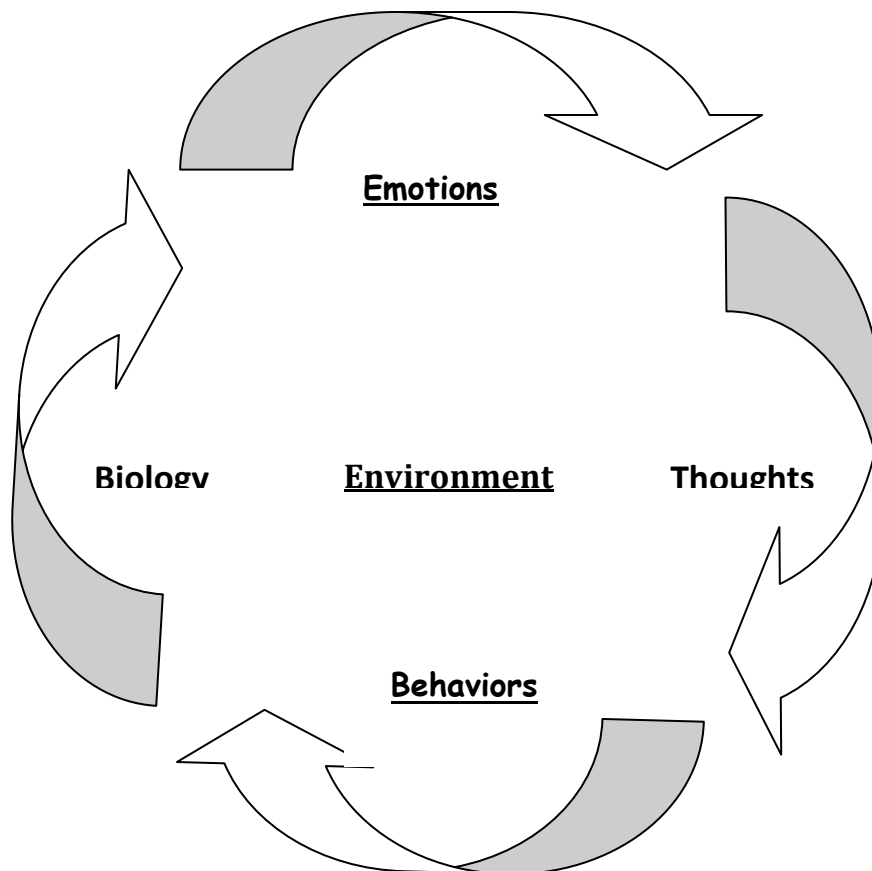

Information from your Primary Care Team

The Depression Spiral

The figure below shows one helpful way to think about and understand depression. Our life experience (including depression) is influenced by a number of interrelated factors: our environment, biological factors, our thoughts and beliefs, our behaviors, and our emotions. Each factor can affect the others.



For example: Sue recently began working in a fast-paced, high-pressure job (**environmental factor**). She began to have thoughts such as “There’s no way I can get all this work done. It’s impossible. If I don’t get it done, I may lose my job.” (**thoughts**). As a result, she began to work longer hours, cut out all fun activities, and withdrew from family and friends (**behaviors**). With this decrease in many of the positive, rewarding aspects of her life, she began to feel down, depressed, and more irritable (**emotions**). As the depression cycle started to take hold, she had more difficulty sleeping and concentrating (**biology**), which led her to feel even more irritable and depressed (**emotions**) and she withdrew further from activities she enjoyed (**behaviors**). At some point in the cycle, the balance of chemicals in her brain also began to alter (**biology**), which further deepened the spiral of depression.

Changing any area in your life can have a positive effect. Often one of the easiest things people can do to reverse the depression spiral is add valued and/or enjoyable activities back into their lives.