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Behavioral Activation

Adult Patient Manual



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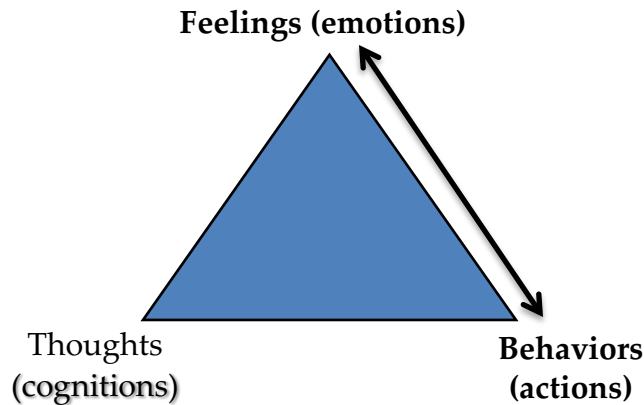
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*Original (free) pdf from which this is excerpted:
[https://psych.med.umich.edu/anxiety-program/pdf/
Behavioral-Activation-for-Depression.pdf](https://psych.med.umich.edu/anxiety-program/pdf/Behavioral-Activation-for-Depression.pdf)

Chapter 5:

Behavioral Activation



Have you ever noticed that certain things that you do influence your mood or anxiety? For example: When you listen to sad music do you ever notice feeling sad for longer periods of time? Do you ever feel less motivated to apply for a job or school when you are actively worrying?

Behavioral activation is one of the most important CBT skills used in treating depression. It has to do with the way that behaviors and feelings influence each other.

In this chapter we'll learn how your behavior can directly affect your mood, for better or worse, and how to use skills to put ourselves in situations that will make it most likely to improve our mood.



What is Behavioral Activation?

Behavioral Activation (BA) is a specific CBT skill. It can be a treatment all by itself, or can be used alongside other CBT skills such as cognitive restructuring. Behavioral activation helps us understand how behaviors influence emotions, just like cognitive work helps us understand the connection between thoughts and emotions.



Here are some examples of how BA may be used:

Jim deals with depression and anxiety. He has a hard time figuring out why his mood drastically dips and also finds it difficult to understand why he feels better for short periods of time. While working with his schedule in therapy, he began to discover specific mood triggers (how he spent his time or random events) that he had never noticed before. He was able to become more aware of these triggers and change his approach, ultimately allowing him to change his mood.

Debbie knew that her family history, stress with taking care of her special needs son, and seasonal change contribute to her depression. Though she knows the triggers, she struggles with managing her mood as she often does not feel like doing activities that will help her depression. She often tells herself that she will wait until it warms up outside to exercise and does not feel up to calling her friends who usually cheer her up. With her therapist she began to find strategies to help her motivation by practicing awareness of different avoidance patterns and developing alternative, adaptive behaviors.

Will Behavioral Activation be helpful for me?



Behavioral activation is helpful for many people. If you answer “yes” to any of the following questions, BA could be a good fit for you.

- Do I have a sense of what is triggering my mood or anxiety?
- Do I generally find myself doing very little, with little pleasure or meaning in my life?
- Are there times that I feel better or worse and I’m not sure why?
- Do I have a difficult time working with my negative thoughts, but seem to feel better when I can get myself moving and doing something?
- Do I have a hard time even knowing what I enjoy or find meaning in?

Behavioral Activation is based on the well-researched understanding that depression often keeps us from doing the things that bring enjoyment and meaning to our lives. This “downward spiral” (explained in the first chapter of this manual) causes us to feel even worse. In Behavioral Activation we work to reverse this cycle using our actions and choices.

Behavioral Activation involves:

- Understanding the “vicious cycles” of depression
- Monitoring our daily activities
- Identification of goals and values
- Building an upward spiral of motivation and energy through pleasure and mastery
- Activity Scheduling: purposefully scheduling in enjoyable and meaningful activities
- Problem solving around potential barriers to activation
- Reducing avoidance
- Working as a team to make gradual, systematic, sustained progress. Change doesn’t happen over night!
- Using between-session assignments. Practice changes the brain, little by little!



“But my depression is ‘situational!’”



