

Goal Setting

Goals are how we make our values, pleasure, and mastery activities real and practical. On the next few pages we will start to schedule the activities that we recorded on the Values, Pleasure, and Mastery Activities List. Before we do, it is important to be sure we are being “SMART” about setting these goals. Use the following tips to increase the chances of reaching your goals.



In order for goals to be achieved, they must be “SMART:”

Specific: when creating a goal, state exactly what you want to achieve. Think about how and when you are going to achieve your goal. For example, “I want to lose ten pounds in two months by counting calories.”

Measurable: in order to say you met a goal, one must be able to measure it. Stating that “I want to eat more fruits and vegetables” is not as measurable as stating “I want to eat a combination of 5 fruits and vegetables a day.”

Attainable: Is the goal possible? If the goal is to get into shape by swimming 30 laps a day and you have never swum for exercise, you will be setting yourself up for avoidance and discouragement. Choose a smaller goal, like taking a few swimming lessons or just swimming a few laps to start.

Realistic: is the goal realistic? If you have had a knee injury or chronic pain, it is probably not realistic to set a goal for yourself of joining a kickboxing class. Perhaps joining a walking program would be more realistic.

Trackable: tracking your progress helps us notice improvement. When we recognize our improvement, it motivates us to continue our good work. It can also help in creating future goals.

Activity Planning

So far, we have...

- ...determined how you spend your time and how your current activities are associated with your mood.
- ...started to understand your values, enjoyable activities, and activities that make you feel a sense of mastery and accomplishment. We've connected these with specific activities that you wrote on the Values, Pleasure, and Mastery Activities List.
- ...learned how to be smart about setting goals.

Activity Chart—Planned Activities

Instructions: Write the specific activities that you recorded on the "Values, Pleasure, and Mastery Master List" in the "activity" column. Place a check in the "completed" column to indicate if you completed the scheduled activity. Record a mood rating in the last row; mood is rated between 0-10 ("0" indicating "most negative" and "10" indicating "most positive.")

	Activity	Completed	Mood rating
5:00 am			
6:00 am			
7:00 am			
8:00 am			
9:00 am			
10:00 am			
11:00 am			
12:00 pm			
1:00 pm			
2:00 pm			
3:00 pm			
4:00 pm			
5:00 pm			
6:00 pm			
7:00 pm			
8:00 pm			
9:00 pm			
10:00 pm			
11:00 pm			

Scheduled Activities for (name): _____ (list day of week/date)

Now it's time to start activating! One way to make Behavioral Activation work is to simply start to schedule activities and then rate how our mood corresponds to each activity. Use the chart on the following page to choose some activities with which to start. You'll check the ones you complete and then rate your mood during the activity.

Activity Planning Tips:

- Start with 2-3 of the easiest activities.
- Schedule activities on the day and time you think you could reasonably complete them. For example, if my activity is "play with my daughter" I might enter that activity at 11 am on Monday, 10 am on Wednesday, and 9 am on Thursday.
- Consider whether you are ready for a particular activity and consider any barriers. For example, if my activity is "exercise," one barrier might be that I don't have any gym clothes. Perhaps I need to first complete the activity "purchase gym clothes" before I'll be ready to hit the gym.
- If you are unable to do an activity on the day or time that you first planned, just cross it out, write the activity that you did that that time, and try to reschedule your planned activity.
- Remember not to get discouraged if you aren't able to complete all of the activities. Try to continue to move forward with the activity anyway, even if it isn't going as you hoped.

Activity Planning Worksheet

Instructions: Write some specific activities that you recorded on the "Values, Pleasure, and Mastery Activities List" in the "activity" column. Place a check in the "completed" column to indicate if you completed the scheduled activity. Record a mood rating in the last row; mood is rated between 0-10 ("0" indicating "most negative" and "10" indicating "most positive.")

	Activity	Completed	Mood rating
5-7:00 am			
7:00 am			
8:00 am			
9:00 am			
10:00 am			
11:00 am			
12:00 pm			
1:00 pm			
2:00 pm			
3:00 pm			
4:00 pm			
5:00 pm			
6:00 pm			
7:00 pm			
8:00 pm			
9:00 pm			
10:00 pm			
11:00 pm			

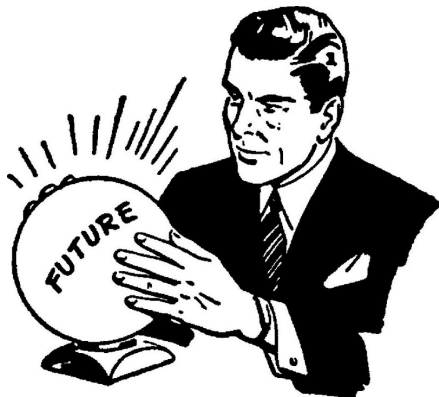
Scheduled Activities for (name): _____

Day of week/date _____

Pleasure Predicting

We are depressed we often anticipate getting little to no pleasure or mastery out of an activity. Depression clouds our judgment and colors our predictions about the future.

