

Behavioral Health

Activation Tip Sheet

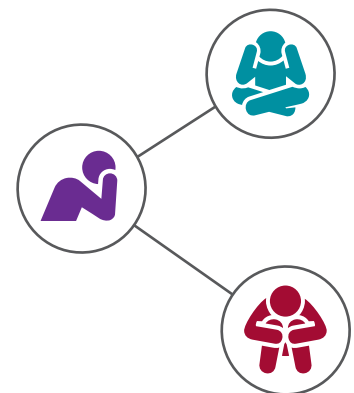


Behavioral activation is a well-regarded treatment for depression. Unlike other types of therapy (traditional psychotherapy, Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression (IPT), or Cognitive Therapy of Depression (CBT)), behavioral activation focuses on **BEHAVIOR AND ENVIRONMENT** rather than our thoughts and feelings about depression.

The theoretical idea behind behavioral activation is that depression leads to negative reinforcement; essentially, negative thinking leads to negative behaviors. Unhealthy behaviors, such as social withdrawal, excessive sleeping, drug and/or alcohol abuse, provide only brief relief, but cause more negativity. Hence, depression worsens. With behavioral activation, positive behaviors lead to an easing of depressed mood.

The idea that replacing negative behaviors with positive ones sounds simple, and it is. However, believing it works and finding out that it does require both faith and practice.

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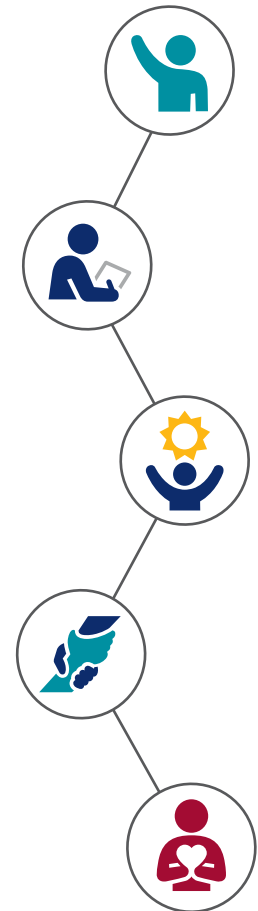
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The most important step is to create a list of activities that you find rewarding. Try to make a list that you can rate for ease of implementing and reward potential using a scale of one to ten.

- Make sure that your list is clear and simple. For example: “Go for a walk” is both easy and quick. It has potential for reward as well. Use a one to ten scale to rate each activity.
- Be creative with your list.
- List first the things that you can do easily, but add some that are more challenging as you get better at this.
- Choose specific goals every week. Consider activities rather than thoughts.
- Avoid being vague. Set specific goals, such as “organize my desk” rather than “clean the house and office.”
- Make sure you consider activities that you typically enjoy. It may seem strange to push yourself to do something when you have no current desire to do it. Behavioral activation is a way to remind your brain of what you enjoy and find interesting.
- Variety is key. Think of your physical health, emotions, sleep and eating habits, and connections with others.
- Your list is not etched in stone. Review your list weekly, make changes, and reward yourself for success, even if it is only very modest to start.

As you implement behavioral health activation techniques, you will notice fewer avoidance and withdrawal behaviors. Motivation builds motivation. This can help with any type of depression, regardless of whether you are in other kinds of therapy, including medication management.

If you are in emotional crisis, thinking about suicide, or are concerned about someone who might be, please call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. You can also call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741.



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