Yes, it is true that often depression is set in motion by difficult events that happen to us. If you are dealing with a big loss, stressful situation, or change in your life, feelings of depression could be a result. While it is important to address these external events and sometimes to talk about the past, it is also important to find ways to address our current situation, find ways to fulfill on our future life aims, and find time for enjoyment. Behavioral Activation can help with this part of treatment.

Action precedes emotion!?

We often wait to feel better or more motivated before doing something.

Remember that anxiety and depression come from parts of our brain that are really trying to protect us by getting us to avoid or isolate. This means that as long as we are following the lead of the anxiety and depression, we will continue to feel less motivated and want to avoid and isolate.



So why activate first? Firstly, activating changes our brain state and can make us feel better, right away. For example, exercise can produce “good chemicals” in the brain that lift mood while they are in the bloodstream. Secondly, the more that we activate, the more situations we find ourselves in that can give us positive experiences. The technical term for this is “reinforcing positive context contingencies.” Technicalities aside, we need to “get out there” and give ourselves the best chance of feeling better, even if we don’t feel like it at the time.



So, when we are feeling anxious and depressed, we cannot wait on the brain to give us the motivation to get out there and do things. Research has shown that our decision to activate (in other words, to do the opposite of what the depression wants us to do, and do something in line with our values and goals) is necessary for emotions to change.

Note: Behavioral Activation has been shown in research studies to be effective on its own for some people to overcome depression. However, it is often used alongside other therapeutic skills, as it may not address your specific situation all by itself. Consider it just one of many options in your effort to manage depression.

On the next few pages we illustrate the “vicious cycles” of depression, according to the research on depression and Behavioral Activation.



The First Vicious Cycle...

Events often get the depression "ball rolling." This could be something new or a reminder from a past stressful event.

What happened
(stressful life events, triggers from past, etc.)

"I lost my job"
"We had our first child"



How you feel
(emotions)

Sad
Anxious
Stressed
Shut down
Embarrassed

The stress of events leads to negative emotions that are distressing and make us want to draw back.

FIRST VICIOUS
CYCLE

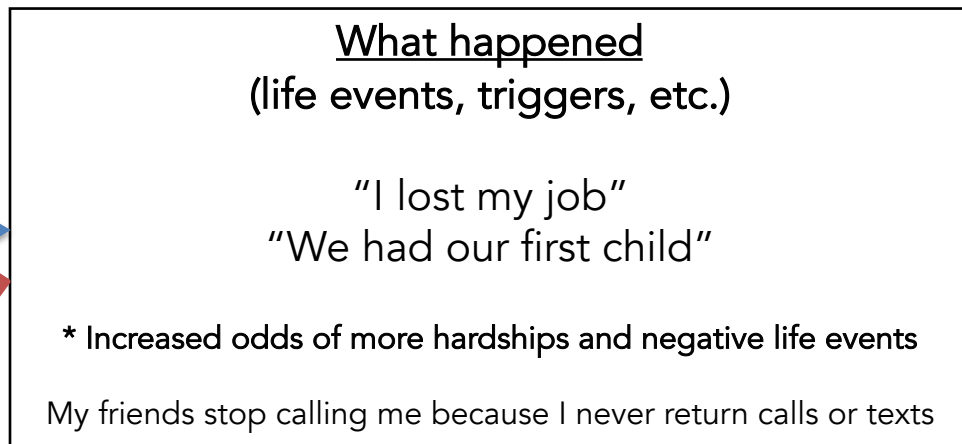
What you do
(or don't do)

