

Case study 3 – Jane Smith

Jane is a 45 year old single woman working in an administrative job. She is close to her family, in particular her mother and sister and her sister's two daughters. She would quite like to have a partner. Although she is relatively happy being childless, she loves looking after her young nieces. Before she became depressed, she enjoyed her job and loved cycling. She had a fairly active social life, although many of her girlfriends have children and families so they don't have quite as much free time as Jane, which is why she has got it into her head that they don't want to see her anymore. This isn't true because they do ring her quite often and are concerned she is depressed.

Jane became quite badly depressed quite suddenly and has taken leave of absence from work to fight the depression, but this only seems to have made things worse. Although she sleeps a lot and doesn't do much – she barely leaves the house – she is still very tired all the time and constantly frets about how the house and garden are in such a mess, because she is so exhausted she hardly ever cleans. She has stopped cycling, stopped socializing and feels like the depression is getting worse and worse, not better, which worries her further. She thinks she'll never be able to go back to work or live her life properly again.

Jane Smith

Need	Where I am now	Score	I'd like to be...	Steps I can take	I'll have got there when...
1 Attention	I see my mother but as I have not contacted my friends in so long, I hardly ever hear from them. I am so tired I hardly give anyone else attention, although I love my young nieces and used to enjoy spending time with them.	5	I'd like to be giving and receiving attention to my old friends and my close family members. I'd like to be giving attention to my nieces.	Now: I will start calling a couple of my old friends to chat. Later: I will organise to meet some of my friends for coffee. I will try and spend time with my nieces while my sister is there as I am too tired to care for them without their mother present. Future: When I start feeling better, I'll look after my nieces alone for an hour or so at a time and build up to taking them out for activities like I used to. I will continue to regularly see my old friends.	When I am seeing my friends at least once a week and am spending quality time with my family again.
2 Mind/body	I don't eat very much at all and I never get any exercise, in fact I almost never leave the house.	1	I'd like to have my old appetite back and to be enjoying my old hobby of cycling.	Now: Start walking around the block each day, until I can walk a bit further. Force myself to eat a healthy breakfast, working up to three healthy meals a day. Later: I will keep doing my daily walk, making it longer when I can. I will get my bike out and clean it and fix it. Future: I'll try riding my bike again and do some of my favourite tracks. I will eat three healthy meals a day.	When I am enjoying eating and feeling hungry again and am back on my bike enjoying a long ride.
3 Security	I'm not too worried about my safety as I have a nice flat, and it's a nice neighbourhood. I'm worried that if I don't get well I might lose my job. I have some savings which will last a while but not forever, and I'm on a reduced salary while I am off work.	7	Well enough to return to work	Now: Do my relaxation exercises so I can calm down and not worry so much. Later: Think about and write a list of what I 'need' to return to work. Focus on the fact that once I'm better, work will be easy again as I won't be so tired. Keep doing my relaxation exercises, eating healthy and walks to help my happiness levels.	I am back at work and am back on my full salary.
4 Community	I am no longer involved in any of my old hobbies or clubs. I barely leave the house.	4	I'd like to be back in my cycling club and to start a few more hobbies. For example, I've always wanted to paint. I used to look after my nieces a lot, giving my sister a break and giving me the enjoyment of teaching them things.	Now: I will find out where the art classes in my area are. I will drive past my cycling club to remind myself of how much fun I had there. Later: I will visit some galleries. I will plan a few activities for my nieces and I to do when I am better such as a trip to the ice-skating rink. Future: I will take my nieces on the trips. I will join an art class and rejoin my cycling club.	When I am cycling with my club again a few times a week and if I join an art class and start to paint.
5 Challenge	I do nothing with my time as I'm on sick to fight depression. I find it difficult to do normal things like the supermarket shopping because I am so depressed, so I am not able to do harder challenges and do creative things.	2	I would like to be back to how I used to be before depression, with cycling and and interests such as art to keep my brain stimulated.	Now: I will look at some art books. Later: I will spend half an hour painting a day, telling myself 'it doesn't matter if it's rubbish'. My goals for walking and then cycling again to connect my mind and body will be a challenge too. Future: I will keep regularly painting and cycling different tracks.	When I am going on long rides, or weekend trips to ride in other parts of the country. When I am painting a lot, or involved in art.

