

BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION FOR DEPRESSION

## BOOKLET THREE

# Roadmap The Activation Plan

# 3

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TALKING THERAPIES SOUTHWARK

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# **Introduction**

## **Why activate?**

Activation is the core of BA which has been shown to be an effective treatment for depression.

Activation is designed to:

- Make our experience of life more rewarding
- Help us do the things that really matter to us
- Prevent us from falling into depression traps
- Encourage us to tackle problems and not procrastinate
- Help us take good care of ourselves
- Build our confidence and self-esteem
- Help us sail out of the doldrums!

## **Why schedule?**

Activity scheduling, making yourself a timetable, can be especially helpful if:

- no one else is structuring your time for you (this is often the case for people who are retired, unable to work or unemployed)
- your general level of activity is low
- you want to establish more helpful routines (e.g. regular mealtimes, regular exercise, etc.)
- you are busy but you keep finding that the important things aren't getting done. You are procrastinating or not managing your time as well as you would like.

## Overview

### **Step 1: Brainstorm activation ideas**

- Look at the example on pages 4-5
- Use the space on pages 6-7 for your own brainstorm

### **Step 2: At the start of each week make an Activation Schedule**

- Use the ideas from your brainstorm to schedule specific activities each week on the *Activation Schedule*
- See more guidance on page 8 and examples on pages 10 –13

### **Step 3: At the start of each week, think through the more difficult items in your activation schedule**

- Think through the more ambitious or difficult activation tasks using the *Task Planning sheets*
- See more guidance on page 9 and examples on pages 14-15.

### **Step 4: During each week**

- Check off activities as you do them
- Make notes about what works and what doesn't (see example on pages 12 - 13)

### **Step 5: At the end of each week**

- Fill in the reflections sheet

### **Step 6: KEEP GOING!**

- Keep adding to your brainstorm space as you go along.
- Read the tips in the booklet and in Appendix 2

## Brainstorm space: example



Use this space to write down any ideas you have about things you might want to do; changes you might make in behaviour patterns or routines, etc. You can add more ideas at any time.

*Open letters*

*Get up in the mornings*

*Walk in the park*

*Be more support to my brother  
who had a relationship breakup  
last year*

Ideas might come from different places including Appendix 3 Life Activities in this booklet, the work you did in Booklet 2 on monitoring activity & mood, or Booklet 4 on values and flow, or Booklet 5 on avoidance, Booklet 6 on problem-solving and Booklet 7 on thinking

*Go shopping*

*Go and hear some live jazz*

*Take old clothes to charity shop*

*Get a pet*

*Go for coffee with friends*

## Brainstorm space



**Use this space to write down any ideas you have about things you might want to do; changes you might make in behaviour patterns or routines, etc.**

*NB Negative thoughts (too difficult, don't deserve, won't work out, etc.) are quite likely to get triggered by this exercise. For the purpose of this brainstorm it's best not to pay too much attention to them. **You aren't committing to doing them:** think of it more like a menu with lots of dishes from which you can choose one starter, one main dish*

## How to schedule

### **At the start of each week:**

- make a list of your aims for that week\* (*see example on pages 10-11*)
- then write each activity in the day and time that you intend to do it, where that's appropriate. (*In the example, no specific time has been assigned for accepting coffee invitation because we don't know when it will happen*).



*Follow the plan,*

### **As you go through the week:**

- tick off the things that you do (*See example on pages 12-13*)
- write in other activities as you do them
- make a note of what happened if you didn't do a tasks
- rate your overall mood each day, perhaps add any comments on times when your mood changed.
- If you want to monitor other aspects of your wellbeing such as energy levels, physical pain, etc. then just add that in as well.

*“Follow the plan, not the feeling” is a sort of mantra of the behavioural activation approach. We very easily tend to decide what to do based on how we feel, particularly when we feel down and want to avoid feeling worse. But this tends not work. So instead of the inside-out approach of feelings being in charge and deciding your behaviour, try the outside-in approach of letting your choices, your plan, decide behaviour, and see what happens.*

**Your first scheduling sheet is on pages 16-17.** Use it in whatever way you think will be most useful for you. It might be more or less detailed than the example, and have similar or very different activities.



## **For the stickier or trickier activation tasks**

It isn't always straightforward to put our plans and ideas into practice. Sometimes they need a bit of thinking through, breaking down into small do-able steps, or identifying the obstacles to understand what might have been keeping us stuck, and so on.