Stay in bed
Don't engage with family
Don't return calls or texts
Avoid people

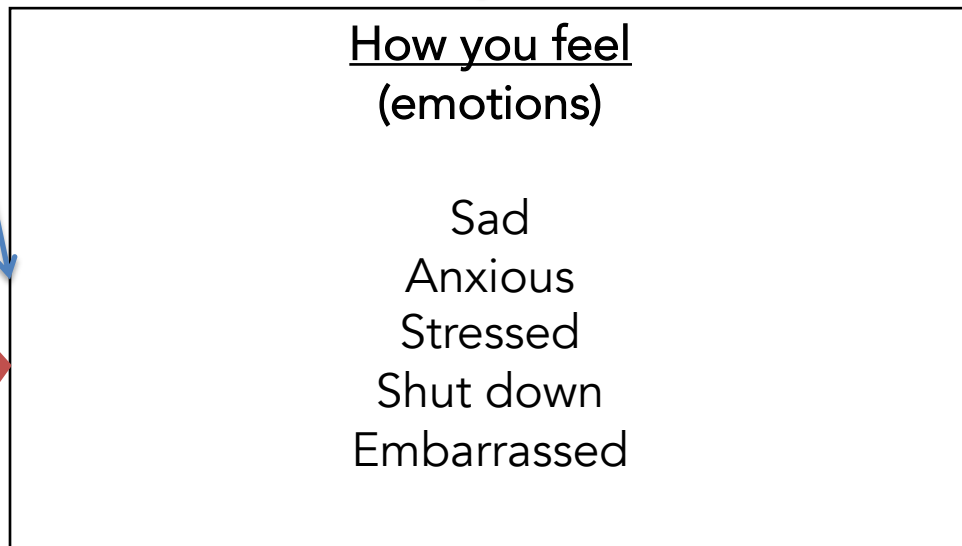
Emotions lead to behaviors: we avoid or isolate, which makes us feel worse.

The Second Vicious Cycle

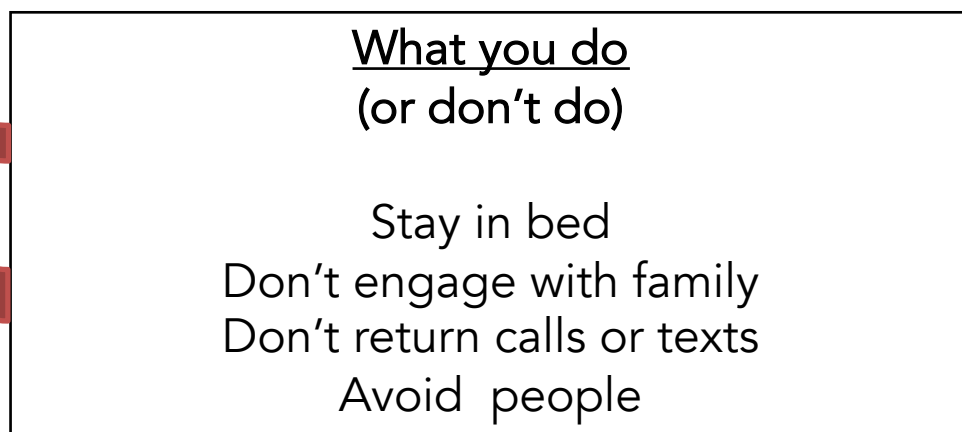
Avoidance, isolation, and other behaviors cause further negative events, making us feel even more depressed.



