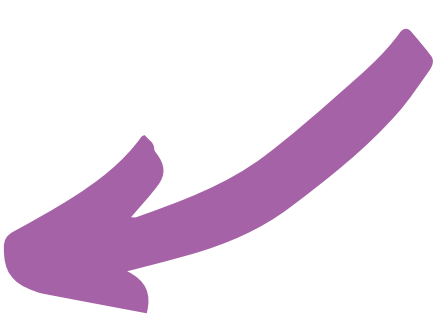
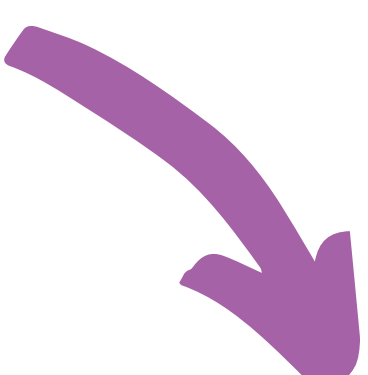
my behaviours are:

how I'm getting less
from life:



**my positive
cycle**

my feelings will be:



my behaviours will be:

how I'll be getting more
from life:

Fill in the Positive behavioural activation cycle based on how you would like to **feel** and **behave** (what you'd like to be doing) in the future.

Activity Diary

When feeling low, it can be helpful to monitor the things we do and how they make us feel. This way, we can look for patterns and links between the things that help us feel good and the things that don't. Use this activity diary to keep track of all of the things you do this week and rate each activity.

ACE ratings:

For each activity, rate how it made you feel on a scale of 0-10 for:

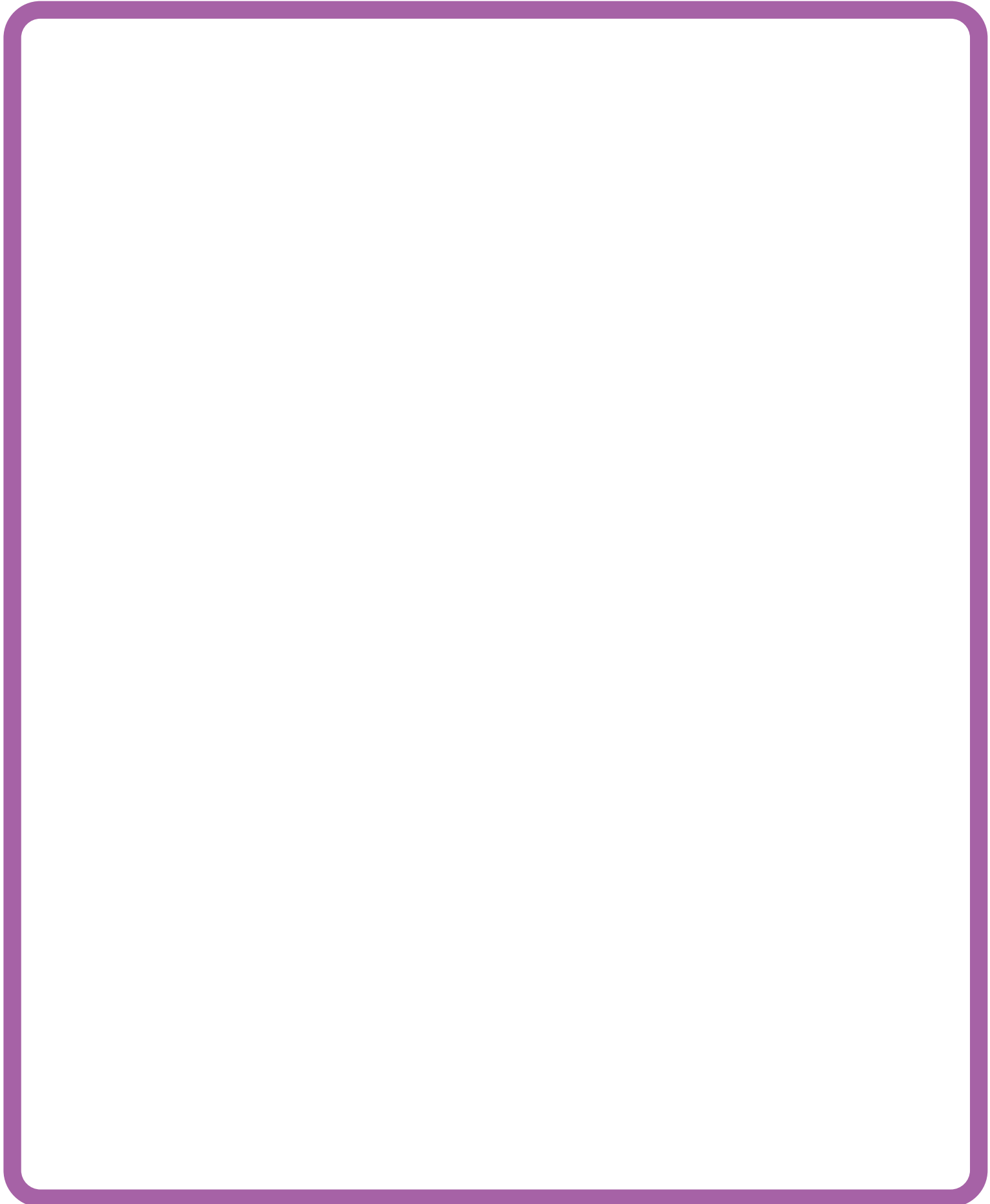
A - sense of Achievement
C - feeling of Closeness to others
E - how much you Enjoyed it

[illegible]

What did you learn this week?

Use this space to:

- 1) Write/draw about what you have found out this week.
- 2) Write/draw about what you have found useful.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick purple border, intended for writing or drawing. The box is positioned below the instructions and occupies most of the page area.