

**Behavioral Activation
for Depression:
Simple but Effective**



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"Neil [Jacobson] criticized the prevailing treatments of depression as "defect models" because they located the cause of depression as internal deficits within individuals. In contrast, he sought to understand the person in the full context of the treatment of depression and encouraged us to look outside the individual in our effort to understand and treat depression. It was his supposition that the secret to alleviating depression lay in changing the conditions in people's lives."

-Martell, Dimidjian, & Herman-Dunn, 2022

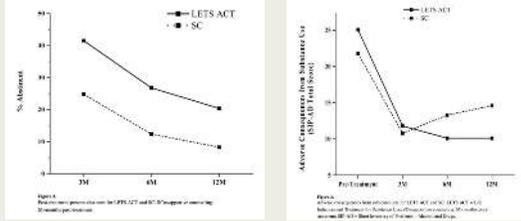
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Origins of behavioral activation

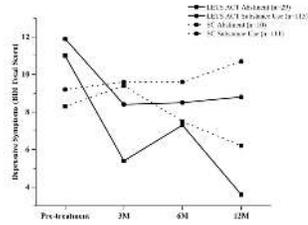
- What are the active ingredients of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for depression?
- Are all the strategies of CBT needed to produce positive outcomes?
- Could the behavioral strategies of CBT alone account for the success of cognitive therapy?
- Jacobson et al., 1996 sought to identify the active ingredients of CBT using what is called component analysis design (dismantling study).
- The different components of a treatment were isolated and compared to one another in an aim to identify which parts CBT active ingredients for alleviating depression.
- Three components of CBT:
 Behavioral Activation (BA) including activity scheduling, mastery and pleasure ratings, graded task assignments
 BA + Automatic Thoughts (AT) including cognitive restructuring of depressive automatic thoughts
 BA + AT + Core beliefs = CBT including cognitive restructuring of core beliefs

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The Effect of a Behavioral Activation Treatment for Substance Use on Post-treatment Abstinence: A Randomized Controlled Trial



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Benefits of BA as a treatment

- Relatively simple to train (studies with minimally trained therapists, lay counselors, grad students etc.)
- Brief protocol & possible to do brief visits
- Can add on other treatments after BA

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What behaviors contribute to depression?



Increase in escape and avoidance behaviors (i.e., reducing an aversive emotional state aka seeking relief)






Less rewarding activities in their daily life



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What behaviors contribute to depression?

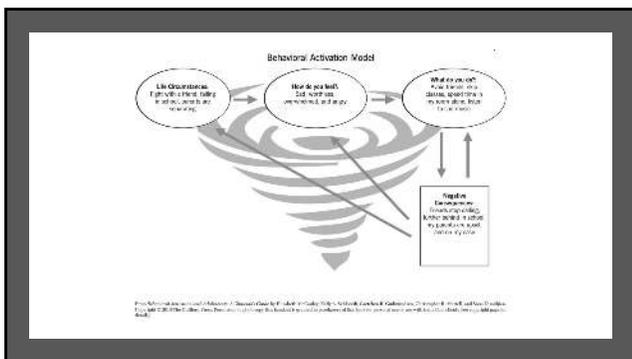


Over time the lack of rewarding activities in their lives (getting laundry done, fun times with friends, getting things done at work) leads to those active, healthy behaviors becoming extinguished.

Doing active, healthy behaviors are no longer part of their daily lifestyle. They start to live a depressive lifestyle characterized by inactivity, avoidance, isolation, withdrawal, etc.




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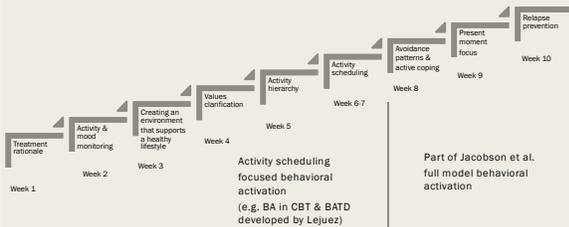
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Goals of BA

1. Learn that your mood is a consequence of how you spend your time
2. Change your mood by changing how you spend your day
3. Identify your values and activities associated with them
4. Identify antidepressant activities (enjoyment, achievement, & meaning)
5. Identify avoidance patterns
6. Actively cope rather than avoid problems, uncomfortable emotions, and challenging situations
7. Engage in the present moment to reduce rumination so you receive the full benefit of antidepressant activities

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Steps to a BA treatment protocol