SECOND
VICIOUS
CYCLE

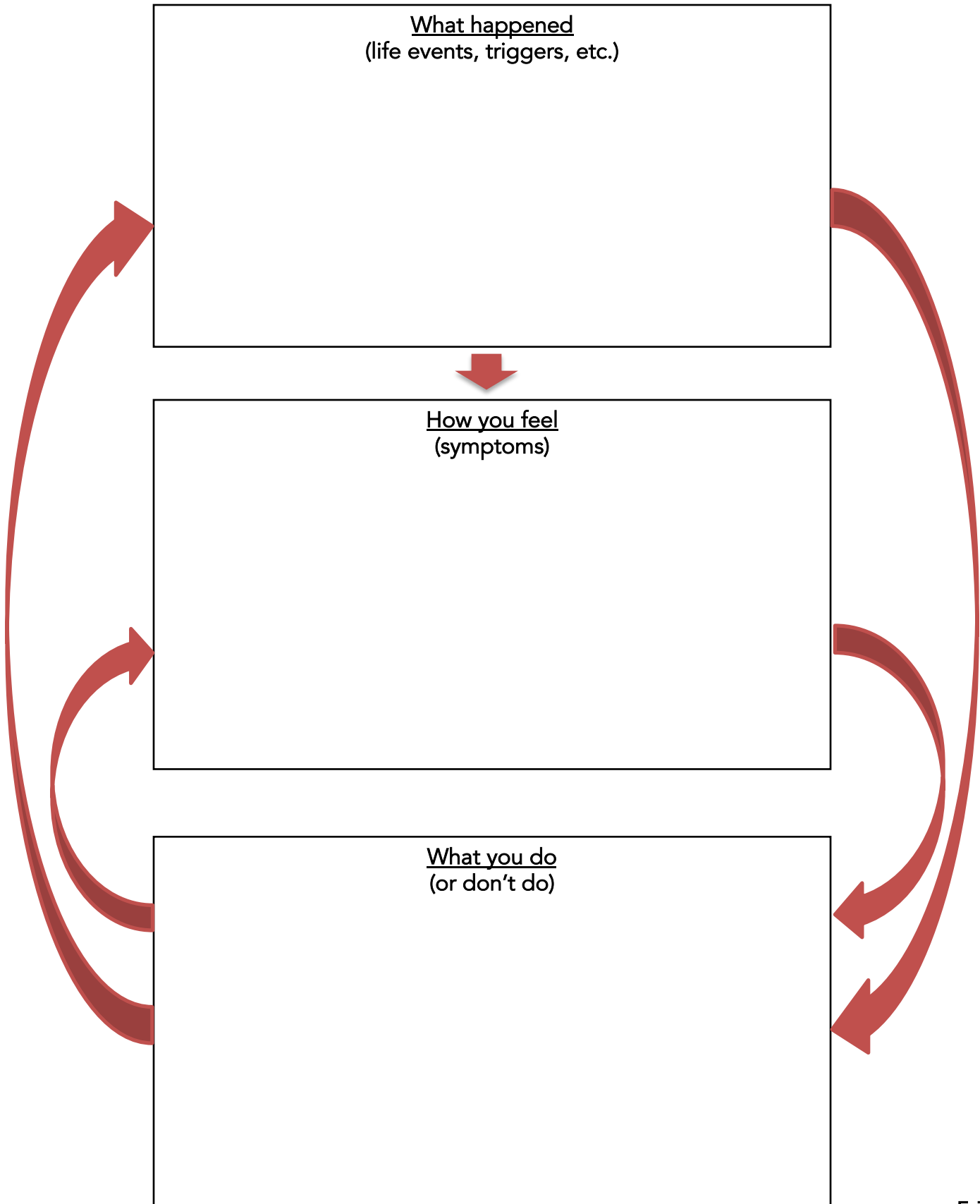


FIRST
VICIOUS
CYCLE



Your cycles?

Try to determine your own "vicious cycles," identifying specific events, emotions, and responses.



Activity Monitoring: Track your mood!

Being aware of our mood, emotions, and behaviors is an important part of CBT. In order to know what to do to fix a problem, we first need to understand what is going on!

Activity Monitoring is the first step of Behavioral Activation. It is important to know exactly what we are doing throughout the day, and how this corresponds to our mood.

While we can't fix the depression just by noticing this, we can take a step toward feeling better by understanding which behaviors help us feel better, which continue to maintain the depression as it is, and which make us feel worse.

Use the Activity Monitoring Chart on the next page to start tracking your activities and mood. →

Get out that pen and paper!

Research shows that people who write things down as part of CBT practice do better than those that try to do it all in their heads. While it does involve more work (and may seem like going back to school), we hope you will give it a try at first, until the skills become more natural.



Activity Monitoring Worksheet

Instructions: Record your activity for each hour of the day (what you were doing, with whom, where, etc.). Record a rating for your mood as you were doing each activity. Mood is rated between 0-10, with "0" indicating "low mood" and "10" indicating "good mood."

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fr	Sat
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							

With BA, we rate mood on a scale of 0-10, 10 being the best, 0 being the worst. We ask people to rate mood in each hour to the best of their ability in order to understand mood changes.

For example:

Monday:

8am: Woke up (5)
9am: Went to go eat breakfast (6)
10am: Got to work, talked to Bob (5)
11am: Sitting at my desk reading e-mails (3)
12pm: Eating lunch at my desk, worrying about meeting (3)
1pm: Meeting, thinking about issue with reports that I missed, tired (3)
2pm: Sitting at my desk working (4)
3pm: Working (4)
4pm: Working (4)
5pm: Driving home (6)

Activity Monitoring Worksheet

Instructions: Record your activity for each hour of the day (what you were doing, with whom, where, etc.). Record a rating for your mood as you were doing each activity. Mood is rated between 0-10, with "0" indicating "low mood" and "10" indicating "good mood."