Jane Smith - continued

Need	Where I am now	Score	I'd like to be...	Steps I can take	I'll have got there when...
6 Intimacy	I am close to my mother and sister but feel I am bringing them down with my depression. I have some close friends who try to contact me but I am so depressed I almost never meet them any more.	5	I'd like to build on my strong relationship with my sister and mother, and keep my close friendships but I feel like they don't like me and don't want to spend time with me any more. I'd like to find a boyfriend but feel like no one would want to be with me.	Now: I will stop my black and white thinking and keep talking and sharing with my family and friends. Later: I will do bonding things with them, like prepare a meal and eat it together. I will listen to my 'self-confidence' and 'social anxiety' hypnosis downloads. Future: If a friend invites me to a dinner party or something I will go (use lots of relaxing hypnosis beforehand) and I will talk to the guests there. If I like a man I meet I will be friendly and not tell myself 'there's no way he could be interested in me'.	When I am able to date confidently. When I am enjoying and deepening my relationships.
7 Control	I have no control because I am so depressed. Everyday tasks are so hard, my house and garden are such a mess and I don't think I'll ever be able to go back to work.	1	I'd like to be managing my every day life (including work) with ease.	Now: I will focus on what I do have control over and do my relaxation exercises so I can relax more. Later: I will clean the house one room at a time so it's not so messy and feels so overwhelming. I will look at all the things I have achieved in the past, at work and personally to remind myself I do have control over a lot. This is black and white thinking which I need to challenge. Future: I will have a system which keeps everything under control so I never feel like it gets on top of me again.	When I feel like everything isn't so overwhelming.
8 Status	I am not working right now, I am being a bad friend and a bad relative. I have no responsibilities and no one looks up to me anymore.	2	I'd like to be back at work, being well-liked by my colleagues as I used to be. I'd like to be a good auntie to my nieces, as it made me feel good to be able to be a role model to them and help my sister out.	Now: I will work on getting myself better enough to that I can contribute, by relaxing, starting to sleep and eat well and walking a little. Later: I will begin to look after my nieces again while their mother is around, building up to taking them out on our own as I feel proud of being a good auntie and sister. Future: When I re-join the cycle club I will see if I can join the committee as then I will be part of a community organisation.	When I feel good about what I do and how I help others again.
9 Meaning	I don't feel like I have any purpose right now. My goals are so silly, I just want to feel better!	3	Being a helpful sister and caring aunt, enjoy cycling and expressing myself through art.	Now: First I need to get better. I will do my relaxation tapes, sleep properly, eat well and start my walks. I need to concentrate on getting better and not beat myself up for all the things I'm not doing. Later: I will keep focusing on me but ease into other activities like the cycling and art and seeing my nieces. Future: I will keep looking after myself mentally by relaxing etc. I will keep looking after my primal needs by caring for my nieces, cycling etc. If I feel myself getting depressed again I will address the problem.	When I'm me again and able to look forward to the future with happiness and make plans.

Mark's commentary on Jane's situation

Jane's depression is blatantly blocking her from meeting her needs. She used to satisfy her need for attention from a wide variety of sources, including work that she enjoyed, and also through belonging to a cycling club, but now she is isolated. She says her only current source of attention 'exchange' is with her mother, although it's the quality of this attention isn't clear and it is never a great idea to have only one main source of attention. It's clear that a **sign** that Jane is feeling better will be that she is spending more time with friends and family again but, paradoxically, starting to mix with others again will also **help** Jane feel better.

So what can we do to help Jane feel good enough to socialize again (which in turn can make her feel *even* better)?

I would like to discover why Jane became depressed so suddenly. What stresses was she under in her life? What was she most worried about? And how did these worries relate to her primal needs – either **not meeting** them or fearing they would **no longer be met** in the future?

Jane needs to feel stronger in herself. She hasn't been eating properly or exercising and, although she doesn't say so, I suspect her sleep isn't what it could be. We can help Jane discipline herself to start eating better and to begin to move her body more. We can teach her to relax so that she feels more *able* to look after her physical needs.

The need for a sense of safety and security is closely tied to the need for a sense of control in life. I feel that Jane may have taken the need for a sense of safety and security perhaps a tad too literally, as she talks about her apartment being 'in a safe neighborhood', yet also states that she has 'no control' over her life – which tends to produce feelings of insecurity.

We could gently start to question her depressive all-or-nothing thinking – does she really have **no** control? None at all? And what about her sense that she is a 'bad' friend/relative? I might challenge this by asking if a bicycle a 'bad bicycle' just because it's taking some time out to get fixed?

Jane would love a special relationship, so we might also look to see what strategies she has used in the past to meet partners and maintain relationships, and whether they have worked for her or not.

It's clear that Jane has a strong sense of what she needs in life. Helped by a clear understanding of the primal needs, we can help her get there.