



[Home](#) > Depression

Do you feel sad, discouraged and hopeless most of the time?

These are the common core symptoms of depression--although people who are depressed can also show additional and quite different changes in feelings, thinking and/or behavior.

Symptoms can range from constant tiredness and lack of energy to such extremes as mania, self-harm, suicidality. Depression can also occur with other disorders (e. g., anxiety, ADHD, addiction, dementia) or ailment (e. g., cancer, heart disease).

SymTrend® is an easy-to-use Internet depression aid. It can help...

Give you more support.

Feeling sad and discouraged undermines the determination and positive thinking needed to fight any illness.

- SymTrend helps you gain a clearer, more positive, view of recovery: which symptoms are improving, which interventions are working, where the possibilities lie, and what to avoid to prevent downturns.
- Using SymTrend to see more clearly, and to see what is better, can be empowering. Seeing progress can promote optimism, which boosts motivation, which stimulates self-help behavior.

Individualize treatment of your depression to achieve a better outcome.

- Track the impact of each intervention on each of your symptoms.
- Monitor the occurrence of side effects and other events that undermine interventions.
- Link particular profile features: feelings, behaviors, stress reactions, and activity benefits.
- See more complex patterns: ups and downs, ons and offs, stable vs. volatile periods.

DEPRESSION TOUR: The tour begins with a description of each SymTrend tool. Part two is a case study. It illustrates how SymTrend tools are combined for better depression care. Part three describes SymTrend use in bipolar disorder and with cognitive behavior therapy.

SymTrend Tools for:

- Recording Symptoms
- Tracking Progress
- Tracking Impact
- Keeping Records
- Reminding When-To
- Reminding How-To



Case Study

- Case study of college aged male who became depressed after two significant personal losses.



Other Resources

- SymTrend use with Bipolar Disorder
- Links





SymTrend® Tools: Recording Symptoms

How time consuming is it?

- Each recording period takes a couple of minutes.
- Do one or more recording periods a day depending upon need, interest or time availability.

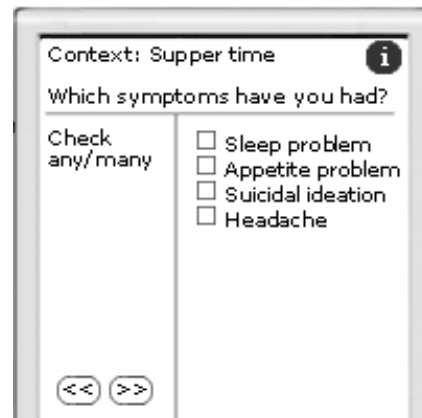
How do I record?

- Use a desktop or laptop computer connected to the Internet.
- Start out with one recording period at bedtime.
- Then, if you need to track your ups and downs during the day, install your Health Log to a handheld computer.

What information should I collect?

- Talk this over with a clinician. Usually She/he will start with tracking:
 - Emotions, such as sadness, anger, guilt, loneliness, and pessimism.
 - Energy level, ability to concentrate, and interest in activities.
 - Medication and dose changes.
- Then, add as needed, tracking the impact of:
 - Thoughts, stressors and external influences on your mood.
 - Positive behaviors upon mood: work, relaxation, exercise, or meditation.
 - Mood on risky behaviors: alcohol, dope, tobacco, risky sex, escape (video games), avoiding others, or thrill seeking.
 - Treatments on: school/work performance.
 - Treatments on social interactions: cooperation, self-expression, self-control.
 - Your health status (for example: blood sugars, headaches, seizures, menstrual and hormone related physical signs) on mood.

Sample Health Log Screens (To test a Health Log go to [Case Study](#))

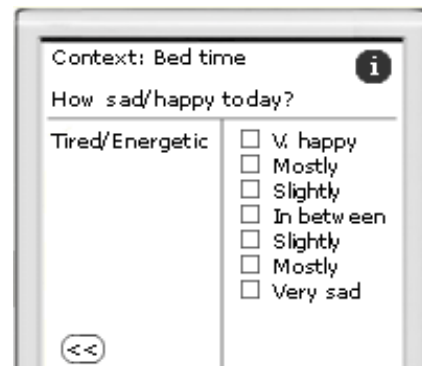


Context: Supper time i

Which symptoms have you had?

Check any/many	<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep problem
	<input type="checkbox"/> Appetite problem
	<input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal ideation
	<input type="checkbox"/> Headache

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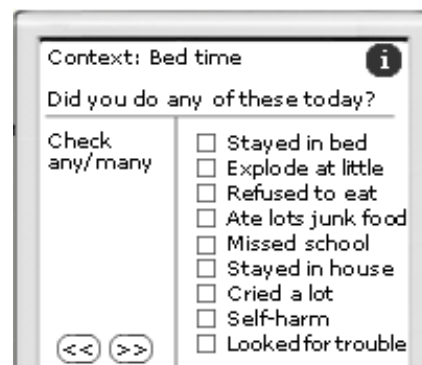


Context: Bed time i

How sad/happy today?

Tired/Energetic	<input type="checkbox"/> V. happy
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly
	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly
	<input type="checkbox"/> In between
	<input type="checkbox"/> Slightly
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mostly
	<input type="checkbox"/> Very sad

<<



Context: Bed time i

Did you do any of these today?

Check any/many	<input type="checkbox"/> Stayed in bed
	<input type="checkbox"/> Explode at little
	<input type="checkbox"/> Refused to eat
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ate lots junk food
	<input type="checkbox"/> Missed school
	<input type="checkbox"/> Stayed in house
	<input type="checkbox"/> Cried a lot
	<input type="checkbox"/> Self-harm
	<input type="checkbox"/> Looked for trouble

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Choose a depression Health Log from the SymTrend library. It has Health Logs for common depression or bipolar disorder needs. Or ask us to personalize a Health Log for you.