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5-7:00am							
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5:00 pm							
6:00 pm							
7:00 pm							
8:00 pm							
9:00 pm							
10:00 pm							
11:00 pm							
							5.9

UP and DOWN Activities

Based on the mood ratings you recorded on the Activity Monitoring Worksheet, determine which activities helped you to feel more positive ("UP" activities) and which led to feeling down ("DOWN" activities).

[illegible]

In Behavioral Activation, one of our aims is to increase “UP” activities and decrease “DOWN” activities. Over the next section we will learn more about the types of activities that will lead to better mood, to add to the list above. Over time, we can replace the “DOWN” activities with more “UP” ones.

A Life Worth Living: Values, Pleasure, Mastery, and Goals

The next step in Behavioral Activation is determining the behaviors on which to focus to improve our mood. While some behaviors, like exercise and meditation, can be used right away to improve mood directly, many of the behaviors that are likely to help us are those that align with the things that we enjoy or are important to us.

An exploration of “values,” “pleasure,” and “mastery” describe much of the “stuff” that makes life worth living. This process can help us come up with tangible goals to move us toward the things that are most important to us.

“Values” are what we find meaningful in life. They are the most important things to us. Everyone has different values, and for each of us they can change over time. They are like a compass, pointing us in the direction we want to go.



“Pleasure” involves activities, or “play” that we enjoy for the sake of the activity itself. Hobbies, games, spending time in nature, or spending time with a good friend.

“Mastery” involves activities, such as work or sports, that involve the development of skills; we are able to accomplish things and feel a sense of mastery over our environment. When enjoyed in moderation and diversified well with other activities, they can increase positive emotions and improve how we feel about ourselves. Also, we may feel more creative as we learn to master certain skills, adding to the possibilities of enjoyment.



Goals and objectives outline the steps we take to experience our lives more fully. They give us targets to help us experience more pleasure, mastery, and value-driven behavior.

To feel more consistently engaged and happy in the world, it is usually best to find a balance of goals centered on values, pleasure, and mastery. How that balance looks for you will be unique. On the following pages, we will help you understand how this balance might look for your own life. 

Values

As we mentioned earlier, “**values**” are what we find meaningful and important. These can be different for different people.

Values are important to explore, because much of our goal-directed activity comes from a foundation of what is valued. For example, one may value a healthy lifestyle, and a related goal may be to exercise daily. We may value family, and therefore choose to schedule in time with them. Or if we don't have a family, our activities could lead to getting married and starting one.

It is common to mistake certain wishes and feelings for values. **Values are not internal states, how people treat us, or specific things to achieve.**

Below are some of the common areas of life that people value and may lead to goal-directed activity.



On the next page is a list of values that are related to the categories below. Use them to start listing your own values on the following page.

Physical well-being

What kind of values do you have regarding your physical wellbeing? How do you want to look at yourself?

Family relationships

What kind of relationships do you want with your family? What kind of mother/father/ brother/sister/uncle/aunt do you want to be? What is important to you about a good family?

Intimate relationships

What kind of partner do you want to be? What quality of relationship do you want to be part of? How do you want to spend time together?

Citizenship/Community

What kind of environment do you want to be a part of? How do you want to contribute to your community?

Mental/Emotional Health

What helps you maintain sound mental health? Why is this important to you? What issues would you like to address?

Spirituality

What kind of relationship do you want with God/nature/ the Earth/mankind? What does having a spiritual life mean to you? How can you exercise this?

Friendships/ social relations

What sort of friend do you want to be? How would you like to act towards your friends? How can these relationships be improved?

Hobbies/ Recreation

How would you like to enjoy yourself? What relaxes you? When are you most playful? Are there any special interests you would like to pursue?

Education/training/ personal growth

How would you like to grow? What kind of skills would you like to develop? What would you like to know more about?

Employment/career

What kind of work is valuable to you? What qualities do you want to bring as an employee? What kind of work relationships would you like to build?



Below is a list of general value categories, and some specific values that are common in each. See if any of them fit you, and use this page to fill out the values rating sheet on the next page.