Therefore we have included **Task Planning Sheets** - one for each week - which you can use to think through the more ambitious, or the stickier or trickier activation goals.

- Have a look at the example on page 14-15.
- Then go to the first sheet on page 18-19 and write in the date.
- Go back to your aims for the week and decide on up to three things that you think might be difficult to carry out this week.

**The aim is to identify small do-able steps in an important direction.**

- Look at the guidance on **SMART GOALS** on page 40.
- Imagine yourself doing the action.
- Watch for any problems or obstacles that come up.
- Identify solutions & write them down.
- If you run into problems, look at the tips and troubleshooting suggestions on page 41. Make the activity smaller, or more realistic, or more relevant. Keep going. This is more difficult than it sounds but don't give up at the first (or second or third) hurdle.
- Do the same the following week.

**Aims for the week:**

- (1) *Get up by 9 am weekdays; (2) go out either shopping or for a walk on Saturday; Telephone brother; (5) Sort out old clothes and take to charity shop; (7) say yes if friend asks me round for coffee.*

	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	
Morning	<i>Get up by 9 am</i>  <i>go for a walk</i>	<i>Get up by 9 am</i>  <i>go shopping</i>	<i>Get up by 9 am</i>  <i>go for a walk</i>	<i>Get up by 9 am</i>  <i>go for a walk</i>
After-noon			<i>Sort out old clothes to take tomorrow</i>	
Evening	<i>Cook dinner</i>	<i>Cook dinner</i>  <i>Telephone brother</i>	<i>Cook dinner</i>	<i>Cook dinner</i>
Mood				

**ACTIVATION  
SCHEDULE**

walk everyday; (3) Cook a dinner everyday except  
e to charity shop; (6) look into getting a pet;

<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
<i>Get up by 9 am</i>	<i>Get up by 9 am</i>		
<i>Take clothes to charity shop and look in pet shop</i>	<i>go for a walk</i>	<i>go shopping</i>	<i>go for a walk</i>
<i>Cook dinner</i>	<i>Cook dinner</i>		<i>Cook dinner</i>
<div data-bbox="26 1070 703 1264" data-label="Text"> <p><b>Example showing schedule at the start of the week</b></p> </div>			

**AIMS for the week**

(1) Get up by 9 am weekdays; (2) go out either shopping or for a walk Saturday; (4) Telephone brother; (5) Sort out old clothes and (7) say yes if friend asks me round for coffee.

	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>
<b>Morning</b>	Get up by 9 am ✓  go for a walk ✓ Quite enjoyed it, but only stayed out 10 mins	Get up by 9 am ✓  go shopping couldn't face it	Get up by 9 am awake a lot in the night & overslept  go for a walk Too tired
<b>After-noon</b>	<div style="border: 2px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; background-color: #d3d3d3;"> <p><b>Example showing schedule at the end of the week</b></p> </div>		
<b>Evening</b>	Cook dinner ✓ (spaghetti & jar of sauce not real cooking)	Cook dinner hadn't gone shopping so ordered a take-away Can't afford it—felt bad Call brother did & invited me to niece's sports day, worried about this	Cook dinner still not been shopping and didn't feel like eating so didn't bother
<b>Mood</b>	Quite good 3	7 depressed Evening bad headache	Bad mood all day 6

walk everyday; (3) Cook a dinner everyday except  
take to charity shop; (6) look into getting a pet;

<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>	<u>Sunday</u>
<p>Get up by 9 am 9.30 so not too bad</p> <p>Take clothes to charity shop ✓ and look in pet shop ✓ Got some food from the market at the same time</p>	<p>Get up by 9 am ✓</p> <p>go for a walk ✓ Made myself go although I didn't want to; but then walked for an hour</p>	<p>go shopping ✓</p>	<p>go for a walk it was raining and I stayed in but I did some exercise instead</p>
<p>Friend invited me in for coffee; said yes; was OK, stayed nearly an hour</p>			
<p>Cook dinner ✓</p>	<p>Cook dinner ✓</p>		<p>Cook dinner ✓</p>
<p>much better day, hopeful 3</p>	<p>4 not too bad</p>	<p>4 relaxed</p>	<p>5 quite good</p>