SymTrend® Tools: Tracking Progress

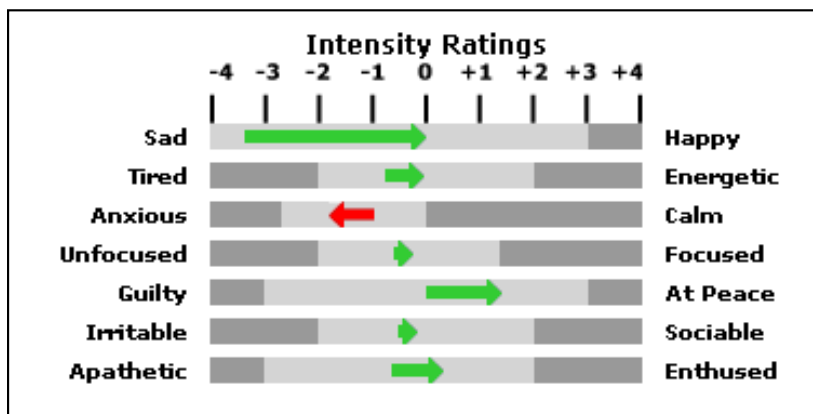
Use SymTrend's online **Progress Profile** charts to summarize progress before and after interventions or other significant events.

A color chart highlights areas of progress and stumbling blocks.

- Green arrows pointing to the right indicate improvement.
- Red arrows pointing leftward indicate a worsening.
- The arrow's size indicates the amount of change.
- The location of the arrow's tip tells the current symptom intensity.

The sample Progress Profile chart below shows a significant increase in the happiness ratings (Line 1). The left end of the arrow indicates a sadness level of about -3.5 (very sad) prior to treatment. The right tip of the arrow indicates an improvement on average to 0 (a so-so feeling level) after a shift in medication dosage. However, the light gray margin on the right indicates highs of $+3$ (a mostly happy day) some days after the shift in dosage. Other emotions changed less dramatically. The second best change was guilt reduction (Line 5), which ended above the midline.

There was, however, one setback, anxiety increased (Line 3). Upon further investigation, this setback was not due to a life event, but was a medication side effect (jitteriness). This was managed with a second medication.





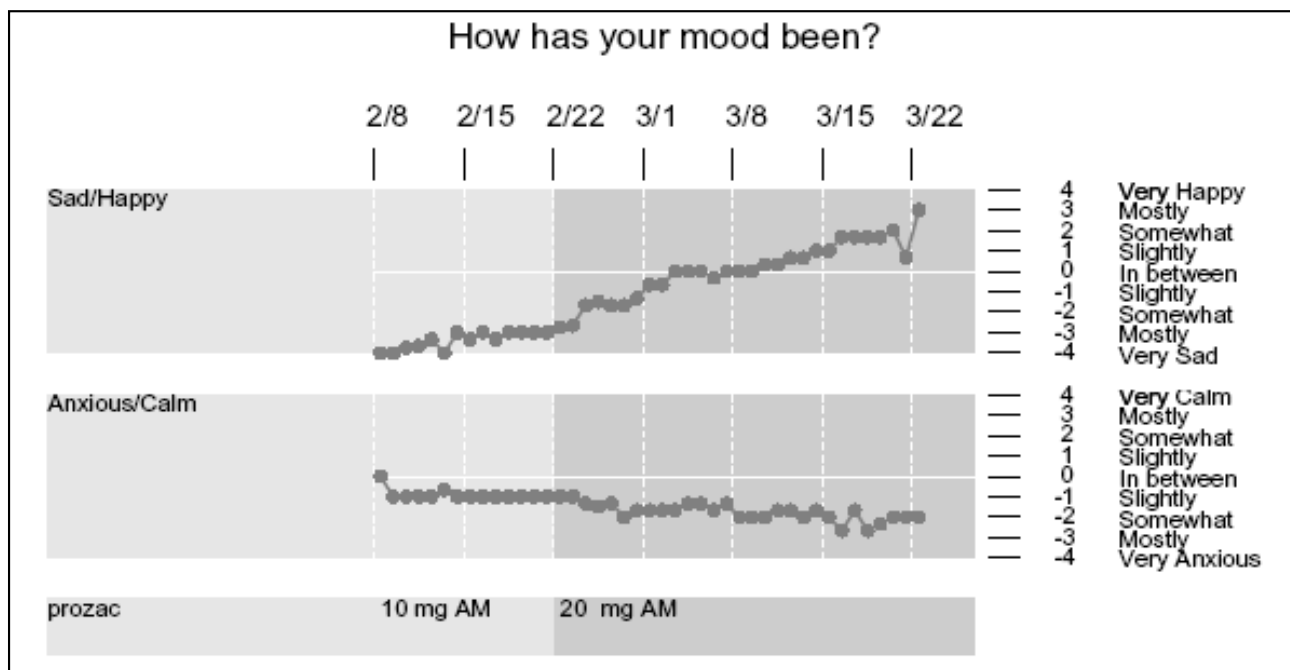
SymTrend® Tools: Tracking Impact

Use SymTrend charts not only to depict the amount and extent of symptom change (see [Tracking Progress](#)), but also to understand and optimize change. SymTrend **Quick Report** charts are useful to:

- Clarify the source of problems (hormones, stress, other illnesses).
- Detect why things are not going as well as expected.
- And understand why problems persist.

Medication Management

SymTrend charts are useful not only for guiding behavioral interventions, but also to help assess the costs and benefits of medications taken for depression. In the chart below, the positive impact of Prozac at 20 mg is evident in the Sad/Happy rating, but the medication caused an increase in anxiety for this individual.