Family relations

- Work on current relationships
- Spend time with family
- Take an active role in raising my children
- Maintain consistent healthy communication

Marriage/couples/intimate relationships

- Establish a sense of safety and trust
- Give and receive affection
- Spend quality time with my partner
- Show my partner how much I appreciate them

Friendships/Social Relationships

- End destructive relationships
- Reach out for new relationships
- Feel a sense of belonging
- Have and keep close friends
- Spend time with friends
- Have people to do things with

Mental/Emotional health

- Seek fun and things that give me pleasure
- Have free time
- Be independent and take care of myself
- Challenge my negative thinking
- Make my own decisions
- Engage in therapy
- Take my medications
- Stay active

Physical well-being

- Live in secure and safe surroundings
- Engage in regular exercise
- Have a steady income to meet physical needs
- Eat foods that are nourishing to my body
- Maintain a balance between rest and activity
- Get enough sleep

Citizenship/Community

- Contribute to the larger community
- Help people in need
- Improve society
- Be committed to a cause or group that has a larger purpose
- Make sacrifices for others

Spirituality

- Follow traditions and customs
- Live according to spiritual principles
- Practice my religion or faith
- Grow in understanding myself, my personal calling, and life's purpose
- Discern the will of God
- Find meaning in life
- Develop a personal philosophy of life
- Spend time in nature
- Focus on the greater good

Education/Training/Personal Growth

- Be involved in undertakings I believe personally are significant
- Try new and different things in life
- Learn new things
- Be daring and seek adventure
- Have an exciting life
- Learn to do challenging things that help me grow as a person

Employment

- Be powerful and able to influence others, have authority
- Make important decisions that affect the organization
- Be a leader
- Make a great deal of money
- Be respected by others
- Be seen by others as successful, be ambitious
- Become well-known, obtain recognition and status
- Be productive, work hard
- Achieve significant goals
- Enjoy the work I do
- Do what I'm told and follow the rules

Here are some other experiments to explore your own values:

1. Imagine that an important newscaster were doing a biographical story on your life. Think about how you'd want them to describe you. How would they describe the way you spent your time? How you related to others? What was most important to you? What are your strengths as a person? Write down a narrative of what they would say.
2. Imagine you could read the mind of a person that's important to you and with whom you've had a good relationship. They are thinking all kinds of thoughts about your qualities: what you stand for, what your strengths are, what you mean to him or her, and the role you play in his or her life.
3. Think about your heroes. They can be people directly in your life, or other people that you look up to, even fictional characters. What are their qualities? What do you admire about them?
4. Imagine you are writing your own autobiography. Imagine how you would like to live your life, barring all barriers, in the "best case scenario." What are the things that are most important to you in this scenario? What would you stand for? How would you spend your time?
5. Imagine that someone is performing the eulogy at your funeral. Looking back on your life, they would be commenting on your strengths, values, and achievements. How would you want them to describe your life?
6. If you are struggling to find a valued direction, commit to experimenting with some of the values on the previous pages for just one week. After choosing a value, plan to notice your reactions to making the effort to hold to this value. Make a list of behaviors that might fit with the value and choose one behavior to try. Notice your judgments that come up about choosing this behavior. Then make a plan to fulfill on the value-driven behavior. Just do the behavior without telling anyone about it and see what happens. Commit to following through on this behavior once per day for one week. Keep a diary of your reactions to behaving this way and others' reactions to you. At the end of the week, reflect on your experiment with someone else, like a therapist or group leader.

Values Rating Sheet

Based on your exploration of the previous pages, write a summary of your values. For example, "to live a healthy life and take care of my body" (physical well-being), or "to be a good friend to people who need me, and to enjoy time with people I love"(friendships).

Rate each domain for how important it is to you from 0-10 (0 = not important, 10 = extremely important).

Remember: **values** are not internal states, how people treat us, or specific things to achieve.

Physical well-being

Family relationships

Intimate Relationships

Citizenship/Community

Mental/Emotional Health



Spirituality

Other?

Friendships/social
relations

Hobbies/Recreation

Education/training/
personal growth

Employment/career

Translating Values into Activities...

The next step is to translate our values into activities that help us fulfill on those goals.

Take a moment to think about the values that you identified on the previous page. What are some short term goals in each area? What are some long term goals? Use this page and the next to start to brainstorm. Write down your results on the upcoming page: "Values, Pleasure, and Mastery Master List."

VALUE

ACTIVITIES

Example:

Parenting

I want to be involved in my children's interests and learning. I'd like to build special memories with my kids and spend quality time with them.