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Treatment rationale

- Changes in life are associated with depression and avoidant coping strategies may lead to more depression in the long term
- When people get depressed they often stop doing enjoyable activities or activities that given them achievement and meaning in their day
- Focus on what is maintaining, or keeping a person depressed, rather than on what may have triggered their depression initially
- Feeling better and thinking more positively is a consequence of becoming more active and engaged in life and relationships
- It may be hard in the beginning to get active, but it can get easier as antidepressant activities lift mood and give more positive energy

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Treatment rationale

- "Depression can be caused by a sudden loss, not being able to attain a certain goal, difficulty coping with daily hassles, etc. Sometimes though there isn't a clear event that leads to depression. People are vulnerable to depression for a variety of reasons. Theories about internal causes are abound. By internal causes I mean that depression is caused by something inside the individual, like chemical imbalance, low self-esteem, negative thoughts, etc. We view depression from a very different perspective though. We believe that depression can be understood in the context of people's lives, their actions, and their environments. Instead of looking inside the person to understand their depression, we focus on what the person is doing that maintains their depression and what they can do to make it better. People who are depressed tend to act in ways that maintain their depression. In depression, many actions can be for the purpose of avoiding unpleasant situations or feelings, and keep the person stuck in a vicious cycle of depression, even though these behaviors may be attempts to cope with negative experiences. Behavioral activation is about learning more active coping strategies. These coping strategies will impact both your moods and activity levels."
- "People who struggle with depression have difficulty getting up the energy to be more active, whether that means physically active, socially active, more productive at work, or spending more time with loved ones. We will focus on improving your mood by enriching the activities of your life, decreasing reliance on avoidance, and providing other activities that may be more effective at reducing stress, eliminating boredom, rewarding oneself, etc."
- "You may not presently feel as though you are able to be as active as you would like or that you are always tired and lack motivation. You also may be wanting to feel better or think more positively before you become more active and start participating in activities that you once enjoyed. As you know, however, getting yourself to feel better is not an easy thing to do. Therefore, we'd like you to try something different. The idea of this treatment is that your thoughts and feelings are affected by your interactions with others and your overall quality of life. So, we believe that for you to have more positive thoughts, and feel better, you must first become more active and put yourself into more positive situations. Although this will be quite difficult right now, it will become easier as more and more positive experiences occur. The treatment requires you to work hard, and I understand that you may be questioning your ability to make changes at this time in your life, but I will help you through this process, and we will work at a pace at which you feel comfortable."

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Activity & mood monitoring

Demonstrates the relationship between activity and mood

Helps patients see that what they do with each hour of the day has considerable influence over their mood that hour and beyond

Shows how mood is really a reflection of how you spend your day. Patterns of low mood = low (or "wrong") activities

Mood is an indicator of what's going on in your environment and you can influence your environment through activity

Recommendations: As close to daily as possible, completed during the day, make it simple so you do it, and less detail the better

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Activity and Mood Monitoring Chart

Instructions: To use this chart, write the activities you engaged in during the hour. The right box contains a depression scale from 0 to 10, with 0 being the most positive mood and 10 being the highest score (most depressed you feel).	Time	Activity	Mood
7:00 am	7:00 am	Woke up	0
7:15 am	7:15 am	Washed face	0
7:30 am	7:30 am	Brushed teeth	0
7:45 am	7:45 am	Put on clothes	0
8:00 am	8:00 am	Left house	0
8:15 am	8:15 am	Went to work	0
8:30 am	8:30 am	Worked	0
8:45 am	8:45 am	Worked	0
9:00 am	9:00 am	Worked	0
9:15 am	9:15 am	Worked	0
9:30 am	9:30 am	Worked	0
9:45 am	9:45 am	Worked	0
10:00 am	10:00 am	Worked	0
10:15 am	10:15 am	Worked	0
10:30 am	10:30 am	Worked	0
10:45 am	10:45 am	Worked	0
11:00 am	11:00 am	Worked	0
11:15 am	11:15 am	Worked	0
11:30 am	11:30 am	Worked	0
11:45 am	11:45 am	Worked	0
12:00 pm	12:00 pm	Worked	0
12:15 pm	12:15 pm	Worked	0
12:30 pm	12:30 pm	Worked	0
12:45 pm	12:45 pm	Worked	0
1:00 pm	1:00 pm	Worked	0
1:15 pm	1:15 pm	Worked	0
1:30 pm	1:30 pm	Worked	0
1:45 pm	1:45 pm	Worked	0
2:00 pm	2:00 pm	Worked	0
2:15 pm	2:15 pm	Worked	0
2:30 pm	2:30 pm	Worked	0
2:45 pm	2:45 pm	Worked	0
3:00 pm	3:00 pm	Worked	0
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5:00 pm	5:00 pm	Worked	0
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6:00 pm	6:00 pm	Worked	0
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11:00 pm	11:00 pm	Worked	0
11:15 pm	11:15 pm	Worked	0
11:30 pm	11:30 pm	Worked	0
11:45 pm	11:45 pm	Worked	0
12:00 am	12:00 am	Worked	0