SymTrend® Tools: Keeping Records

Many patients with depression see multiple providers for different aspects of their care (e.g., for depression medication, for counseling, for general health, and for women's issues). The **Care Records** provide a case history in a list format so that your providers have a common view of the course of your depression in response to treatment and events. Use it to:

- Put all your records in one place.
- Compile a clear, accurate history of services, findings, medications, procedures, hospitalizations and insurance matters.
- Print out your history before you see a new provider to help you remember what has happened in the past.
- Share information among providers, distributed across different locations, easily by giving them all access to the same records.

Care Records Example

(links are not active in graphic)

03/22/01	Visit	Kaiser; psychopharm consult
	Treatment	Ativan; .5 - 1 bedtime
<hr/>		
03/08/01	Note	I hate my new medication. I get shaky and have trouble sleeping. This isn't helping me.
	Visit	Kaiser; psychopharm consult
	Treatment	trazadone; as needed
<hr/>		
02/22/01	Visit	Kaiser; psychopharm consult
	Treatment	prozac; 20 mg AM
<hr/>		
02/08/01	Visit	Kaiser; ER visit
	Treatment	prozac; 10 mg AM

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SymTrend® Tools: Reminding When-To



How can I remember to enter data, when I can't remember where I left my keys?

Receive preset To-Do messages and schedule alerts throughout the day. Get as few or as many as you need. Get an email on your desktop computer or a beep on your handheld computer.

Schedule time each day to:

- Take medications.
- Do routines (food, exercise, etc.).
- Schedule tasks to keep from falling too far behind.
- Schedule social time and outside activities to keep you active.
- Do relaxation exercises and deep breathing.
- Enter health data.

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SymTrend® Tools: Reminding How-To

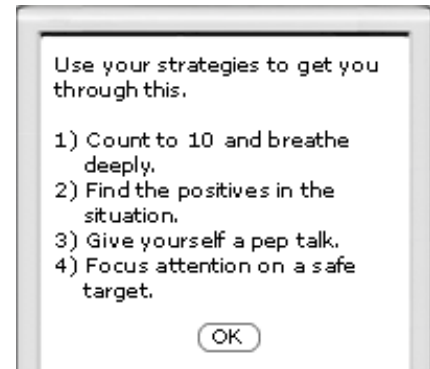
How can SymTrend help me change my life?

What can be done to help sluggish, overwhelmed, or forgetful minds? When-To Reminders tell the user what to do, but not how to do it.

SymTrend supports the "how" with prompts to personalize treatment support reminders. These **How-To Reminders** are Health Logs that contain 1 to 2 minute exercises designed to do one of the following:

- **Foster awareness** – by noting the physical and emotional signs of anxiety.
- **Enhance preparedness** – by prompting coping strategies prior to a known challenge in a situation that causes anxiety.
- **Encourage reflection** – about triggers, successes, and progress with coping skills.
- **Facilitate habituation** – by staying in the exposure to anxiety-arousing situations and doing exposures frequently.
- **Enhance focus** – on the positive – on success with working on your problems using when-to and how-to lists.
- **Calm agitation** – by guiding relaxation exercises.
- **Reinforce participation** – support use of coping skills with words of encouragement.

Think of How-To Reminders as being tools for instilling cognitive watchwords.



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Next Section: Case Study



Case Study

Jamal was a college junior who complained of eight weeks of increasing fatigue, intense anger, and depressed mood since his grandmother died.

- He reported periods of irritability and felt guilty about not visiting her before she died.
- His class attendance had dropped significantly. He started to fail exams and miss deadlines.
- He missed his girlfriend at another school who, weeks before, had cooled their relationship to focus on studies.
- Jamal started to have suicidal thoughts in response to these stresses, which he interpreted as signs of his worthlessness. His roommates convinced him to go to the university health clinic.
- The clinic doctor started him on Prozac at 10 mg. The doctor also recommended that he start tracking his mood with SymTrend.
- Medication side effects were treated with other medications, which produced additional side effects.
- These complications prompted a referral to a psychiatrist.

[Read how SymTrend® helped >>](#)



Case Study: Why Jamal Used SymTrend®

- A primary care doctor at the university health service prescribed medication for Jamal's depression.
- The doctor wanted to be sure that Jamal did not become increasingly suicidal either due to events or as a paradoxical response to the medication. A staff member monitored his entries during the first few weeks after starting on the meds.
- The doctor also hoped that Jamal would become more aware of his feelings of sadness, anger and guilt, as temporary responses to adversity rather than as being a true reflection of self worth.

Case Study: SymTrend Tools Used

Health Log for Recording Symptoms

Jamal recorded in his Health Log three times a day. It took about a minute each time.

Care Records for Keeping Records

He entered clinician visits and medication changes into the Care Records. He also added general comments there, since his Health Log did not have a place to enter open-ended text.

Progress Profile for Tracking Progress

The Progress Profile summary chart was used to give everyone an overall impression of Jamal's mood to check that it was improving with the treatment. The pattern highlighted issues that had to be discussed to distinguish medication effects from effects of external stresses.

Quick Report for Tracking Impact

The Quick Report charts revealed that Jamal had a mixed response to the initial SSRI antidepressant. The complicated pattern of energy, happiness, and anxiety ratings, combined with the frequency of headaches and worsening sleep suggested that a referral to a psychopharmacologist was appropriate.

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Case Study: Recording Symptoms

Health Log Prescribed

The clinic doctor recommended a Health Log that included emotions rating scales and a checklist of signs that are common in depression management. The clinic had created a few custom Health Logs to prescribe for various problems.