I'm going to attend the next PTO meeting and maybe contact the teacher to be a classroom volunteer. I can plan a small vacation to take with the kids next summer.





VALUE

ACTIVITIES









Pleasure

Pleasure involves activities that we enjoy for the sake of the activity itself. There are many different kinds of pleasure. Those that are most sustainable involve “play” such as hobbies and other recreational activities. Social activities can also involve pleasure. Other types of pleasure, such as sensory experiences (food, drink, images, touch, etc.) can also be enjoyable if done in moderation.

Below are examples of enjoyable activities that are enjoyed by many. Circle the ones that apply to you, and add others that aren’t included below.



Social activities

- Spending time with family
- Enjoying own children and/or young relatives
- Enjoying close friends
- Hanging out with large groups of friends/acquaintances
- Parties, meeting new people
- Romance
- Pets
- Clubs: meeting people with similar interests
- Enjoying food and drink with others

Hobbies, Interests, and other “play”

- Reading
- TV, movies, plays
- Dancing
- Playing or listening to music
- Board games or cards
- Arts and crafts, sewing, painting
- Cooking
- Walking, hiking, enjoying nature, fishing
- Sports (basketball, softball, swimming, etc.) or going as a spectator
- Martial arts (karate, etc.)
- Museums/zoos
- Video games
- Traveling, sightseeing, going to the beach, sunbathing
- Shopping
- Gardening/decorating
- Photography
- Comedy: TV, recordings, live
- Religion or spirituality



Sensory experiences

- Pleasant smells, images, sounds, physical touch, tastes
- Taking a bath
- Listening to soothing music
- Mindful tasting

Other?

Mastery

Mastery involves activities, such as work or sports, that involve the development of skills; we are able to accomplish things and feel a sense of mastery over our environment. When enjoyed in moderation and diversified well with other activities, they can increase positive emotions and improve how we feel about ourselves.

Here are some examples of how people experience mastery to experience fulfillment in their lives. Circle the ones that apply to you, and add others that aren't included below.

Job or Meaningful Daytime Activity

Look for or attempt to develop some of these qualities in your occupation volunteer work, or other meaningful daytime activity:

- Enjoyment
- Creativity
- Feelings of competence (able to accomplish tasks satisfactorily)
- Potential for development of skills
- Ability to "move up" in the organization or take on more responsibility, if this is desired
- Social contact with coworkers, colleagues, others in the field



Other skill-based activities

- Sports
- Music practice and performance
- Home improvement/building
- Woodworking
- Visual art (painting, drawing, pottery, sewing, knitting)
- Learning about interests (history, politics, food, language, culture, etc.)
- Crafting, pottery, and other creative skills

Other?

Activities List: Pleasure and Mastery

Here are some examples of activities that tend to increase pleasure and mastery. You might think of more that are not listed. Circle the ones that you think could lead to enjoyment or mastery for yourself.

1. Soaking in the bathtub
2. Planning my career
3. Collecting things (coins, shells, etc.)
4. Going for a vacation
5. Recycling old items
6. Relaxing
7. Going on a date
8. Going to a movie
9. Jogging, walking
10. Listening to music
11. Thinking I have done a full day's work
12. Recalling past parties
13. Buying household gadgets
14. Lying in the sun
15. Planning a career change
16. Laughing
17. Thinking about my past trips
18. Listening to others
19. Reading magazines or newspapers
20. Hobbies (stamp collecting, model building, etc.)
21. Spending an evening with good friends
22. Planning a day's activities
23. Meeting new people
24. Remembering beautiful scenery
25. Saving money
26. Gambling
27. Going to the gym, doing aerobics
28. Eating
29. Thinking how it will be when I finish school
30. Getting out of debt/paying debts
31. Practicing karate, judo, yoga
32. Thinking about retirement
33. Repairing things around the house
34. Working on my car (bicycle)
35. Remembering the words and deeds of loving people
36. Wearing sexy clothes
37. Having quiet evenings
38. Taking care of my plants
39. Buying, selling stocks and shares
40. Going swimming
41. Doodling
42. Exercising
43. Collecting old things
44. Going to a party
45. Thinking about buying things
46. Playing golf
47. Playing soccer
48. Flying kites
49. Having discussions with friends
50. Having family get-togethers
51. Riding a motorbike
52. Sex
53. Playing squash
54. Going camping
55. Singing around the house
56. Arranging flowers
57. Going to church, praying (practicing religion)
58. Losing weight
59. Going to the beach
60. Thinking I'm an OK person
61. A day with nothing to do
62. Having class reunions
63. Going ice skating, roller skating/blading
64. Going sailing
65. Travelling abroad, interstate or within the state
66. Sketching, painting
67. Blowing bubbles
68. Doing embroidery, cross stitching
69. Sleeping
70. Driving
71. Entertaining
72. Going to clubs (garden, sewing, etc.)
73. Thinking about getting married
74. Going bird watching
75. Singing with groups
76. Flirting
77. Playing musical instruments
78. Doing arts and crafts
79. Making a gift for someone
80. Buying CDs, tapes, records
81. Watching boxing, wrestling
82. Planning parties
83. Cooking, baking
84. Going hiking, bush walking
85. Writing books (poems, articles)
86. Sewing
87. Buying clothes
88. Working
89. Going out to dinner
90. Discussing books
91. Sightseeing
92. Gardening
93. Going to the beauty salon
94. Early morning coffee and newspaper
95. Playing tennis
96. Kissing
97. Watching my children (play)
98. Thinking I have a lot going for me
99. Going to plays and concerts
100. Daydreaming
101. Planning to go to college or university