## Task planning sheet: EXAMPLE

Activation goal	Thinking through the details: <i>walk it through in your head as it comes up</i>
	What? Where? When? Who? Why?
Get up by 9am	<p><i>Want to establish better routine</i>  <i>At home, in the bedroom</i></p> <p><i>Every day apart from Sunday</i></p>
Go for a walk	<p><i>By myself/with a friend</i></p> <p><i>Three times a week in the morning</i></p> <p><i>To the park</i></p> <p><i>Because I know I usually feel better when I do</i></p>
Go to my niece's sports day	<p><i>Junior school sports day, niece in the relay and rounders, she really wants me to watch her</i></p> <p><i>Walk to the school &amp; on the playing field</i></p> <p><i>Wednesday afternoon 2-4 pm</i></p> <p><i>With my brother</i></p>

*our mind's eye; imagine yourself doing it , watching for any obstacles or resistance that*

**Possible obstacles and solutions**

*Problem: Feeling tired, don't want to get up*

*Possible solution to try out: Give myself 10 minutes, then get up*

*Problem: Alarm won't go off*

*Possible solution to try out: Make sure alarm is set every night before bed*

*Problem: Raining*

*Possible solution to try out: Go when the weather is better/do some exercise in the house instead*

*Problem: Won't want to go*

*Possible solution to try out: Give myself a reward e.g. Hot chocolate & watching a good programme on TV after*

*Problem: My health problem means I walk very slowly and I can't go very far*

*Possible Solutions to try out: remind my brother how long it will take me to walk there, set off in plenty of time; make sure we have early lunch; make sure niece knows we have to walk back slowly (she may get impatient but it is good for her to learn to take others' needs into account)*

*Problem: worried how far it will be to the toilets*

*Possible solutions to try out: Ask my brother to check with the school and make sure we can watch from somewhere not too far away; also go to the toilet when we arrive at the school*

**Aims for the week**

<b>Day:</b>	.....	.....	.....
<b>Morning</b>			
<b>After-noon</b>			
<b>Evening</b>			
<b>Mood</b>			



Date.....

**ACTIVATION  
SCHEDULE 1**

.....	.....	.....	.....

## Task planning sheet: Week 1

Activation goal	Thinking through the details: <i>walk it through in your head as it comes up</i>
	What? Where? When? Who?

**DATE .....**

<i>our mind's eye; imagine yourself doing it , watching for any obstacles or resistance that</i>	
	<b>Possible obstacles and solutions</b>

**Reflections on your week of scheduling**

What went according to plan?

.....  
.....  
.....

What did you learn?

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.....  
.....

What do you want to continue doing?

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.....  
.....

What do you want to do differently next week?

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## Two scheduling tips about timing

### **1. Schedule an activity you have some difficulty doing before another activity that you are very likely to do.**

For example, if you have no trouble going on Facebook but are having difficulty finding time to exercise, schedule 10 minutes exercise *before* going on Facebook. If you know you are going to want a coffee mid-morning, schedule the difficult telephone call *before* having the coffee.

You can add this to your plan. For example:

*Telephone boss (before coffee)*  
*Go for walk (before starting up computer)*

Obviously, for someone who has been putting off working on the computer but who loves walking and walks a lot, the order should be scheduled the other way around:

*Work on computer (before going for a walk)*

The idea is to put the thing first that you are less likely to do so you have to do it before you do the more likely one.

### **2. Time activities to fit with your levels of energy.**

For example, if you know you are likely to fall asleep in the afternoon (which may affect your sleep at night), then schedule physical rather than sedentary activities for the afternoon. Schedule more sedentary ‘brain’ tasks for times when you generally feel more alert.

**Aims for the week**

<b>Day:</b>	.....	.....	.....
<b>Morning</b>			
<b>After-noon</b>			
<b>Evening</b>			
<b>Mood</b>			

Date.....

**ACTIVATION  
SCHEDULE 2**

.....	.....	.....	.....

## Task planning sheet: Week 2

Activation goal	Thinking through the details: <i>walk it through in your mind as it comes up</i>
	What? Where? When? Who? Why?



**DATE .....**

<i>our mind's eye; imagine yourself doing it , watching for any obstacles or resistance that</i>	
	<b>Possible obstacles and solutions</b>

**Reflections on your week of scheduling**

What went according to plan?

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What did you learn?

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What do you want to continue doing?

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What do you want to do differently next week?

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## More scheduling tips

### Motivational surface tension

This is Piers Steel's term for the 'getting started' problem. Often, getting started is the hardest part.