At first, Jamal recorded online from his dormitory room three times a day. As he started to get out more, he decided to download the Health Log to a handheld computer for more convenient recording.

See What a Health Log is Like TRY IT >>

click here to test a Health Log

Context: Bed time
How good or bad a day?

Bed Day/Good Day

Very Good Day
 Really
 Somewhat
 slightly
 In between
 slightly
 Somewhat
 Really
 Very Bad Day

Help << >>

Back Forward

- For ratings, click on the box next to your answer.
- For checklists, click on your answers and then click on the right arrow.
- For open-ended questions and numbers, click in the space on the right and use your keyboard to answer. Then click on the right arrow.



Case Study: Keeping Records

Visits, Medications and Notes Entered into Care Records

Jamal recorded each visit to the doctor and the changes in medications in the Care Records section of SymTrend®. In addition to the Health Log entries, he wrote a note about his frustration with the course of medication.

Care Records Example (links are not active in graphic)

03/22/01	Visit	Kaiser; psychopharm consult
	Treatment	Ativan; .5 - 1 bedtime
03/08/01	Note	I hate my new medication. I get shaky and have trouble sleeping. This isn't helping me.
	Visit	Kaiser; psychopharm consult
	Treatment	trazadone; as needed
02/22/01	Visit	Kaiser; psychopharm consult
	Treatment	prozac; 20 mg AM
02/08/01	Visit	Kaiser; ER visit
	Treatment	prozac; 10 mg AM

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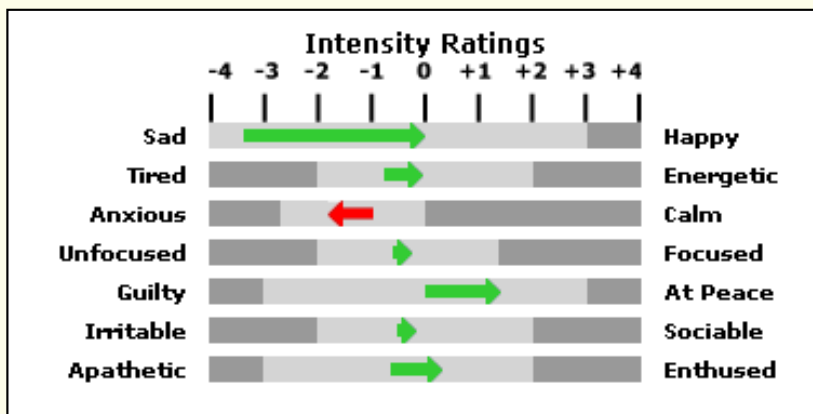


Case Study: Tracking Progress with Progress Profile Charts

A member of the staff of the clinic checked Jamal's entries online every couple of days to make sure there were no negative side effects of the medication and to determine when positive effects started.

The sample **Progress Profile** chart below shows a visible increase in the happiness ratings after to 20 mg Prozac (Line 1). Other emotions changed less dramatically. In fact, Jamal had become more anxious. The presence of increased anxiety and energy in a young person who had expressed suicidal thoughts is a cause for concern, so Jamal was asked to come in to talk to the clinician.

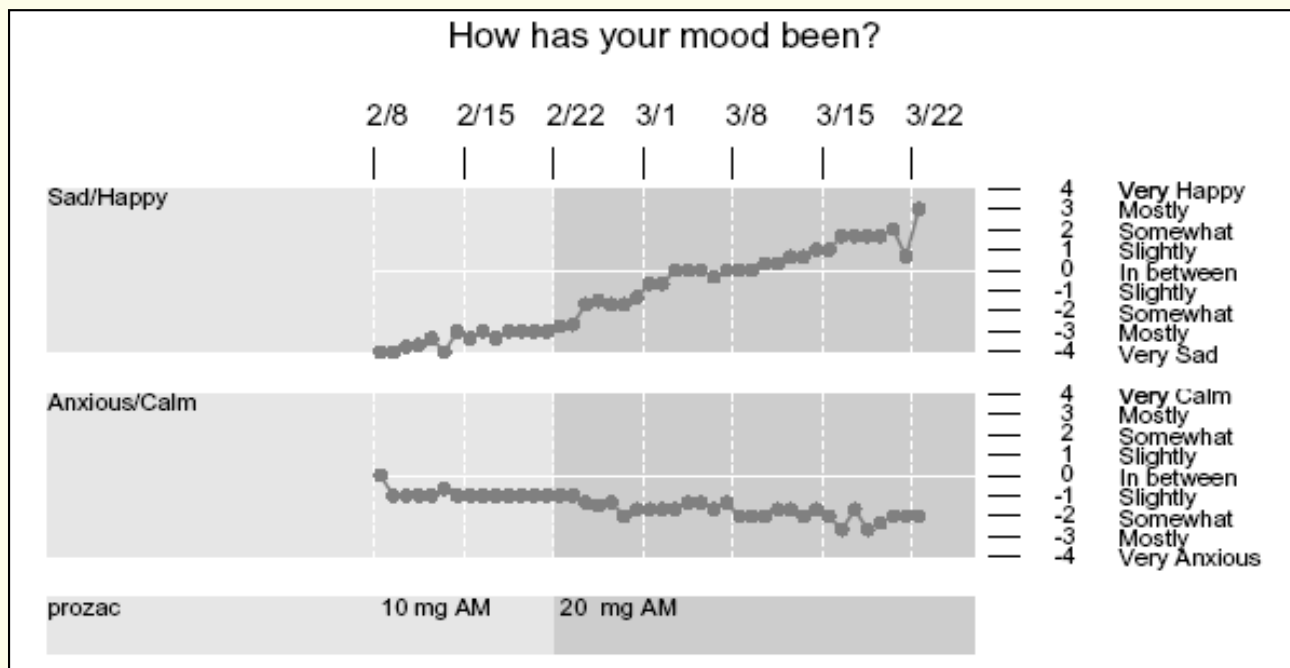
Jamal and his clinician discussed the increased jitteriness and anxiety he was experiencing – he insisted that it was not a response to life stresses. It proved to be a side effect of the medication and was handled with another medication.