As an experiment, we can “pleasure predict” how much pleasure or mastery we feel after a given activity. This is one way that we can mix Behavioral Activation with the Cognitive Skills we learned in Chapter 4. We perform a “behavioral experiment,” which means that we see what happens when we plan an activity, recording the “data,” to see what we learn. People tend to learn that activities are more enjoyable than they had predicted. See what happens for you!



Use the sheet on the following page to “pleasure predict” some activities this week.



First, pick an achievable activity, especially one that you predict may not be enjoyable. Schedule the activity using the Activity Planning Worksheet on the previous page.

Fill in the form on the next page, recording your “prediction” before you start the activity on a scale of 0-10. Right after the activity is finished, record how much you actually enjoyed it.

Pleasure Predicting Sheet

Activity
(Schedule activities with a potential for pleasure or personal growth)



Companion(s)
(If alone, specify "self" – do not put the word "alone" in this column)



Satisfaction
(rate on scale of 0-10)

Predicted	Actual
<hr/>	<hr/>

Activity



Companion(s)



Satisfaction
(rate on scale of 0-10)

Predicted	Actual
<hr/>	<hr/>

Activity



Companion(s)



Satisfaction
(rate on scale of 0-10)

Predicted	Actual
<hr/>	<hr/>

Problem Solving and Acceptance

When a problem arises, there many possible responses. As we have discussed throughout this manual, some responses to depression and problems can help to solve these problems; others can serve to make things worse. Below we describe three ways of addressing a problem. One approach may work best, or all three may apply. The “take home point” here is that all situations are different, and require different types of approaches to help you meet your life aims.

Adaptive Response #1: Get the facts (thinking)

Use cognitive skills to better understand the “facts” of a situation. Perhaps there is a problem, and perhaps there is not. Sometimes the first step is to understand the facts of a situation, and then decide whether or not to use problem solving skills (below) or accept things that are outside of our control. Also see the earlier section on “Cognitive Therapy Skills.”

Adaptive Response #2: Problem solving (actions/behaviors)

Sometimes the best answer to a problem is working to “solve” the problem somehow—it is not a problem with our thinking or behavior, it is a problem with the external circumstances. For example, if someone is consistently aggressive or abusive of us, we may want to find a way to set firm limits with that person or leave the relationship altogether. There are many problem solving skills, some of which are outlined below:

- Behavioral Activation skills to address avoidance
- Assertively address interpersonal conflicts
- Take small steps to make progress on long-term projects
- Plan for the future
- Manage your time effectively
- many others...

Talk to your therapist or group leader about other behavioral skills to directly address problems that arise.

Adaptive Response #3: Accept what cannot be controlled (letting go)

There are times that we believe we should be able to control something, yet our consistent attempts to do so are met with failure. This “beating a dead horse” makes us more and more frustrated, angry, anxious, and depressed. Sometimes letting go of things we cannot control is necessary to prevent problems from getting even worse; we also lift some of the burden of failing over and over.

How to take action to solve a problem

1. Write down clearly what the problem is.
2. Brainstorm about ways to solve the problem, even “ridiculous” ways, writing down all possibilities.
3. Rank the possible solutions in order, from best to worst. Think “how likely is it for this approach to work?”
4. Decide on a plan of action for each reasonable solution. Rate how probable it would be each each plan to work.
5. Pick the most reasonable plan and put the plan into action. If it doesn't work, go to the next best solution and try that one. Continue to try until you solve the problem.

How do I know what to do to make it better?



Sometimes it is difficult to know which approach to take to make a situation better. While it is ultimately an individual decision, one that may take trial and error, therapy is a place to work out some of these difficult choices. The various skills in CBT are meant to help us get some clarity around some of these decisions. While we don't have room in this manual to discuss in detail how to make these decisions, this is something to discuss with your group or individual therapist as you move through treatment.

Dealing with Low Motivation



If you are experiencing depression, chances are you're dealing with motivational difficulties. Frequently we hear people (depressed or not) talk about waiting to make changes when they are "ready" as if there is a particular day that they will wake up and suddenly feel different and able to face whatever it is they are avoiding. We put off exercise routines, diets, getting homework done, calling back important people, etc., because we feel unmotivated.

From the outside-in...

As we discussed in the "Action Precedes Emotion?" section earlier, one reason we struggle with motivation is that we are looking to our internal emotional state (happy, energized, excited) to cue us to start a task. This is an "inside-out" way of thinking which is problematic with depression, because for most people, low motivation/energy is a pervasive symptom that typically takes some time to resolve.

