DEPRESSION

Small steps when mood is low

An activity plan based on behavioural activation

Low mood makes everything feel like effort, so you do less. Doing less removes the moments of pleasure, achievement and connection which keep mood steady. Mood drops further. This plan breaks the circle from the action end.

What it is

Behavioural activation means planning small, meaningful activities first and letting motivation follow. You stop waiting to feel ready. You schedule the step and treat it as an appointment with yourself.

NICE guidance on depression (NG222) lists behavioural activation among the recommended psychological treatments.

Three kinds of activity

- Pleasure. Something you enjoy, or used to enjoy. A walk, music, a bath, a favourite programme.
- Achievement. A task which gives a sense of getting something done. Washing up, one email, paying one bill.
- Connection. Contact with another person. A message to a friend, a call, coffee with a colleague.

How to use this sheet

1. Each evening, plan one to three small activities for the next day. Mark each P, A or C.
2. Make each step smaller than feels necessary. Ten minutes counts.
3. Before the activity, rate your mood from 0 to 10. Rate it again afterwards.
4. At the end of the week, look for the activities which lifted your mood, even by one point. Plan more of those.

Tips

✓ Expect low motivation. Do the step anyway, then notice what happens.
✓ Partial counts. Five minutes of a planned walk is a success.
✓ Be kind about missed days. Plan again tomorrow.

Want support with this? Joseph offers online therapy across the UK. **act-cognitive-therapy.com/start-therapy** or call or WhatsApp 0750 001 6004.

Important. This worksheet supports therapy. It does not replace it. If you feel unsafe or at risk, contact your GP, call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option, call Samaritans free on 116 123, or call 999 in an emergency.

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My week of small steps

Write one to three activities per day. P = pleasure, A = achievement, C = connection.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Activity and time							
P, A or C							
Mood before 0–10							
Mood after 0–10							
Activity and time							
P, A or C							
Mood before / after							

Which activities lifted my mood, even a little?

What will I plan more of next week?

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