

# Personal mobile therapist keeps watch on blue moods

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'BlueWatch' is a smartphone app designed to build resilience and positive mood in people before their depressed moods turn into more serious mental illness

A personalised mobile therapist developed by Deakin University psychology experts could be the answer to treating depression.

'BlueWatch' is a [smartphone app](#) designed to build resilience and [positive mood](#) in people before their depressed moods turn into more serious mental illness.

"We know that early detection and treatment of [depressive symptoms](#)

increases the speed of recovery and prevents the development of more chronic and debilitating forms of depression and related health conditions," explained Dr Linda Hartley-Clark, associate research fellow with Deakin's School of Psychology.

"We also know that treating [mental health issues](#) via web and phone-based interventions are typically found to be effective and viewed positively by users because they are easy to use, freely available, and provide anonymity for people suffering stigma associated with 'illbeing'.

"So we have brought the two together in the BlueWatch app."

Dr Hartley-Clark is calling on people 18 to 25 years old to evaluate the app before it is released later this year.

"Depressed mood is common and affects around one in five people in their lifetime. However, individuals aged between 18-25 years have the highest prevalence of mental disorders of any other age group and youth suicide is the leading cause of death in young people aged 15-24 years. In addition, young adults are particularly vulnerable to ongoing and worsening symptoms because they are reluctant to seek help in person. This is why we are targeting this age group to test the app," Dr Hartley-Clark said.

Just as a trained therapist relies on various treatment approaches to suit a client's needs, BlueWatch is based on various therapeutic approaches which are successful in treating negative moods and building resilience.

"It is like having a personalised mobile therapist on hand 24/7," Dr Hartley-Clark said.

"Over 12 weeks, BlueWatch will step participants through six modules that cover education and techniques to reduce depressive symptoms,

such as addressing negative thoughts, breathing exercises to reduce stress and other coping strategies to build resilience.

"It will also monitor their mood at set times during the day and immediately prompt them to specific modules based on these scores. In this way, the program offers tailored advice about when it is most appropriate to utilise the treatment resources to maximise reduction in symptoms."

Participation in the BlueWatch trial will give participants skills to build resilience and positive mood and also help the researchers see how long it takes for depressive symptoms to improve and whether some of the modules offered are better than others for reducing symptoms quickly and effectively.

**More information:** People wanting to take part in the trial can visit the website [www.bluewatchapp.com](http://www.bluewatchapp.com) or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/BlueWatchApp](http://www.facebook.com/BlueWatchApp)

Provided by Deakin University

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