Here are two tips for dealing with motivational surface tension.

1. When a task feels overwhelming, **set a goal of doing just 10 minutes** at a time (perhaps 10 minutes each day).

Examples:

*Spend 10 minutes planning essay in the morning and another 10 minutes in the afternoon*

*Spend 10 minutes weeding garden each day*

Of course, once started you may feel like spending longer, but it is best not to spend *too* much longer, especially at first. It is generally far better to come back to the activity for another 10 minutes later. This way you get another opportunity to break the surface tension, weakening it before it gets a chance to build up again.

2. Where possible, **do the preparation for an activity the evening before.**

For example, if you are finding it difficult to get out in the morning, it can help to lay the table for breakfast, put your shoes out, or get your clothes ready the night before. If you plan to write a letter, set out the pen, paper, and any past letters, addresses, or other information you need the evening before. Again, this helps break down the motivational surface tension.

**Aims for the week**

<b>Day:</b>	.....	.....	.....
<b>Morning</b>			
<b>After-noon</b>			
<b>Evening</b>			
<b>Mood</b>			

Date.....

**ACTIVATION  
SCHEDULE 3**

.....	.....	.....	.....

## Task planning sheet: Week 3

Activation goal	Thinking through the details: <i>walk it through in your head</i> <i>comes up</i>
	What? Where? When? Who? Why?

**DATE .....**

<i>our mind's eye; imagine yourself doing it , watching for any obstacles or resistance that</i>	
	<b>Possible obstacles and solutions</b>

**Reflections on your week of scheduling**

What went according to plan?

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.....

What did you learn?

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What do you want to continue doing?

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.....

What do you want to do differently next week?

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## More scheduling tips

### Distractions

Distractions can be one of the biggest problems when it comes to completing important tasks. If you are not doing the things that you intended to do, look at what you *are* doing instead. What is it that distracts you?

We all have a tendency to respond to the things that are right in front of us. If the biscuits are there, we tend to eat them. If the computer ping tells us an email has arrived, we tend to check it. If someone comes along and speaks to us, we tend to stop and chat. If our mobile tells us a text has arrived, we stop to answer it. Of course there is nothing wrong with any of this, except when there are so many distractions that they get in the way of our attempts to complete important tasks.

If this is happening to you, you may find it helpful to **change the environment to get rid of as many distractions as possible.**

You can make a reminder in your schedule.

*Fill in job application (TV and mobile turned off!)*

On the other hand, sometimes having some background music on, for example, makes it easier to settle to a boring or difficult task. Notice when you find it helpful and when it distracts you.

**Aims for the week**

<b>Day:</b>	.....	.....	.....
<b>Morning</b>			
<b>After-noon</b>			
<b>Evening</b>			
<b>Mood</b>			

Date.....

**ACTIVATION  
SCHEDULE 4**

.....	.....	.....	.....

## Task planning sheet: Week 4

Activation goal	Thinking through the details: <i>walk it through in your mind as it comes up</i>
	What? Where? When? Who? Why?

**DATE .....**

<i>our mind's eye; imagine yourself doing it , watching for any obstacles or resistance that</i>	
	<b>Possible obstacles and solutions</b>

**Reflections on your week of scheduling**

What went according to plan?

.....  
.....  
.....

What did you learn?

.....  
.....  
.....

What do you want to continue doing?

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.....  
.....

What do you want to do differently next week?

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.....  
.....

Space for notes

APPENDIX ONE: SMART GOALS

	EXAMPLES
<b>S</b> pecific	<p>General: <i>I want to get up earlier</i></p> <p>Specific: <i>Be out of bed, washed and dressed and in the kitchen making breakfast by 9 am on weekdays</i></p>
<b>M</b> easurable	<p>Hard to measure: <i>I want to be a more involved Dad</i></p> <p>Easier to measure: <i>Spend 30 minutes at least 4 evenings a week playing or reading with my children (watching TV or videos doesn't count)</i></p>
<b>A</b> chievable	<p>Difficult to achieve: <i>I want my partner to be more considerate.</i></p> <p>Easier to achieve: <i>Show appreciation when my partner considers my needs and wishes</i></p>
<b>R</b> elevant	<p>Not relevant: <i>something that isn't very interesting or rewarding, that doesn't really matter to you</i></p> <p>Relevant: <i>something interesting or rewarding, or in line with your values</i></p>
<b>T</b> ime frame	<p>No time frame: <i>I'm going to turn out my cupboards, one day, when I feel in the mood ....</i></p> <p>With time frame: <i>I'm going to turn out the cupboard under the stairs next Saturday afternoon</i></p>



## **Tips and troubleshooting**

The main reason we fail is because we set too many big goals with too many shoulds and not enough kindness.

