Welcome to the home page for the SHIFT-Depression® Inventory, a self-help inventory for guiding treatment of depression with women.

This inventory was developed by Dr. Helen Vidler, for her doctoral research completed in 2002 and has been further developed based on the findings from that study. Helen Vidler is a Counselling Psychologist, a Member of the Australian Psychological Society, and is registered with the NSW Psychologist’s Registration Board.

She has held a long-term interest in the management of treatment for women with depression and during the past 10 years she has conducted research in this area for a Master of Women’s Health (University of Melbourne, Key Centre for Women’s Health) and PhD (University of Melbourne). She has worked in both the public and private sectors for over twenty years and currently holds a teaching position at the University of Western Sydney.

Background to the inventory

This inventory has been developed from research conducted with women who were depressed. One of the central findings of that research was that, when depressed, women felt they were not in control of their lives.

The study was concerned with women’s accounts of their experience of depression including treatment. Women were interviewed using an in-depth, semi-structured method and those interviews were then analysed for themes regarding the experience of being depressed. The central themes were; levels of awareness of being depressed (self/other), negative judgement (self/other), social support (level/quality/seeking), self-sacrificing (focusing care on self or others) and self-agency (feeling powerless or not). The measures used were the Centre For Epidemiological Studies Depression scale (CESD, Radloff, 1977), The Silencing The Self Scale (STSS, Jack, 1991) and the Contributory Factors to Depression Measure (CFDM, Vidler, 2002). The CFDM is now called the SHIFT-Depression® Inventory. Go to the links page for research publications detailing this study.

Women’s Comments after using the SHIFT-Depression® Inventory

'It stares you in the face, the reasons ...why you became depressed!'

'The questions are very clear. You go ‘Oh wow! ...I’d forgotten about that (issue).’

'Oh, I didn’t realise that was such an issue for me!'

'That helps me understand some things now.'

'It covers so many areas and connects things.'

'It feels positive to think about what things could help me and gives me some direction.'

'I feel more optimistic after focusing on what things might help to alleviate my depression.'
The findings from the study also showed that depression was multi-factorial and interactional and affected the biological, hormonal, psychological (individual intrapsychic and interpersonal), social and contextual areas of women’s lives. If treatment is to be informed from these findings, then treatment needs to also be focused in each of these areas rather than focusing on only one area (eg physical treatment) to the exclusion of others (eg context).

Because depression is experienced as a unique interaction between each of these domains (as multi-factorial), for each individual, it is important for clinicians to attend to each domain area in assessment and in formulating treatment plans. The research has shown that depression is experienced as a physical, psychological, social and contextual phenomenon.

This inventory is offered as a tool to assist women to identify the issues from each of these areas that affect their depression and may help to alleviate it. If women can identify the things affecting them, they can then have a voice in the direction their treatment for depression takes which will assist them gain control over their lives.

Women have a voice in their treatment

The inventory is designed for women to use in conjunction with the support of a qualified professional as part of a collaborative treatment plan. If women identify the issues that for them are associated with being depressed and what may help to alleviate their depression, they can then choose the ways they wish to be supported to make changes, or not, as the case may be.

Because this inventory is based on research with women, it has therefore been developed to use with women. Although it may be useful in shedding light on some of the issues concerned with depression in men, it is not intended as such. Go to the links page for information about men and depression.

Details of the inventory

The inventory is in four parts with each part consisting of six domain areas. These domain areas, biological (physical), social (stressful life experiences, community and culture), psychological; intrapsychic (thoughts and feelings), interpersonal (relationships with others), and hormonal (women’s problems), contain statements relating to the experience of depression for women.
The first two parts of the inventory;
Part A 'Things connected to your sadness or depression', and
Part B 'Things that may help to alleviate your sadness or depression' are designed for completion at the stage of determining how to proceed with treatment and setting goals for therapy and counselling etc.

Evaluating progress

The second two parts;
Part C 'Things that have helped to alleviate your sadness or depression', and
Part D ‘Your experience of health care services involved in your treatment’ are designed to be given when an alleviation of depression is apparent either from self-report or from the results of a depression measure. These final parts are used as a means to evaluate what worked and what didn’t work and will prove useful for clinicians who wish to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment or for those engaged in research using the inventory. Go to the links page for a depression measure reference.

The SHIFT-Depression® inventory is available for download to qualified practitioners. It is not to be used by women to self-treat their depression in isolation.