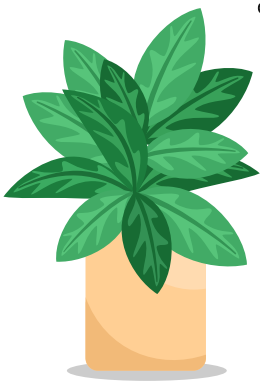


Behavioral ACTIVATION

Behavioral Activation is a therapeutic approach commonly used to treat depression, though it can be effective for other mental health issues as well. Center to Behavioral Activation is the idea that our behaviors can impact our emotions and mood. The goal of Behavioral Activation is to help individuals behave in ways that are likely to improve their mood, increase motivation, reduce avoidance, and improve overall functioning.

HOW BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION WORK

- **Link Between Behavior and Mood:** Behavioral Activation is grounded in the principle that engaging in positive, meaningful activities can reduce the severity of depressive symptoms. When people are depressed, they often withdraw from activities that used to bring them pleasure or a sense of accomplishment, which can increase the intensity of their symptoms. Behavioral Activation encourages individuals to re-engage with these activities, which can help improve their mood over time.
- **Breaking the Cycle of Avoidance:** Depression often leads to avoidance behaviors—avoiding social interactions, responsibilities, or even self-care. While avoidance may provide temporary relief, it usually leads to long-term negative consequences, such as increased feelings of guilt, isolation, and reduced self-worth. Behavioral activation helps individuals confront and reduce avoidance by gradually increasing their engagement in life.
- **Scheduling Activities:** A key component of Behavioral Activation is creating a structured schedule of activities that are known to be mood-enhancing. These activities are typically categorized into three types: pleasurable activities, activities that provide a sense of accomplishment, and necessary tasks (for example, hygiene, chores, and academic responsibilities).



Necessary Tasks

- **Household Chores:** Breaking down chores into smaller tasks can make them more manageable. Completing these tasks can reduce stress and provide a sense of control.
- **Academic Responsibilities:** Setting small, achievable goals at school can help you feel productive and reduce the overwhelming nature of your tasks.
- **Self-Care:** Activities like showering, brushing your teeth, and eating regular meals are essential for maintaining your health and can also improve your mood.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION

Pleasurable Activities

- **Socializing with Friends or Family:** Even if you don't feel like it, making plans to see friends or family can help improve your mood.
- **Hobbies:** Engaging in hobbies you used to enjoy, like reading, painting, gardening, or playing a musical instrument.
- **Exercise:** Physical activity, even a short walk, can boost endorphins and improve mood.
- **Watching a Favorite Movie or Show:** Allowing yourself to enjoy entertainment can provide a break from negative thoughts.

Activities that Provide a Sense of Accomplishment

- **Completing a Small Task:** Start with something manageable, like organizing a drawer or doing laundry. The sense of achievement from completing a task can boost your mood.
- **Learning Something New:** Taking on a small challenge, like learning a new recipe, trying a new hobby, or even listening to new music can give you a sense of accomplishment.
- **Volunteering:** Helping others can provide a sense of purpose and improve self-esteem.

STEPS IN BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION

1. **Identify Activities:** Work with a therapist or on your own to identify activities that you enjoy or that provide a sense of accomplishment. It's important to include both types of activities in your plan.
2. **Create a Schedule:** Develop a weekly schedule that includes specific times for each activity. Start with small, manageable goals and gradually increase your engagement over time.
3. **Monitor Your Mood:** Keep track of how you feel before and after engaging in each activity. This helps you see the connection between your behaviors and your mood, and it can provide motivation to continue.
4. **Adjust as Needed:** Review your progress regularly and adjust your schedule based on what's working or not working. If an activity isn't providing the desired effect, try modifying it or choosing a different activity.
5. **Overcome Barriers:** Identify potential obstacles to completing your activities and develop strategies to overcome them. This might include breaking tasks into smaller steps, enlisting the help of others, or practicing self-compassion.