Case Study: Tracking Impact

In a follow-up visit after the start of medication, Jamal said that he felt no mood change. The **Quick Report**, however, showed that his daily Sad/Happy ratings were actually edging upwards slowly. The doctor increased the dosage to 20 mg. By the third visit, Jamal had noticed an improvement in mood.



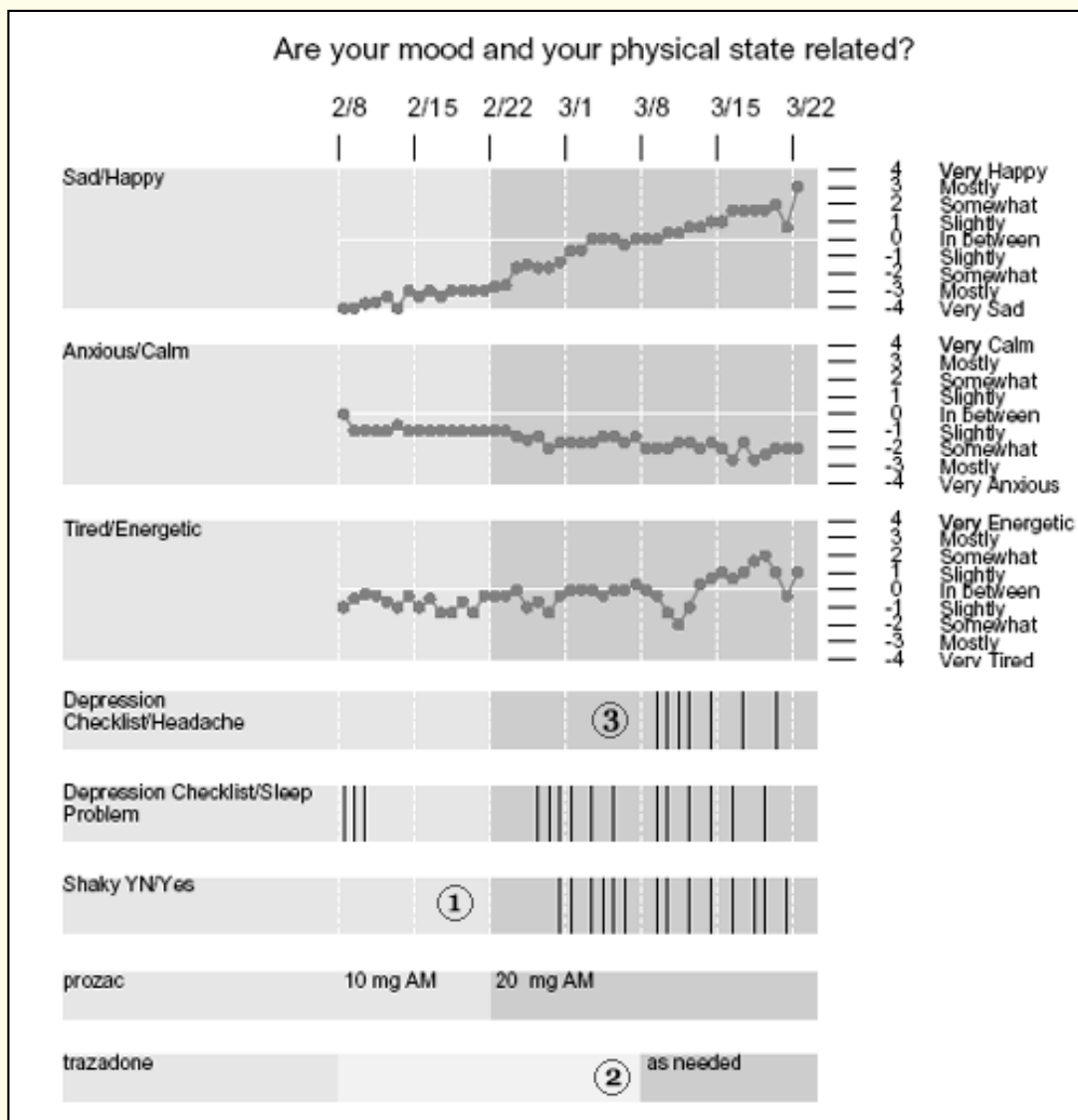


Case Study: Tracking Impact

At the third visit, Jamal also complained, however, about being jittery at times and about intermittent insomnia (1). The charts supported what he was saying.

Jamal had started to attend classes regularly once again. He and his doctor discussed the possibility that jitteriness was from worries about having fallen behind in his assignments and the work he had missed. The doctor prescribed a medication to aid sleep and continued to monitor jitteriness (2).

After Jamal started to have headaches from the new medication (3), the doctor decided to refer him to a psychopharmacologist for medication adjustment. Jamal was able to bring along his SymTrend charts to the appointment, to give her a perspective of his medication history.





Case Study: Benefits

Impact:

- Charts helped the university clinic keep track of a student at risk.
- Recording with the SymTrend® Health Log forced Jamal to become more in touch with his feelings of anger, sadness and guilt.

Medications:

- Feedback was available for Jamal's doctor to adjust medication.
- The charts also proved useful to the psychiatrist to whom Jamal was referred, so that she had a more complete picture about the treatments to date.

