

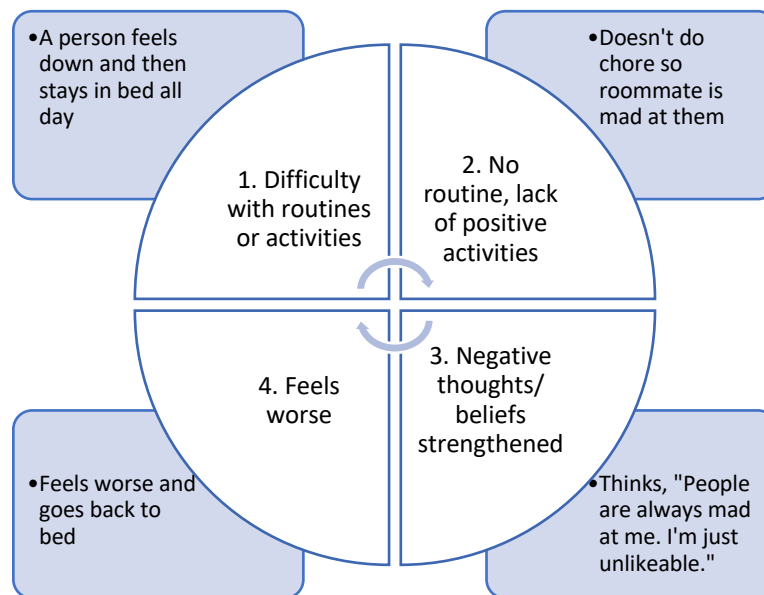
Behavioral Activation: Therapist's Guide

What is behavioral activation?

Behavioral activation helps clients increase their daily activity levels, thereby improving their mood and thoughts. It is a highly effective tool when clients are coping with depression, oversleeping, or a general lack of routine.

The Cognitive Model

The cognitive model teaches that thoughts, behaviors and actions are all connected. When a person becomes behaviorally *inactive*, as a result of depression, isolation, or lack of routine they miss out on positive emotions that would have been associated with engaging in enjoyable activities while also experiencing increased stress from not completing tasks and responsibilities. Consequently, they experience an increase in negative cognitions which, in turn, increase their negative emotions and make it even more difficult to complete activities.



Employing Behavioral Activation

Introducing BA to Clients

- Educate clients about the cognitive model and how it relates to what they're currently experiencing.
 - Ask them to pick a recent time when they had difficulty doing something. Walk them through the cognitive model using their example (see above for an example).

- This is very important because behavioral activation will help them in the long run, but is often more challenging in the short run. It's important that they understand how this can be helpful.

Anticipation vs. Enjoyment

- Research has shown that depression decreases the **anticipated enjoyment** that people will get from activities, but does not decrease **actual enjoyment**. This can be a helpful point to emphasize to clients: even though they won't feel like completing activities at first, they will likely enjoy them more than they think they will.
- At first, behavioral activation may feel strange or even unpleasant. It's important for clients to go through the motions, even if they feel like they're "faking it." Over time, it will start to feel more enjoyable.

Make a List of Activities

- Help clients make a list of the activities they would like to pursue, broken down by type. There are three main types: mastery, enjoyment and tasks (see below for a description of these types).

Make a Schedule

- Look at the behavioral activation weekly schedule together. Work with your client to plan activities for at least the next 2-3 days.
- Gently increase the amount of activity and make sure it feels tolerable to your client. If right now they tend to stay in bed for 6 hours of the day, try picking just one activity for each time period and keep the goal time for it brief. Choose what the reward will be if they accomplish it, such as getting back into bed.
- Over time, help them build more activities into each time period of the day. Ideally you want to aim for a balance of all three activity types each day.

Types of Daily Activities

Mastery- These are the types of activities that give a sense of accomplishment, purpose, and achievement. Often, they involve developing or improving on a skill.

Examples: Learning a language, developing cooking, art, reading engaging books, home improvement projects, career or skill development, sports, etc.

Enjoyment- These tasks produce a sense of pleasure or fun. They aren't don't need to be done in order to achieve or accomplish anything, but just because they are enjoyable.

Examples: Taking a walk, listening to music, doodling, playing with a pet, taking a hot shower or bath, cooking something delicious, sitting outside, stretching or yoga, calling a friend.

Tasks- These are the things that need to be done in our daily lives in order to have them function well. Be careful not to focus too much on these, or they can become overwhelming. Instead, try to pick just one or two *at most* per day.

Examples: Washing the dishes, making a doctor's appointment, paying bills, responding to messages.