THIS WAY UP



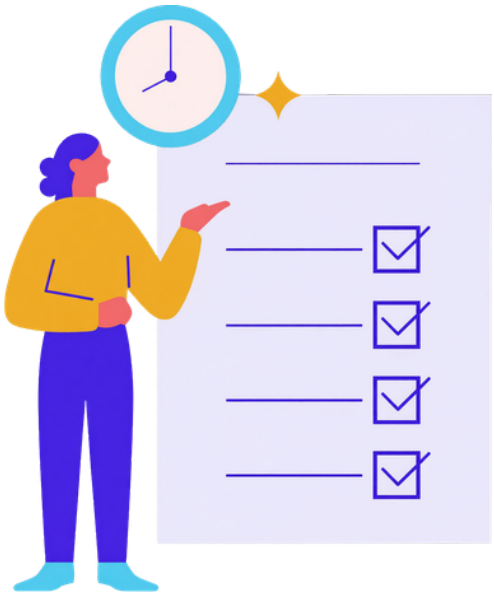
Helping Patients Take the First Step: The Importance of Early Clinician Support

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Digital mental health interventions such as THIS WAY UP are highly effective for treating anxiety, depression and related mental health conditions. However, like any treatment, experiencing good treatment outcomes requires patients getting started and regularly engaging with the intervention.

Emerging evidence suggests that clinician support has its greatest impact during the period between referral and the first few weeks of treatment.



This initial phase is known as **treatment activation**, and it's a phase where your language and actions may make the biggest difference to your patients getting on the road to recovery.

Patients are more likely to commence and continue with a digital treatment when their clinician provides a strong recommendation, a clear rationale for their recommendation, and brief, early follow-up. **Early clinician encouragement** may be one of the most important factors in helping patients engage with treatment.

6 Ways to Activate Engagement

1. Prescribe with Confidence

Patients take cues from their clinician. Present digital CBT to your patient as the effective, trustworthy, evidence-based treatment that it is, not as an alternative or backup option. Your confidence is contagious.

Treatment activation tip: Explain why you believe the program will help and how it relates to the patient's symptoms.

Helpful phrase: *"This is an evidence-based CBT treatment that has helped many people with similar symptoms to those that you're experiencing. I believe it's a good fit for you and I'd like you to give it a try."*



2. Provide a Clear Clinical Rationale

Patients are more likely to engage when they understand why a specific treatment program has been recommended.

Treatment activation tip: Link the program directly to the patient's goals, needs and symptoms.

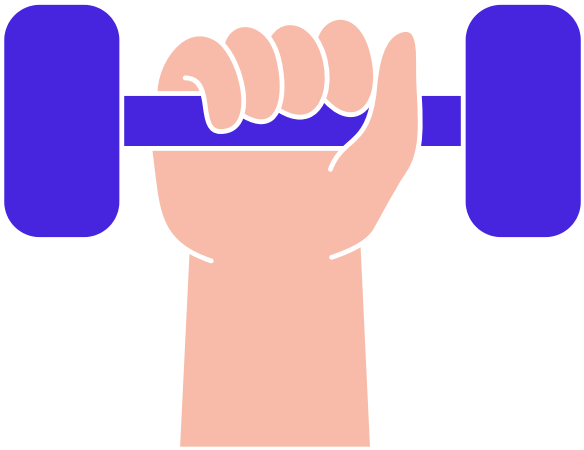
Helpful phrase: *"Based on the anxiety symptoms you've described, it sounds like you're experiencing social anxiety. This is a really common issue for many people, and the great news is it's very treatable. You don't have to continue suffering with this anxiety. The most effective treatment for social anxiety is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and this online treatment program teaches practical CBT skills to help manage anxious thoughts, reduce avoidance and build confidence. I've seen it work for other patients and I am confident it is likely to be helpful for you too."*

3. Set Expectations Early

Setting realistic treatment expectations enhances sustained uptake and ongoing engagement.

Treatment activation tip: Normalise that improvement takes practice and that early modules may feel challenging.

Helpful phrase: *"Like any new skill, it can take a little time before the benefits become noticeable. The key is sticking with it and continuing to practise what you learn. Learning new ways of thinking and behaving involves conditioning your mind and body into new habits. It's like exercising a new muscle at the gym; initially it's tough and you need time and practice to build up strength, but with practice, it becomes easier. CBT skills work the same way – you've made a great start, keep at it. I'm here to help you along the way!"*



4. Follow Up Early

Research suggests that clinician support is most influential during treatment initiation. A brief check-in can be enough to help your patient maintain momentum.

Treatment activation tip: Ask whether your patient has started their program, and identify any barriers before disengagement occurs. Normalise barriers to getting started, and troubleshoot solutions collaboratively.

Helpful phrase: *"Have you had a chance to start the first module yet? Is there anything making it difficult to get going?"*

5. Personalise the Level of Support

Not all patients will need the same amount of guidance.

Treatment activation tip: Provide additional support where needed, focusing on motivation, confidence and problem-solving.

Helpful phrase: *"Would it be helpful if I check in with you to see how you're progressing? What might suit you best?"*



6. Address Barriers While Motivation is High

Common barriers include limited time, forgetting to log in to their digital treatment platform, low motivation, technical difficulties and uncertainty about applying skills.

Treatment activation tip: Discuss any foreseeable obstacles at the referral stage and create a simple, practical plan to overcome them. Where possible, support the patient to register to their treatment program when you prescribe it – sit with them for 1-2 minutes to support them in registering. This familiarises the patient with the online program and avoids delay in registering/supports overcoming hesitation or technical difficulties.

Helpful phrase: *"What's most likely to get in the way of completing the program, and how can we plan ahead for managing that now? I'm here to help you get the most out of the treatment program."*

Key Takeaway



The clinician's recommendation is one of the strongest drivers of their patient's engagement with a digital mental health treatment.

The evidence suggests that clinician support may have its greatest impact during treatment activation, when patients are deciding whether to start, trust and engage with a digital treatment. A strong recommendation, personalised treatment rationale and brief, early follow-ups are simple ways you can help your patients:

- ✓ Start treatment
- ✓ Understand that the intervention is credible
- ✓ Stay motivated during the initial modules and beyond
- ✓ Overcome any potential early barriers
- ✓ Build momentum and confidence

Small amounts of support delivered at the right time can make a meaningful difference to patient engagement with digital mental health treatments, and ultimately, clinical outcomes – making lasting improvements to your patient's quality of life.