[<< Back](#)[Next >>](#)**Next Section: Other Resources**



Other Resources: Living with Depression

Supplementary Information

- Use of SymTrend® with bipolar disorder.
- Use of SymTrend® to monitor teens who self-injure.
- Use of SymTrend® with behavioral treatments for depression.

Links and Books

- Reference material for depression, bipolar disorder and Cognitive Behavior Therapy for children and adults.

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Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® with Bipolar Disorder

- Some clinician researchers recommend the use of symptom diaries in the management of bipolar disorders.
 - The diary alerts family members and clinicians about mood swings and impending declines into depression and/or manic episodes.
- Doctors at NIMH and other sites who are affiliated with a Stanley Bipolar Research Foundation developed a paper diary for managing the medications for patients with mood fluctuations.
 - Their diary, which is available in modified form on SymTrend, enables tracking of mood fluctuations, anxiety, sleep patterns, the frequency of rapid swings in mood within a day, and events that might trigger changes.
 - While some doctors think that this population will not adhere to a reporting schedule, a study by the group reported that patients in their study used the paper version of their diary for more than a year.
- Other diaries in the literature can be modified for electronic recording.
 - For example, Dr. Gary Sachs provides a mood chart on the website of the Massachusetts General Hospital Bipolar Clinic & Research Program (www.manicdepressive.org/tools_all.html).

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Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® with Bipolar Disorder

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Most bipolar diaries in the literature suggest that you capture your mood at its highest and lowest points in the day.

- This can be done with one daily report at the end of the day, in which you report your mood's highest and lowest points (see Health Log screen below). This procedure may be adequate.



- An alternative, more accurate method is to use SymTrend on a handheld computer more than once a day:
 - You can have the Reminders feature alert you to do Health Log recordings during the day and you will capture the swings of mood as they happen.

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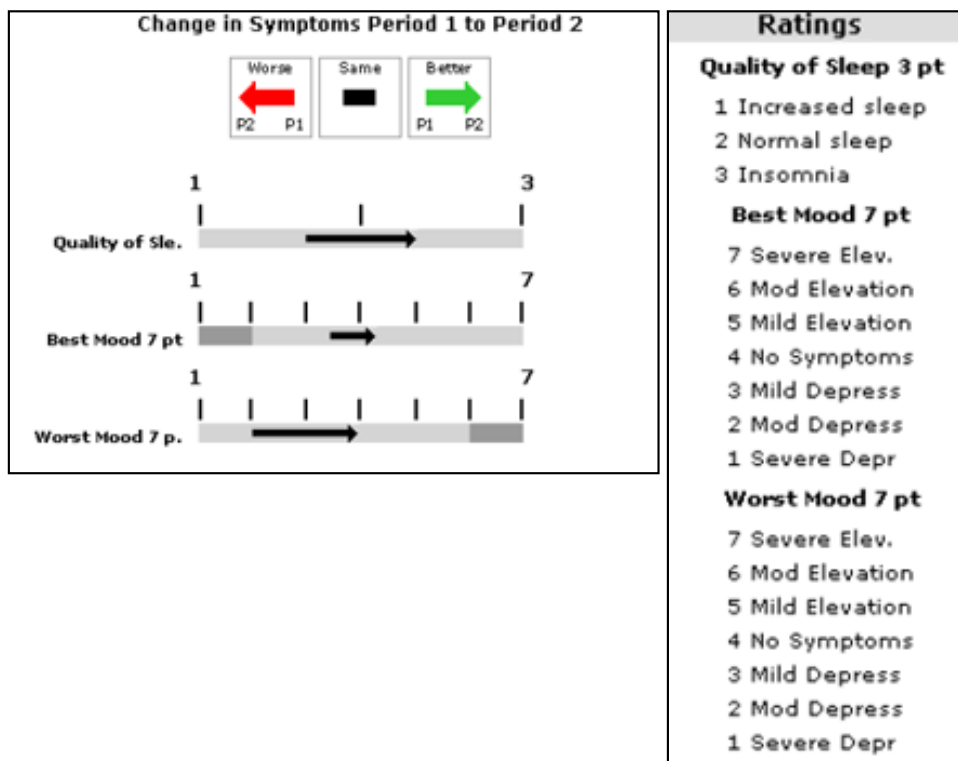
Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® with Bipolar Disorder

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Interpretation of Progress Profile charts requires sensitivity to changes in mood that are common in bipolar disease.

- In bipolar disorder management, neither end of the mood scale (1) "Very Depressed" and (7) "Very Elevated" is a desirable. Likewise, neither end of the sleep scale is desirable either: (1) "Increased sleep" or (3) "Insomnia".
- The arrows in the Progress Profile chart are not green when rightward and red when leftward, indicating positive vs. negative change. Instead, it is important to consider whether the arrow is heading to a stable "middle" and not overshooting to the extremes.
- In the chart below, you can see that the user's best mood slightly overshoot the middle of the chart which represents "Normal Sleep" for the sleep line and "No Symptoms" for the two mood lines. These sleep and mood shifts need to be monitored to insure they don't move too far in the manic direction.





