

Back from the Bluez

Module 2

Behavioural Strategies for Managing Depression

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Behavioural Activation: Fun & Achievement

The symptoms of depression can bring about some drastic changes in a depressed person's life, daily routines, and their behaviour. Often it is these changes that makes the depression worse and prevents the depressed person from getting better.

For example, a lack of motivation or a lack of energy can result in a depressed person cutting back on their activities, neglecting their daily tasks and responsibilities, and leaving decision-making to others. Have you noticed these changes in yourself when you are depressed?

When your activity level decreases, you may become even less motivated and more lethargic. When you stop doing the things you used to love, you miss out on experiencing pleasant feelings and positive experiences. Your depression could get worse and this becomes a vicious cycle.



Similarly, when one begins neglecting a few tasks and responsibilities at work or at home, the list may begin to pile up. As such, when a depressed person thinks about the things they have to do, they may feel overwhelmed by the pile of things they have put off doing. This may result in them feeling guilty or thinking that they are ineffective or even, a failure. This will also worsen the depression.

Increasing Your Activity Level

One way to combat depression is to simply increase your activity level, especially in pleasurable activities - having fun - and tackling your list of tasks and responsibilities, but doing it in a realistic and achievable way, so that you set yourself up to succeed. Becoming more active has a number of advantages:

Activity helps you to feel better. At the very least, when you start engaging in some kind of activity, it gives your mind something else to think about - a different focus. Doing things, even a little at a time, can help give you a sense that you are moving forward, taking control of your life again, and doing something - experiencing a sense of **ACHIEVEMENT**. You may even find **PLEASURE** and enjoyment in the activities you do.

Activity helps you to feel less tired. Usually, when you are physically tired, you need rest. However, when you are depressed, the opposite is true. Sleeping more and sitting around doing nothing will only cause you to feel more lethargic and tired. Also, doing nothing leaves room for your mind to ruminate on depressive thoughts, which will make you feel even more depressed.



Activity can help you think more clearly. Once you get started, you may find that you take a different perspective on particular problems in your life. Also, because your mind takes a different focus as a result of the activity, your thoughts may become clearer.

This is one of the ways of turning the vicious cycle of depression around, by using behavioural strategies - engaging in pleasurable activities and tackling small tasks.

Fun & Achievement

It makes good sense to do fun and pleasurable things to make yourself feel better, but these are not the only sorts of activities that will help generate positive feelings. Being depressed isn't just about feeling sad - there are a lot of other feelings involved as well, such as hopelessness, guilt, and despair. So, it also makes sense to do things that result in other positive feelings, such as achievement and a sense of purpose. When you are

planning things to do for yourself, it is important to remember to include a mixture of activities, adding those that have the potential to give you other positive feelings. An example of this is paying off money on your credit card, doing the ironing, or doing the shopping. Doing these things can help you feel more in control of your life (e.g., paying off your debts) and give you satisfaction that you have started doing something (e.g., catching up on household chores). Doing tasks that give you a sense of achievement or mastery will help you feel like you are starting to get back on top of things again. Some activities may combine the two. For example, making your bed may give you a sense of pleasure at having a neat, tidy bed, but it may also give you a sense of achievement at having done something to improve your home environment. This sense of achievement is just as important as getting pleasure out of something, and may indeed prompt you to do more.

Start Simple

Even though there are a number of advantages in increasing your activity level, it may not be easy to get started. Often, this is because when you are depressed, you think negative thoughts such as “I won’t enjoy doing this,” or “It’s too hard,” or “I’ll probably fail at this too.” These thoughts may stop you from getting started. Often the big mistake people make is trying to do too much too soon.



When you are depressed, things that you usually don’t even have to think about doing (when you are not depressed) can seem to require a huge amount of effort. The idea is to start with small easy steps and begin with things that you can do. Think of it in terms of training for a sports event.

If you hadn’t been doing any running for 6 months, would you try and run a marathon without doing any training? Of course not! You would go on a training programme that starts out within your present capabilities, and then slowly build up your fitness and endurance. Similarly, when you are depressed, it is unreasonable to expect yourself to be able to jump out of bed and clean the house before going out to meet a friend for a late lunch. If you set your goals too high, you might end up not doing them, become disappointed in yourself, and feel worse than ever. Instead, plan to do things that are achievable at your current level of functioning. Start with small steps and slowly build yourself up to the large tasks that seem unmanageable right now. For example, aim to get out of bed for 10 minutes, then slowly build up the amount of time you are out of bed for. Don’t try to clean the whole kitchen - just aim to do the dishes. If this is too much, just stack all the dirty dishes in a pile. Aim to get one bench top clean, or just wash 5 plates. Any task can be broken down into smaller and smaller steps until you find something achievable.

