

**BLACK DOG INSTITUTE****Patient Information Sheet****What Does Clinical Assessment Entail?**

At your initial assessment, the doctor (general practitioner or psychiatrist) might ask you the following questions:

- Is depression the main disorder, or is it as a result of some other condition (for example anxiety, substance abuse) that should be treated?
- If depression is the main disorder, what are its key features (in order to determine the depressive sub-type)?
- What is the risk, if any, to you of self-harm, harm to reputation, or even harm to others?
- What is the level of current disability?
- Were there any triggers (for example, stressful events) to the episode?
- If there were triggers, did they:
  - Entirely cause the depressive state, or
  - Did they activate or worsen it, or
  - Were they merely coincidental?
- How did you interpret the triggers, and what thoughts did they activate?
- Are you part of a family network and, if so, what is the quality of the relationships?
- What can you remember about your childhood, including the level of parenting received, interactions with other children and experiences at school?
- Is there any family history of depression or other relevant medical problems?
- How many and what types of jobs have you had and what level of satisfaction, if any, was there?
- What is the quality of your relationships with intimates, peers, workmates? Have those relationships been sustained over time?

The clinician will then establish:

- Whether any medical/surgical problems might have contributed to the depression
- Whether any allergies exist, especially in relation to medication
- If drugs or alcohol are an issue
- If you are experiencing any cognitive limitations which are affecting concentration, memory and intellectual functioning
- Your life history of depressive episodes and mood swings, previous treatments and perceived effectiveness or ineffectiveness of these treatments
- Whether any current 'sustaining' factors to the depression exist, for example, ongoing work problems or dysfunctional relationships
- Your own views about the reasons for the depression, and preferred treatments.

*Adapted from Gordon Parker (2002), 'Professional Assessment'  
In Dealing with Depression – A Commonsense Guide to Mood Disorders,  
Allen & Unwin, Chapter 13, pp. 70-74.*