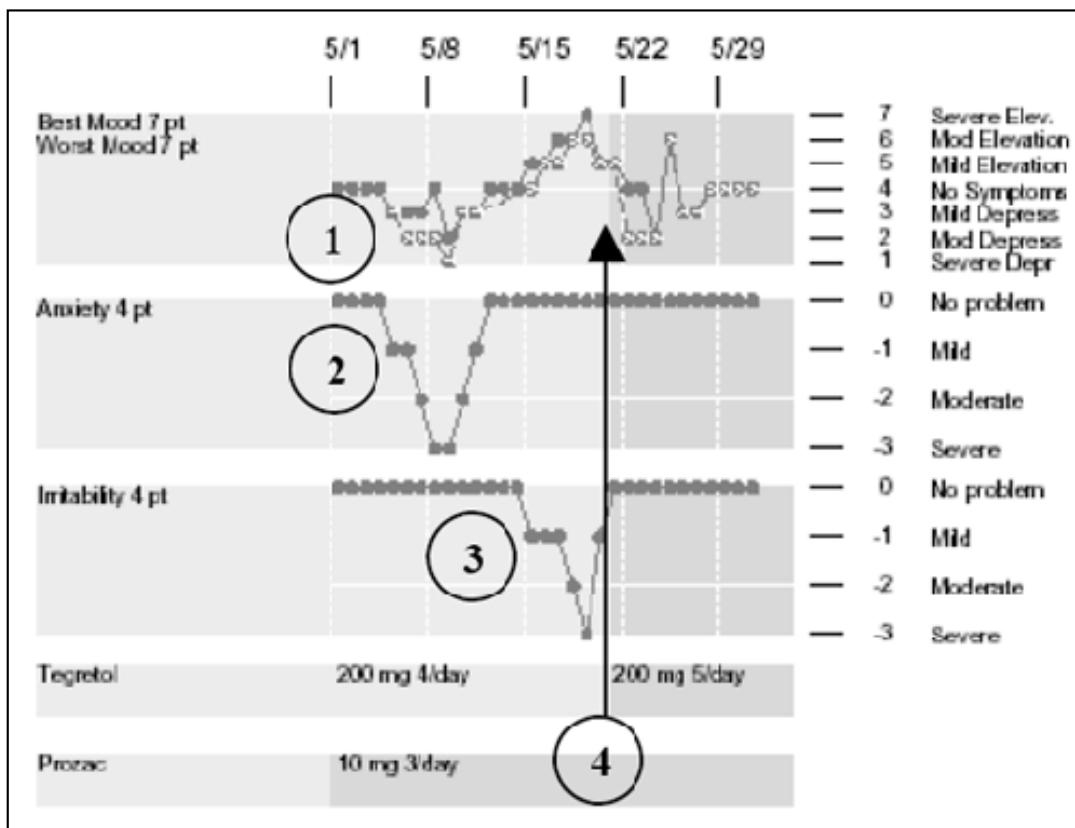
Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® with Bipolar Disorder

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SymTrend's Quick Report provides a clear picture of the association among mood elevation/depression, other emotions and medications.

- The first strip of this chart has two lines: the Best Mood (filled circles) and the Worst Mood (open circles). The user appears to have mood switches (gaps between best and worst, may indicate cycling) within a single day, particularly when her mood is on the way down (1).
- Anxiety (second strip on the chart) becomes more severe as the mood becomes more depressed (2), whereas irritability (third strip on the chart) becomes more severe as the mood becomes more elevated (3).
- The user's mood elevation may have been reduced by the increase in her dosage of Tegretol (the change in color of the background on 5/21 marks a dosage shift) (4).





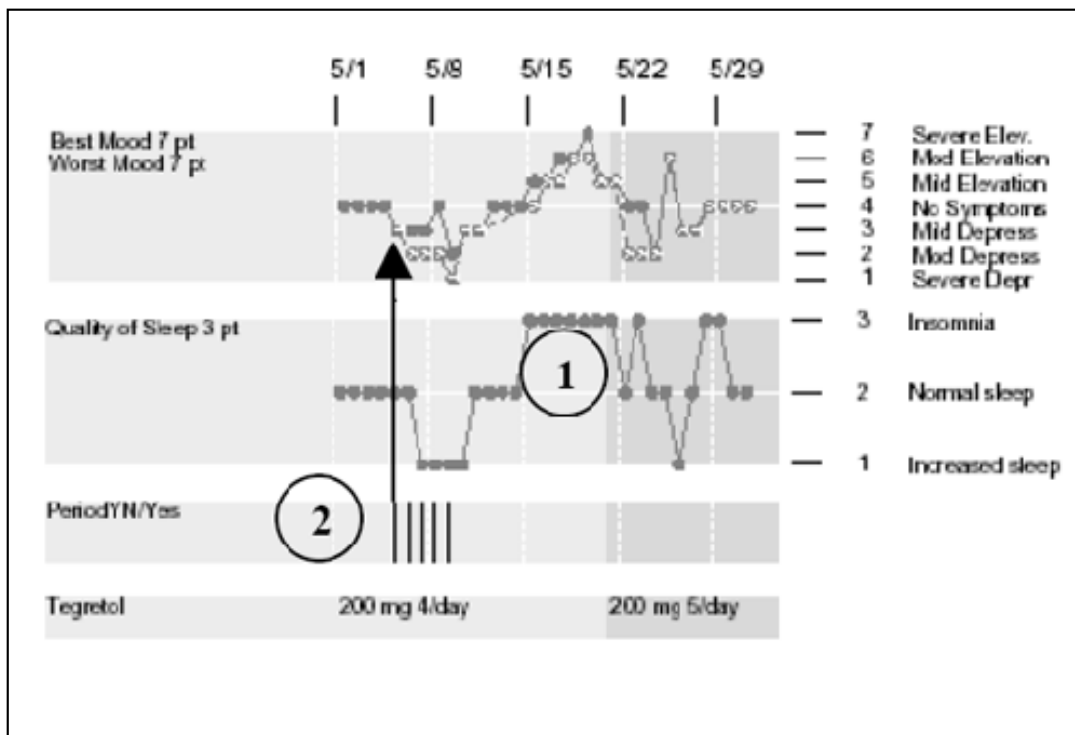
Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® with Bipolar Disorder

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SymTrend's Quick Report also provides a clear picture of the association between mood elevation/depression, medications, and other psychobiological factors: sleep and menses.