Sometimes it is easier to aim to do a task for a set period of time rather than trying to achieve a set amount. Read a book for 5 minutes rather than reading a whole chapter. Say you will spend 10 minutes weeding the garden rather than aiming to weed a certain area. In this way, it will be easier for you to achieve your goal. In the beginning, the important thing is not what you do or how much you do, but simply the fact that you are **DOING**. Remember that action is the first step, not motivation, and you’ll soon find yourself feeling better!

On the next page is a Fun Activities Catalogue. There are 365 activities listed in this catalogue. Choose two or three from the list to do in the coming week. Remember to include one or two achievement-type tasks to your schedule as well. Use the worksheet on page 7 to plan ahead which activity you will do, when you will do it (date), and then rate your depression, pleasant feelings, and sense of achievement **BEFORE** and **AFTER** the activity. Take this as an experiment to evaluate your mood before and after doing an activity. See if this helps in lifting your mood.

On page 8 is a Weekly Activity Schedule. You could use this worksheet to plan your schedule for a week. Try including a few tasks you need to tackle or some errands that you need to run, and remember to add in some fun activities as well.



Fun Activities Catalogue

The following is a list of activities that might be fun and pleasurable for you. Feel free to add your own fun activities to the list.

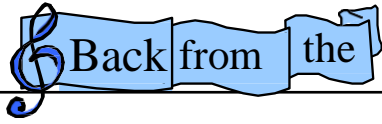
1. Going to a quiz or trivia night
2. Spending time in nature
3. Watching the clouds drift by
4. Debating
5. Painting my nails
6. Going ice skating, roller skating/blading
7. Scheduling a day with nothing to do
8. Giving positive feedback about something (e.g. writing a letter or email about good service)
9. Feeding the birds
10. Spending an evening with good friends
11. Making jams or preserves
12. Going out to dinner
13. Buying gifts
14. Having a political discussion
15. Repairing things around the house
16. Washing my car
17. Watching TV, videos
18. Sending a loved one a card in the mail
19. Baking something to share with others (e.g. family, neighbours, friends, work colleagues)
20. Taking a sauna, spa or a steam bath
21. Having a video call with someone who lives far away
22. Organising my wardrobe
23. Playing musical instruments
24. Going to the ballet or opera
25. Lighting scented candles, oils or incense
26. Spending time alone
27. Exercising
28. Putting up a framed picture or artwork
29. Flirting
30. Entertaining
31. Riding a motorbike
32. Wine tasting
33. Going to the planetarium or observatory
34. Birdwatching
35. Doing something spontaneously
36. Going on a picnic
37. Having a warm drink
38. Massaging hand cream into my hands
39. Fantasising about the future
40. Laughing
41. Flying a plane
42. Playing tennis or badminton
43. Jogging, walking
44. Going to home opens
45. Researching a topic of interest
46. Going to the beach
47. Redecorating
48. Volunteering for a cause I support
49. Smelling a flower
50. Opening the curtains and blinds to let light in
51. Going to the zoo or aquarium
52. Doing jigsaw puzzles
53. Donating old clothes or items to charity
54. Lying in the sun
55. Learning a magic trick
56. Talking on the phone
57. Listening to a podcast or radio show
58. Walking around my city and noticing architecture of buildings
59. Doing arts and crafts
60. Going on a ghost tour
61. Sketching, painting
62. Mowing the lawn
63. Going horseback riding
64. Doing the dishes
65. Sitting outside and listening to birds sing
66. Going to a free public lecture
67. Travelling to national parks
68. Going to a fair or fete
69. Playing cards
70. Putting moisturising cream on my face / body
71. Volunteering at an animal shelter
72. Re-watching a favourite movie
73. Gardening
74. Going camping
75. Playing volleyball
76. Going bike riding
77. Entering a competition
78. Doing crossword puzzles
79. Patting or cuddling my pet
80. Cooking a special meal
81. Soaking in the bathtub
82. Having a treatment at a day spa (e.g. facial)
83. Putting extra effort in to my appearance
84. Playing golf
85. Doing a favour for someone
86. Building a bird house or feeder

