

MODULE 4
*Behavioural Strategies for
Managing & Preventing Depression*

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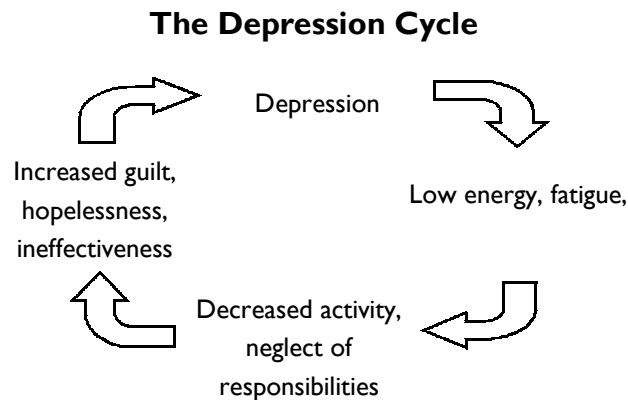
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The Depression Cycle

The symptoms of depression can bring about some drastic changes in a depressed person's life, daily routines, and their behaviour. Often these changes can perpetuate the depression and prevent the depressed person from getting better.

For example, a lack of motivation or a lack of energy can result in a depressed person cutting back on their activities, neglecting their daily tasks and responsibilities, or leaving decision-making to others. Have you noticed these changes in yourself when you are depressed?

You might find that you become less and less active, don't go out much anymore, avoid hanging out with friends, and stop engaging in your favourite activity. When this happens, you have become locked in the Depression Cycle.



When your activity level decreases, you may become even less motivated and more lethargic. When you stop doing the things you used to love, you miss out on experiencing pleasant feelings and positive experiences. Your depression could get worse and this becomes a vicious cycle.



Similarly, when one begins neglecting a few tasks and responsibilities at work or at home, the list may begin to pile up. As such, often when a depressed person thinks about the things they have to do, they might feel overwhelmed by the accumulation of the things that they have neglected. This might result in them feeling guilty or thinking that they are ineffective or even, a failure. This will also perpetuate the depression and the depression cycle.

Reversing the Depression Cycle

The first step in reversing depression cycle is to simply increase your activity level, especially in pleasurable activities and tackling your list of tasks and responsibilities. However, it's important to remember to do this in a realistic and achievable way, so that you set yourself up to succeed. Becoming more active has a number of advantages.

Activity helps you to feel better. At the very least, when you start engaging in some activity, it gives your mind something else to think about—a different focus. Doing things, even a little at a time, can help to give you a sense that you are moving forward, taking control of your life again, and achieving something. You might even find pleasure and enjoyment in the activities you do

Activity helps you to feel less tired. Usually, when you are physically tired, you need rest. However, when you are depressed, the opposite is true. Sleeping more and sitting around doing nothing will only make you feel more lethargic and tired. Also, doing nothing leaves room for your mind to dwell on depressive thoughts, which will make you feel even more depressed.



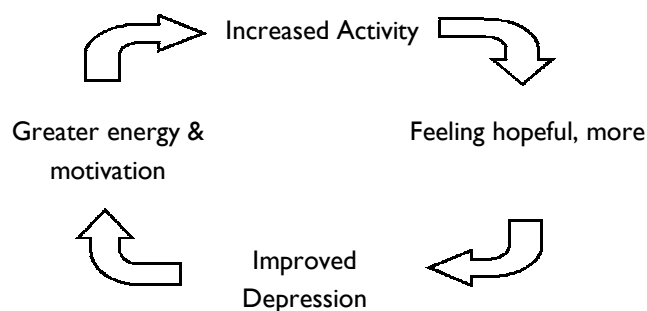
Activity can help you think more clearly. Once you get started, you might find that you take a different perspective on particular problems in your life. Also, because your mind takes a different focus as a result of the activity, your thoughts may become clearer.

This strategy of breaking or reversing the depression cycle is considered a behavioural strategy, and includes scheduling activity into your week, such as tackling small tasks and engaging in pleasurable activities. Use the worksheet on the next page to set up a few pleasant or fun activities and one or two simple tasks for yourself this coming week. Think of it as an experiment, and see if you feel better after you have engaged in some pleasant activities. Having a bit of difficulty thinking of fun things to do? Refer to the Pleasurable Activities Catalogue on pages 5 and 6.

On page 7 is a Weekly Activity Schedule. You can use this worksheet to plan your schedule for a week. Try including a few tasks you need to tackle or some errands that you need to run and remember to put in some fun activities.

If you stick to your plan and increase your activity level, a reversed Depression Cycle will look like this:

Reversing The Depression Cycle



This behavioural strategy not only is able to lift your depression, but also to prevent its recurrence. Just remember to keep a good balance between responsibilities and fun activities in your life.

Behavioural Activation Worksheet

FUN & ACHIEVEMENT

One way of combating depression is to prescribe some fun for yourself. By engaging in some simple, pleasant activities, you can improve your mood and your energy level. However, because you're feeling depressed right now, you might not experience the same level of pleasure doing an activity as when you were not depressed. But don't stop after one or two activities. Keep going and you'll find that your mood will begin to lift. Try it and see!

You may also want to engage in some simple tasks or responsibilities that you have neglected for some time. Often, accomplishing tasks can improve your motivation and give you a sense of achievement. Start with tasks that are simple and achievable. BUT remember that it is important to BALANCE both responsibilities and pleasurable activities. Try not to go overboard on one and leave out the other.

Use the following rating scale to rate your depression, pleasant feelings, and sense of achievement BEFORE and AFTER the activity.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Absolutely None	Minimal	Slight	Mild	Moderate	Much	Higher	Very High	Extreme

		Depression	Pleasure	Achievement
Activity & Date:	Before:	_____	_____	_____
	After:	_____	_____	_____
Activity & Date:	Before:	_____	_____	_____
	After:	_____	_____	_____
Activity & Date:	Before:	_____	_____	_____
	After:	_____	_____	_____
Activity & Date:	Before:	_____	_____	_____
	After:	_____	_____	_____

What did you notice about yourself?

Pleasurable Activities Catalogue

The following is a list of activities that might be pleasurable for you. Feel free to add your own pleasurable activities to the list.

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

Weekly Activity Schedule



Use the schedule below to plan your activities for the coming week. Make sure you balance fun and pleasurable activities with your daily responsibilities and duties.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun
8 to 9am							
9 to 10							
10 to 11							
11 to 12pm							
12 to 1							
1 to 2							
2 to 3							
3 to 4							
4 to 5							
5 to 6							
6 to 7							
7 to 8							
8 to 10							
10 to 12 am							

MODULE SUMMARY

- Often, the symptoms of depression can, in themselves, perpetuate the depression and prevent the depressed person from feeling better
- A lack of motivation and energy can result in a person becoming less active, which can cause further problems because the person may feel even less motivated and more lethargic, resulting in a vicious cycle
- This vicious cycle can be broken by simply increasing your activity level
- When you increase your activity levels, this helps you feel better, less tired, and able to think more clearly
- Neglecting your daily responsibilities may lead to you feeling guilty and overwhelmed, especially if those responsibilities pile up
- It is important to schedule pleasurable activities as well as daily responsibilities into your weekly schedule, and to balance these with time for rest

Keep Going ...

In the next module, we will discuss how your thoughts play a part in the way you feel, and how you can challenge and change them so that you feel better and more able to manage your moods.