- Insomnia (sleep is second strip on the chart) is associated with elevated mood and increased sleep with depressed mood (1).
- The user appears to become more depressed during her menses (third strip on the chart) (2).





Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® to Monitor Teens Who Self-Injure

Recently, attention has been drawn to the dangers of teen depression and the need to more closely monitor depressed teens. They frequently engage in self-injury. Depressed teens attempt copy cat suicide. The risk for a suicide attempt may actually increase for some teens when they start an SSRI antidepressant medication.

Everyone benefits from having teens monitoring their feelings, thoughts and self-injurious behaviors while being medicated.

- Clinicians can watch for early signs of a negative response.
- Teens can especially benefit from learning more about:
 - What triggers urges to self-injure: Where? When? Who with?
 - What peer pressures and stressors play a role?
 - What thoughts go through their minds?
- Parents can feel more at ease with monitoring protections in place.

SymTrend is an ideal tool to do this early warning and feedback monitoring. In a research project currently underway at Harvard University, teens record multiple times a day about such issues using SymTrend. Preliminary data suggest that the teens:

- Find the pause for reflection helpful.
- Enjoy using handheld computers.
- Cooperate with data collection requirements.

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Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® with Behavioral Treatments for Depression

SymTrend is particularly helpful in conjunction with Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT). The basic assumption of cognitive therapy is that depressed feelings can be elevated by reducing the distorted negative thinking that accompanies depression. The disturbed, irrational, or distorted thinking of a depressed person includes negative self-esteem, negative views of the past and present, and hopelessness with regard to the future. The person's beliefs about him/herself are often inconsistent with objective reality. They lead to behaviors that remove the person from positive environmental supports and block attainment of goals.

The focus in cognitive therapy, therefore, is on thoughts and beliefs. During therapy, a depressed person's distorted thinking is directly examined, with the hope of helping the person adopt a more realistic view of the self, the environment and the future.

CBT often includes:

1. Affective education: teaching the person how to identify feelings and emotions.
2. Making connections: recognizing the relationship among thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
3. Homework assignments:
 - Monitoring one's moods or feelings.
 - Tracking one's use of "negative self-statements" ("bad self talk"), such as "No one wants to be my friend. They'll play with me for a little while and then leave me to play with other kids".
4. Learning to avoid negative feelings' triggers in three steps:
 - **Recognize the event trigger:** e.g., a comment that one hears.
 - **Recognize the belief about oneself triggered by the event:** e.g., attributing a person's comment to one's own inadequacy.
 - **Block the trigger/belief chain by:** avoiding the trigger, challenging the trigger, challenging the belief, negating other beliefs through positive action, or buffering the trigger through supports.
5. Practicing positive self- talk and other social skills.

SymTrend can be useful in all five of these CBT interventions. Daily

tracking of moods, thoughts and behaviors between sessions with a therapist provides the basis for discussions during treatment sessions.

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Other Resources: Supplementary Information

Use of SymTrend® with Behavioral Treatments for Depression

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Symptom Recording and, at later stages of therapy, How-To Reminders can be used to prompt evaluation of thoughts, internal beliefs and behaviors as they occur. The reminders can also provide hints about alternative positive interpretations of events.

Below are just a few of the “therapeutic homework” exercises used in Cognitive Behavior Therapy for depression. SymTrend’s tool use facilitates each of these exercises.

Measuring Mood and Physical Response: Record the intensity of sadness, anger, hopelessness at particular moments and at bedtime for the overall day.

- Then, contrast the feelings recorded at the moment during the day with the ratings at end of the day. How does the change in time and place of recording change the assessment?
- Differentiate between thoughts, beliefs and emotions.
- Identify physical signs that signal oncoming anger or anxiety.

Activity Monitoring: To reverse negative evaluations of the ability to manage oneself.

- Set reminders to enter information hourly.
- Click items on checklists of tasks accomplished.
- Rate the tasks/activities on difficulty and/or pleasure experienced.

Coping Cards: To access the skill steps learned/practiced in treatment to prepare prior to a challenge, or to mitigate post-challenge fallout.

- Remind about an appropriate skill and component steps.

Positive Self-Statement Logs: To change negative self-talk and clarify core beliefs.

- Start to encourage positive self-talk by using a list of statements to check off.
- Eventually, the user will generate their own positive statements.



Other Resources: Books and Links

Reference material for depression, bipolar disorder, and Cognitive Behavior Therapy for children and adults.

Depression and Bipolar Disorder

D. G. Fassler & L. S. Dumas (1998) *"Help Me, I'm Sad": Recognizing, Treating, & Preventing Childhood and Adolescent Depression*. New York: Penguin Books.

M. E. Copeland (1994) *Living without Depression and Manic Depression: A Workbook for Maintaining Mood Stability*. Oakland: New Harbinger Publications.

K. R. Jamison (1996) *The Unquiet Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness*. New York: Vintage Books.

Depression & Bipolar Support Alliance: <http://www.dbsalliance.org>

Manic-Depressive and Depressive Association of Boston: <http://www.mddaboston.org>

MedicineNet.com: <http://www.medicinenet.com/depression/article.htm>

Child & Adolescent Bipolar Foundation: <http://bpkids.org>

Cognitive Behavior Therapy:

D. Greenberger & C.A. Padesky. (1995) *Mind Over Mood. Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think*. New York: The Guilford Press.

<http://www.nacbt.org/whatiscbt.htm>

<http://www.cognitive-behavior-therapy.org/fullerPrint.html>

<http://www.beckinstitute.org/>

(click link on top of page for C.T. Resources and then link on side of page for Questions & Answers or Consumer Readings)

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