87. Clearing my email inbox
88. Planting a terrarium
89. Playing lawn games (e.g. bowls, croquet, bocce)
90. Going to a party
91. Getting out of debt/paying debts
92. Seeing and/or showing photos
93. Going on a city tour
94. Going to an agricultural show
95. Flipping through old photo albums
96. Upcycling or creatively reusing old items
97. Going sailing
98. Stretching muscles
99. Maintaining a musical instrument (e.g. restringing guitar)
100. Playing soccer
101. Buying clothes
102. Going to the botanic gardens
103. Going to a scenic spot and enjoying the view
104. Going to the speedway
105. Snuggling up with a soft blanket
106. Listening to an audiobook
107. Going to see live stand-up comedy
108. Writing down a list of things I am grateful for
109. Maintaining an aquarium
110. Playing Frisbee
111. Teaching a special skill to someone else (e.g. knitting, woodworking, painting, language)
112. Playing chess (with a friend or at a local club)
113. Going to a games arcade
114. Jumping on a trampoline
115. Sending a text message to a friend
116. Going fishing
117. Doodling
118. Putting a vase of fresh flowers in my house
119. Participating in a protest I support
120. Going to a movie
121. Surfing, bodyboarding or stand up paddle boarding
122. Baking home-made bread
123. Walking barefoot on soft grass
124. Watching a movie marathon
125. Skipping/ jumping rope
126. Being physically intimate with someone I want to be close to
127. Going to karaoke
128. Wearing an outfit that makes me feel good
129. Cooking some meals to freeze for later
130. Hobbies (stamp collecting, model building, etc.)
131. Talking to an older relative and asking them questions about their life
132. Looking at pictures of beautiful scenery
133. Having family get-togethers
134. Listening to music
135. Learning a new language
136. Taking a free online class
137. Working
138. Washing my hair
139. Singing around the house
140. Going swimming
141. De-cluttering
142. Going rock climbing
143. Whittling
144. Going on a ride at a theme park or fair
145. Arranging flowers
146. Going to the gym
147. Working on my car or bicycle
148. Juggling or learning to juggle
149. Contacting an old school friend
150. Calligraphy
151. Sleeping
152. Driving
153. Going crabbing
154. Playing with my pets
155. Abseiling
156. Going kayaking, canoeing or white-water rafting
157. Listening to the radio
158. Doing Sudoku
159. Planting vegetables or flowers
160. Walks on the riverfront/foreshore
161. Shooting pool or playing billiards
162. Getting an indoor plant
163. Surfing the internet
164. Doing embroidery, cross stitching
165. Browsing a hardware store
166. Donating blood
167. Buying books
168. Meditating
169. Training my pet to do a new trick
170. Planning a day's activities
171. Waking up early, and getting ready at a leisurely pace
172. Going to a Bingo night
173. Playing ping pong / table tennis
174. Buying an ice-cream from an ice-cream truck
175. Going on a hot air balloon ride
176. Sightseeing
177. Organising my work space
178. Dangling my feet off a jetty
179. Writing (e.g. poems, articles, blog, books)
180. Dancing in the dark

