



Small Steps: Behavioural Activation



When mood is low, motivation often drops too. Behavioural activation works by starting with small, planned actions rather than waiting to feel motivated first.

WHY ACTION CAN HELP

Depression can lead us to withdraw or do less. Over time, this can mean fewer opportunities for connection, enjoyment, structure and accomplishment.

START SMALLER THAN YOU THINK

A useful step does not need to be impressive. Getting dressed, sitting outside for five minutes, sending one message or completing part of a task can all count.

BALANCE DIFFERENT TYPES OF ACTIVITY

Consider activities that offer connection, enjoyment, accomplishment, self-care or something personally meaningful. You do not need to feel like doing them first.

NOTICE WHAT HAPPENS AFTERWARDS

The aim is not to guarantee an immediate mood lift. Notice instead whether the action changes your energy, sense of connection, accomplishment or willingness to take another step.

Action can come before motivation.

If a planned step feels too hard, make it smaller. Consistency and experimentation are more important than doing it perfectly.



Choosing My Small Steps



Choose activities that are realistic for your current energy and circumstances. The best starting point is often something small enough that you are reasonably likely to try it.

CONNECTION

One small way I could connect with another person...

ENJOYMENT OR INTEREST

One activity that might offer even a little interest, pleasure or change of scenery...

ACCOMPLISHMENT

One manageable task that could give me a sense of having done something...

SELF-CARE

One thing I could do to support my body or basic needs...

WHAT MATTERS TO ME

One small action connected with something or someone I value...

Keep the bar manageable

If your first idea feels too difficult, break it into an even smaller first step.



My Small-Step Plan



Pick just a few actions to experiment with. Plan when you might do them, then notice what happened rather than judging yourself on whether they changed your mood.

SMALL ACTION	WHEN / WHERE	BEFORE	AFTER / WHAT I NOTICED
		Mood / energy: ____ / 10	
		Mood / energy: ____ / 10	
		Mood / energy: ____ / 10	
		Mood / energy: ____ / 10	

WHAT DID I LEARN?

What was easier or harder than expected? Did anything shift in your energy, connection, accomplishment or willingness to keep going? What might you repeat or adjust?

Using this with your psychologist

Review what you noticed together and adjust the size, type or timing of activities to suit your needs.