In Behavioral Activation we ask people to work from the outside-in, acting according to a plan rather than waiting to feel ready. We can jump-start our mood by starting with an action and letting our mood follow. This is hard at first, but over time, most people recognize that their actions can actually have an impact on their mood, so they feel less at the mercy of their depression.



Little by little...

Working on doing things that you have been avoiding can sometimes feel painful or even cause some anxiety. While plunging into these behaviors might seem ideal, you will likely have more success if you commit to taking small steps.

For example, if you and your therapist identify exercise as a goal, you might break this down into steps.

If you'd like to run, but you've been inactive for months, chances are you're not going to just start running. By breaking this down into smaller goals you will likely have more success. Let's say you set a goal to put on your shoes and walk for 10 minutes, then 20, then 30, etc. Once you've built some momentum, you then might begin to run.

Use the "Motivation Tips" on the following page to help you get unstuck when low motivation strikes.



Motivation Tips

1. Keep it simple
2. Break it into smaller pieces
3. Do one thing at a time
4. Set realistic goals
5. Schedule activities at times when you are most likely to succeed
6. Use self-compassion
7. Anticipate setbacks
8. Reinforce and reward healthy behavior choices
9. Reflect on what works and what doesn't work
10. Change your environment
11. Minimize distractions
12. Use visual reminders
13. Talk yourself into it—challenge negative thinking!
14. Use a timer—start with just five minutes
15. Use reminders/alarms
16. Have an accountability partner
17. Focus on long-term benefits
18. Commit to making decisions based on what we know, not on what we feel



Behavioral Activation Tips

Behavioral Activation can be challenging! It is common to run into roadblocks during this process and have moments in which we want to give up. We can honestly say that the only barrier to improvement is giving up completely; if you continue to learn about your valued life course and stay “out there,” chances are that things will improve.



Use the tips below to help navigate barriers that come up during the course of Behavioral Activation treatment.

1. **Be prepared for a challenge:** because we are working against our brain’s attempts to protect us, it takes effort and some discomfort to get results from Behavioral Activation in the long run.
2. **Get “back on the horse:”** when failures inevitably happen, be prepared to respond actively. Depression will tell us to give up when things don’t go well... and try to convince us that all of those negative thoughts are the truth. Prove the depression wrong by getting back out there and moving toward what you really value.
3. **Move one step at a time:** retraining the brain takes time, one small step at a time. Trying to move too quickly is a recipe for failure and disappointment, and overwhelms us so that we want to give up.
4. **Address negative thinking:** go back and review the Cognitive Therapy Skills chapter and continue to address the thinking that tries to keep us isolated. Especially address self-critical thoughts and develop self-compassion.
5. **Focus on valued action, not just on “symptom reduction.”** Gauge success according to the extent that you are living a valued life, not whether or not you have emotions. While one aim of CBT is to improve mood and have fewer negative emotions in the long run, in the short run we must remember that emotions are a part of life and we cannot get rid of them completely. But... we *can* improve life and how we feel by moving toward valued actions.

6. **Monitor your activities and mood as specifically as you can.** We often miss important clues to treating depression when we don't pay enough attention to the details of our activity.
7. **Solve problems** that could be leading to further depressive symptoms, and work to accept those things that cannot be solved, while continuing to move toward life aims to the best of your ability.
8. **Be sure your activities line up with your true values.** Sometimes we think we are living a valued life and we are not; this leads to continual disappointments. Continue to explore your values. Remember that *values are not internal states, how people treat us, or specific things to achieve.*
9. Be sure you **have the skills you need to be successful.** Trying to do something in which we don't have the necessary skills sets us up for failure. Some people learn that they are "incompetent," only because they continue to try to do things for which they are not ready. Find out what skills are necessary to be successful at a given task, and then, given the amount of work it would take to learn the necessary skills, decide if it makes sense to continue to pursue that activity.
10. **Understand the principles of Behavioral Activation** and why each part of it is necessary. Sometimes we are confused about why we are doing something; this potentially leads to resistance to trying new things, and we miss out on the possible benefits.
11. **Practice mindfulness:** review Chapter 3 and practice mindfulness. Research shows that enjoyment is much more likely when we are present and mindful. Use Behavioral Activation as an opportunity to practice being mindful of potentially pleasurable experiences as they occur.
12. **Reward yourself** for your achievements. Depression and self-criticism try to take away the "kudos" we deserve when we achieve something. Make an explicit effort to reward yourself instead.

Barriers and Resources Worksheet

Use the following worksheet to determine the specifics of some of your goals. Think about possible barriers and resources you might have to hurdle them.

Goal: _____

When I want to achieve it: _____

How I am going to do it: _____

How I am going to measure it: _____

What are possible barriers? _____

What are the possible resources? _____

Notes

Notes