181. Listening to classical music
182. Photography
183. Watching funny videos on YouTube
184. Doing something religious or spiritual (e.g. going to church, praying)
185. Seeing a movie at the drive-in or outdoor cinema
186. Making my bed with fresh sheets
187. Lifting weights
188. Early morning coffee and newspaper
189. Planning a themed party (e.g. costume, murder mystery)
190. Wearing comfortable clothes
191. Shining my shoes
192. Acting
193. Meeting new people
194. Doing 5 minutes of calm deep breathing
195. Buying new stationary
196. Turning off electronic devices for an hour (e.g. computer, phone, TV)
197. Buying music (MP3s, CDs, records)
198. Relaxing
199. Going to a footy game (or rugby, soccer, basketball, etc.)
200. Going skiing
201. Doing woodworking
202. Planning a nice surprise for someone else
203. Playing video games
204. Holding a garage sale
205. Saying "I love you"
206. Making a playlist of upbeat songs
207. Colouring in
208. Playing laser tag or paintball
209. Joining a community choir
210. Doing a nagging task (e.g. making a phone call, scheduling an appointment, replying to an email)
211. Taking a ferry ride
212. Shaping a bonsai plant
213. Watching planes take off/ land at the airport
214. Planning my career
215. Reading non-fiction
216. Writing a song or composing music
217. Taking my dog to the park
218. Borrowing books from the library
219. Having a barbecue
220. Sewing
221. Dancing
222. Having lunch with a friend
223. Talking to or introducing myself to my neighbours
224. Holding hands
225. Having an indoor picnic
226. Reading classic literature
227. Going on a date
228. Taking children places
229. Going whale watching
230. Putting on perfume or cologne
231. Digging my toes in the sand
232. Hitting golf balls at a driving range
233. Reading magazines or newspapers
234. Calling a friend
235. Sending a handwritten letter
236. Going snorkelling
237. Going hiking, bush walking
238. Reading fiction
239. Pampering myself at home (e.g. putting on a face mask)
240. Watching my children play
241. Going to a community or school play
242. Making jewellery
243. Reading poetry
244. Going to the hills
245. Getting/giving a massage
246. Shooting hoops at the local basketball courts
247. Flying kites
248. Savouring a piece of fresh fruit
249. Playing hockey
250. Eating outside during my lunch break
251. Floating on a pool lounge
252. Making a pot of tea
253. Using special items (e.g. fine china, silver cutlery, jewellery, clothes, souvenir mugs)
254. Doing a DIY project (e.g. making homemade soap, making a mosaic)
255. Taking care of my plants
256. Telling a joke
257. Going to a public place and people watching
258. Discussing books
259. Going window shopping
260. Watching boxing, wrestling
261. Giving someone a genuine compliment
262. Practising yoga, Pilates
263. Walking around the block
264. Shaving
265. Genuinely listening to others
266. Participating in a clean-up (e.g. picking up litter at the beach or park)
267. Eating fish and chips at the beach
268. Rearranging the furniture in my house
269. Doing water aerobics
270. Blowing bubbles
271. Buying new furniture

273. Making a 'To-Do' list of tasks
274. Travelling abroad, interstate or within the state
275. Having quiet evenings
276. Geocaching
277. Singing in the shower
278. Browsing at a second hand book shop
279. Test driving an expensive car
280. Refurbishing furniture
281. Exchanging emails, chatting on the internet
282. Knitting/crocheting/quilting
283. Napping in a hammock
284. Skipping stones on the water
285. Doing ballet, jazz/tap dancing
286. Archery
287. Going on a Segway tour
288. Visiting a grandparent
289. Making a gift for someone
290. Having discussions with friends
291. Trying a new recipe
292. Playing cricket
293. Signing up for a fun run
294. Scrapbooking
295. Accepting an invitation
296. Cooking an international cuisine
297. Solving riddles
298. Scuba diving
299. Watching home videos
300. Building a sand castle
301. Planning a holiday
302. Sitting at the beach or river and watching the movement of the water
303. Watching fireworks
304. Making home-made pizza
305. Cheering for a sports team
306. Origami
307. Doing something nostalgic (e.g. eating a childhood treat, listening to music from a certain time in my life)
308. Joining a club (e.g. film, book, sewing, etc.)
309. Lighting candles
310. Going bowling
311. Going to museums, art galleries
312. Reading comics
313. Having coffee at a cafe
314. Trying new hairstyles
315. Taking a road trip
316. Watching a fireplace or campfire
317. Whistling
318. Playing darts
319. Going to a flea market
320. Working from home
272. Going to a free art exhibition
321. Buying a meal from a food truck or hawkers market and eating outdoors
322. Operating a remote control car / plane
323. Playing board games (e.g. Scrabble, Monopoly)
324. Savouring a piece of chocolate
325. Hunting for a bargain at an op shop, garage sale or auction
326. Buying, selling stocks and shares
327. Going to plays and concerts
328. Buying fresh food at the market
329. Beachcombing
330. Dining out at a restaurant or café
331. Harvesting home grown produce
332. Exploring with a metal detector
333. Giving someone a hug
334. Taking a holiday
335. Going to the hairdresser or barber
336. Swimming with dolphins
337. Picking flowers
338. Sandboarding
339. Going to the beauty salon
340. Buying myself something nice
341. Playing squash
342. Watching a sunset or sunrise
343. Star gazing
344. Watching a funny TV show or movie
345. Making pottery, or taking a pottery class
346. Playing mini golf
347. Recycling old items
348. Going to a water park
349. Practising karate, judo
350. Boxing a punching bag
351. Cleaning
352. Driving a Go Kart
353. Daydreaming
354. Learning about my family tree
355. Picking berries at a farm
356. Watching kids play sport
357. Setting up a budget
358. Writing a positive comment on a website /blog
359. Getting a manicure or pedicure
360. Collecting things (coins, shells, etc.)
361. Eating something nourishing (e.g. chicken soup)
362. Babysitting for someone
363. Taking a class (e.g. cooking, improvisation, acting, art)
364. Combing or brushing my hair
365. Writing diary/journal entries

