

When you feel sad or depressed, you may want to stay home and sleep. You may have low energy. You may feel like nothing is fun. This can happen when you have depression. It can help to stay busy and do things each day. This sheet tells you what behavioral activation is and how it may help you feel better.

WHAT IS BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION?



Depression can make it hard to do things you enjoy. You may avoid things, stay away from people, or sleep too much. These actions can make you feel worse. This is a “downward spiral.” Behavioral activation can help break this cycle.

Important note: Sometimes people stay alone to rest and feel better. If rest helps you feel better, it is okay to rest. If being alone makes you feel sad or worse, behavioral activation may help you try new ways to feel better.

HOW DOES BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION WORK?

Behavioral activation helps you to change your choices so that you can stop the “downward spiral.” It has two parts. First, do fewer of the things that make depression worse. Second, do more things that help you feel better.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION YOU CAN DO AT HOME?

1. Make a list of what you do each day. Write how each thing makes you feel.
2. Look for patterns. Do some things make you feel better? Do some make you feel worse? For example, are you happy when you draw? Are you sad when you sit with nothing to do? Are there times when you feel angry? What is happening then?
3. Make a list of fun things or things that help you feel better. Pick things that are easy to do. Hard things can be hard to start. Put the things you want to try most at the top. Examples: take a walk, read a book, talk to a friend, cook, color, exercise, write a poem, help other people, or watch a movie.
4. In your daily plan, pick one positive activity for a time when you often feel worse. Start with one positive activity each day. Add more if you want.
5. Keep doing positive activities instead of things that make you feel worse. Keep track of how you feel.