102. Going for a drive
103. Listening to a stereo
104. Refinishing furniture
105. Watching videos or DVDs
106. Making lists of tasks
107. Going bike riding
108. Walks on the riverfront/shoreline
109. Buying gifts
110. Travelling to national parks
111. Completing a task
112. Thinking about my achievements
113. Going to a sporting event
114. Eating gooey, fattening foods
115. Exchanging emails, chatting on the internet
116. Photography
117. Going fishing
118. Thinking about pleasant events
119. Staying on a diet
120. Star gazing
121. Flying a plane
122. Reading fiction
123. Acting
124. Being alone
125. Writing diary/journal entries or letters
126. Cleaning
127. Reading non-fiction
128. Taking children places
129. Dancing
130. Going on a picnic
131. Thinking "I did that pretty well" after doing something
132. Meditating/ Mindfulness exercises
133. Playing volleyball
134. Having lunch with a friend
135. Making a gratitude list
136. Thinking about having a family
137. Thoughts about happy moments in my childhood
138. Splurging
139. Playing cards
140. Having a political discussion
141. Solving riddles mentally
142. Playing tennis
143. Seeing and/or showing photos or slides
144. Knitting/crocheting/quilting
145. Doing crossword puzzles
146. Shooting pool/Playing billiards
147. Dressing up and looking nice
148. Reflecting on how I've improved
149. Buying things for myself
150. Talking on the phone
151. Going to museums, art galleries
152. Thinking religious thoughts
153. Surfing the internet
154. Lighting candles
155. Listening to the radio
156. Spending time in nature
157. Having coffee at a cafe
158. Getting/giving a massage
159. Saying "I love you"
160. Thinking about my good qualities
161. Buying books
162. Having a spa, or sauna
163. Going skiing
164. Going canoeing or white-water rafting
165. Going bowling
166. Doing woodworking
167. Fantasizing about the future
168. Doing ballet, jazz/tap dancing
169. Debating
170. Playing computer games
171. Having an aquarium
172. Erotica (sex books, movies)
173. Going horseback riding
174. Going rock climbing
175. Thinking about becoming active in the community
176. Doing something new
177. Making jigsaw puzzles
178. Thinking I'm a person who can cope
179. Playing with my pets
180. Having a barbecue
181. Rearranging the furniture in my house
182. Buying new furniture
183. Going window shopping
184. Saying yes to an opportunity

Values, Pleasure, and Mastery Activities List

Look back at the last 6 pages and write down the activities you came up with to form a master list of possible activities that fit with your life aims. We'll use these to start to get more active with Behavioral Activation.

Pleasure

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Mastery

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Valued Activities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

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 to achieve goals, make them “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
5-7:00 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): _____ (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

Activity



Companion(s)



Satisfaction

(rate on scale of 0-10)

Predicted	Actual

Activity



Companion(s)



Satisfaction

(rate on scale of 0-10)

Predicted	Actual

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