Others:



Behavioural Activation Worksheet

FUN & ACHIEVEMENT

One way of combating depression is to prescribe some fun for yourself. By engaging in some simple, pleasant activities, you can improve your mood and your energy level. However, because you're feeling depressed right now, you might not experience the same level of pleasure doing an activity as when you were not depressed. But don't stop after one or two activities. Keep going and you'll find that your mood will begin to lift. Try it and see!

You may also want to engage in some simple tasks or responsibilities that you have neglected for some time. Often, accomplishing tasks can improve your motivation and give you a sense of achievement. Start with tasks that are simple and achievable. BUT remember that it is important to BALANCE both responsibilities and pleasurable activities. Try not to go overboard on one and leave out the other.

Use the following ratings scale to rate your depression, pleasant feelings, and sense of achievement BEFORE and AFTER the activity.

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------|--------|------|----------|------|--------|-----------|---------|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Absolutely None | Minimal | Slight | Mild | Moderate | Much | Higher | Very High | Extreme |

| | | Depression | Pleasure | Achievement |
|------------------|---------|------------|----------|-------------|
| Activity & Date: | Before: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | After: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Activity & Date: | Before: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | After: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Activity & Date: | Before: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | After: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Activity & Date: | Before: | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| | After: | _____ | _____ | _____ |

What did you notice about yourself?

Weekly Activity Schedule



Use the schedule below to plan your activities for the coming week. Make sure you balance fun and pleasurable activities with your daily responsibilities and duties.

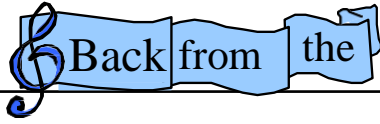
| | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thur | Fri | Sat | Sun |
|-------------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| 8 to 9am | | | | | | | |
| 9 to 10 | | | | | | | |
| 10 to 11 | | | | | | | |
| 11 to 12pm | | | | | | | |
| 12 to 1 | | | | | | | |
| 1 to 2 | | | | | | | |
| 2 to 3 | | | | | | | |
| 3 to 4 | | | | | | | |
| 4 to 5 | | | | | | | |
| 5 to 6 | | | | | | | |
| 6 to 7 | | | | | | | |
| 7 to 8 | | | | | | | |
| 8 to 10 | | | | | | | |
| 10 to 12 am | | | | | | | |

Module Summary

- When people are depressed, they may experience a loss of motivation and energy that often stops them from engaging in activities that might lift their mood
- This decrease in activity levels may perpetuate depressed mood as people may become even less motivated and more lethargic
- Daily tasks and responsibilities might be neglected as well, and when a depressed person thinks of the things they have to do, they may feel overwhelmed by the long list
- Add a few pleasant and fun activities to your weekly schedule to help you lift your mood
- You might also want to start tackling your list of things to do by starting with small or simple tasks, to give you a sense that you have achieved something
- When you increase your activity level, this will help you feel better and less tired, and help you think more clearly

Stay Tuned...

In the next module, we will discuss how your thoughts affect the way you feel, and what role thoughts play in maintaining depression.



About The Modules

BACKGROUND

This module was created in the early 2000s by Clinical Psychologists at the Centre for Clinical Interventions, under the supervision of the Centre's Founding Director, Paula Nathan.

The concepts and strategies in these modules have been developed from evidence based psychological practice, primarily Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT). CBT for depression and anxiety is based on the approach that depression and anxiety are the result of problematic cognitions (thoughts) and behaviours.

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