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Creating an environment that supports a healthy lifestyle

- Public commitments to make behavior change increase likelihood of a person following through.
- Have patient decide who in their support system that they will share their goals.
- Engage the support system so the patient receives encouragement and help in reaching their goals. (e.g. see if a friend will be a gym buddy)
- "Set yourself up for success" by setting yourself up to start an activity or goal
 - Set out the gym bag
 - Put cleaning supplies on the counter
 - Schedule an activity with a friend
 - Open up the document on the computer so it's ready
- Graduated task assignment

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Identifying activities & values clarification

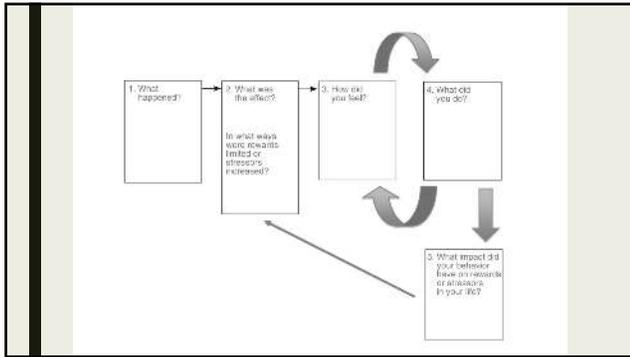
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1.8. Aktivitätskatalog	1.8. Aktivitätskatalog (Fortsetzung)
<p><small>Form 1.8. Aktivitätskatalog (Fortsetzung) 1.8. Aktivitätskatalog</small></p> <p>1. 1.8.1. Aktivitäten</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2. 1.8.2. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>3. 1.8.3. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>4. 1.8.4. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>5. 1.8.5. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>6. 1.8.6. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>7. 1.8.7. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>8. 1.8.8. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>9. 1.8.9. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>10. 1.8.10. Beispiele</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

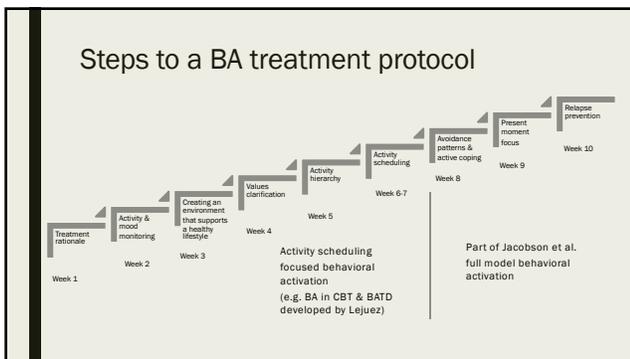
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Form 1.8. Aktivitätskatalog und Aktivitätenkatalog		
Aktivität	Ergebnis	Ergebnis
• Aktivität 1		
• Aktivität 2		
• Aktivität 3		
• Aktivität 4		
• Aktivität 5		
• Aktivität 6		
• Aktivität 7		
• Aktivität 8		
• Aktivität 9		
• Aktivität 10		
• Aktivität 11		
• Aktivität 12		
• Aktivität 13		
• Aktivität 14		
• Aktivität 15		

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BA in one slide

1. Depression interrupts a person's routine and the activities that give them enjoyment, achievement, and meaning in their day.
2. Because a depressed person doesn't feel like they have the energy to address the problems in their life, they often avoid them and then feel guilty about avoiding them as their problems grow.
3. Gradually adding enjoyable and meaningful activities into one's day (especially when someone doesn't feel like doing it) will eventually improve mood.
3. Start small with activities or break down problems into smaller chunks, so it's possible to chip away at them.
4. Mood improves after enjoyable and meaningful activities, so don't listen to depressed mood. Let values be the guide and take small steps towards them even when one doesn't feel like it.
5. Motivation and energy will eventually come after regularly doing antidepressant activities.
6. Feeling down is a sign from the body that the current routine isn't working and that more antidepressant activities are needed.



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Clinical demonstration



<https://youtu.be/3gNF10Zvyzc>

Centre for Clinical Interventions

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Clinical resources

<https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/For-Clinicians/Depression>

Therapist Aid

<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/behavioral-activation>

<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-guide/behavioral-activation-guide>

<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/schedule-behavioral-activation>

<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/activities-behavioral-activation>

<https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/activity-list>

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