

*Self-Help Information*



## Leaflet 1: Getting Active

*Behavioural Activation*

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### Hierarchy

Most Difficult

Medium Difficulty

Least Difficult

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## Leaflet 1: Get Active (Behavioural Activation)

### Depression

When people are feeling low and depressed, they may experience a range of symptoms, including having a lack of energy and interest in life which can cause them to withdraw and avoid tasks and activities. Behavioural activation is an effective treatment for depression because it targets the role of avoidance in depression. It focuses on helping people reintroduce things they may have been avoiding by restabilising daily routines, increasing pleasurable activities and addressing important, necessary issues.

### How does behavioural activation work?

When people are depressed they often feel physically unwell, have negative thoughts and change the way they do things?). People who are depressed often cut down on the amount and variety of things they would normally do. For example, they might avoid doing activities such as going out with others, reduce the time they spend with friends, work colleagues and family, and make little effort to do things that they may have previously enjoyed.

In the short-term doing less can make them feel better; however, doing less in the longer term means that things they need to do pile up. As a result, they may find themselves doing less of the social and personal activities which bring them pleasure and achievement. Doing less also means they have more time to dwell on negative thoughts.

Some of the things people avoid are just routine activities such as cleaning the house, doing the ironing, washing up. Other routines are disrupted such as the time they go to bed or get up, when they eat and how they cook for themselves. These are the important life routines that make people comfortable in their surroundings. Other activities that get disrupted are things people do for pleasure such as seeing friends, enjoying a day out with family or playing games with children. These are the things that often make people feel well.

A third area that people avoid is activities that are important and necessary, such as paying bills or confronting difficult situations at work. These are activities which are important and if neglected may lead to a negative outcomes.

By using behavioural activation to restart these activities, people are helped to move out of the negative cycle and it gives them the opportunity to experience positive things. This encourages them to continue routine, pleasurable and necessary activities, thus becoming less withdrawn, less isolated and their mood consequently starts to lift.

## **5 Steps to get Active Again**

### **Step 1: Identifying routine, pleasurable and necessary activities**

You should identify routine, pleasurable and necessary activities – things that you would like to do but have stopped doing, or done less of, since you became depressed. The worksheet BA 1 is used to gather this information.

### **Step 2: Making a hierarchy of routine, pleasurable and necessary activities**

Using the worksheet BA 2, you should organise the activities in BA 1 into order of difficulty – most difficult, medium difficulty, easiest (we call this a hierarchy). Include some of each type of routine, pleasurable and necessary activity in each section of BA 2. You may wish to break down an activity into small steps so that they seem more achievable to take on.

### **Step 3: Planning some routine, pleasurable and necessary activities**

Plan some avoided activities into your week, using a blank diary (BA 3) to specify a mixture of routine, pleasurable and necessary activities. To start with you should choose activities from near the bottom of your list in BA 2 i.e. the easiest to start with. You should be as specific and detailed as you can about your chosen activity, outlining: what, where, when, and who with. The diary should be split into am, pm and evening. Small and regular activities are better in the early stages.

### **Step 4: Implementing behavioural activation exercises**

You should undertake the planned activities written down in the diary. Ideally moving from the easier activities to the more difficult ones, and using a mixture of routine, pleasurable and necessary actions. Record in the same diary whether you did the planned activity.

### **Step 5: Review your progress**

Regularly look back at your progress and think about how you have got on. This should help you to begin to overcome your depression and lift your mood. If you have any difficulties, think about whether you could plan things differently for the next day e.g. maybe you chose too difficult an activity to start with and could not achieve it, so need to take activities in smaller steps. Above all, remember to give yourself praise for your efforts – every step is helping you!

**You can download extra copies of this worksheet from our website:**

[www.talk2gether.nhs.uk](http://www.talk2gether.nhs.uk)

## BA 1 Behavioural Activation

List the activities you have stopped doing, or are doing less of than usual.

### Routine Activities

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### Pleasurable Activities

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### Necessary Activities

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## BA 2 Behavioural Activation Hierarchy

Organise the activities in BA 1 into a hierarchy of difficulty.

### Most Difficult Activities

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### Medium Difficulty Activities

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### Easier Activities

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## BA 3 Behavioural Activation Diary

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	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who	What Where When Who