### **Not really your goal—just something others have said you SHOULD do?**

If so, perhaps bring some open mindedness and try it out anyway. But if it becomes really clear it is not your goal, let it go - replace it with something that matters to YOU.

### **Too vague?**

Sometimes it is hard to make goals specific - if so, talking it through with a trusted friend can be helpful.

### **You do want to do it, but you think it would be selfish or that you don't deserve it?**

Imagine you are your best friend. Really imagine. The kindest person who has your best interests at heart. Take your time. Now, what does your best friend say?

### **Scarier than you thought?**

This can happen. Is there some courage you can draw on? Is there a way of making the task smaller?

### **Too big?**

Make it MUCH smaller. Something that can be done in one minute?

### **Mind excuses?**

*Can't-Be-Bothered, No-Point, Will-All-Go-Badly, and co.* may well show up. As best you can, just take these thoughts along for ride without buying in to what they say!

## Life activities

### Excursions/Community

1. Attending a place of worship e.g. church or mosque
2. Attending a local book club
3. Taking a trip or holiday
4. Going to a fair, carnival, circus, zoo or amusement park
5. Day out at the seaside, or in the country
6. Eating out
7. Taking a road trip
8. Staying at a hotel or bed & breakfast
9. Camping
10. Going to a museum or exhibition
11. Shopping, markets, car boot sales
12. Going to the library or a book shop
13. Other:

### Interactions with others or social activities

1. Visiting friends or family
2. Phoning friends or family
3. Get involved with some volunteering e.g. [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)
4. Compliment or praise somebody
5. Dating, internet dating
6. Going to or having a party
7. Giving and receiving physical affection
8. Reminiscing, talking about old times
9. Group activities

10. Discussing a topic of interest (sports, fashion, politics, news)
11. Going to a pub quiz
12. Other:

### Entertainment

1. Watching TV or listening to the radio
2. Making a song play list
3. Bingo, card games, playing the lottery
4. Visit a place of interest
5. Going to see a band, film, concert, comedy show, play, musical
6. Going to the races (horse, car, dog etc)
7. Going to a sporting event
8. Other:

### Sports & Games (at a level suitable for your health and fitness)

1. Swimming, snorkelling, or scuba diving
2. Cycling, skating or roller - blading
3. Martial arts such as judo or karate
4. Pilates or yoga
5. Jogging, hiking or walking
6. Football: 11-a-side, 5-a-side
7. Tennis, racquetball, table tennis, badminton, squash
8. Golf or miniature golf
9. Fishing
10. Bird watching
11. Playing board games
12. Puzzles, crosswords, brain teasers

**NOTE:** Of course there will be a number of things here that are simply not possible in your particular circumstances. This will be true to some extent for everyone. However, look and see if there are one or two things that *are* possible and might be worth giving a try to add more variety to your life. Also, the main aim of this list is to get your own ideas flowing - what other activities can you think of? Should we add them to the list? Let us know!

13. Rock climbing or mountaineering
14. Cricket or rounders
15. Boating (canoeing, kayaking, sailing)
16. Pool, billiards or shuffleboards
17. Computer games
18. Other:

### **Education**

1. Learning something new (a language etc)
2. Learning something artistic (painting, pottery, crocheting etc)
3. Reading
4. Taking a course on something of interest
5. Writing stories, novels, plays, poetry, essays, reports etc
6. Reading a ‘‘How to do it’’ book or article
7. Going to a lecture or to listen to a speaker of interest
8. Attending evening courses or completing school qualifications
9. Other:

### **Domestic activities**

1. Cleaning the house
2. Cooking or baking
3. Looking after pets
4. Gardening
5. Washing the car
6. Sewing
7. Buying flowers and paints
8. Re-arranging or redecorating a room
9. Fixings things around the house or working on the car
10. Other:

### **Hobbies, arts & crafts & the arts**

1. Playing a musical instrument
2. Singing
3. Making a photo album
4. Making a gift for someone
5. Dancing
6. Meditation
7. Craft and art work (drawing, painting, sculpting, pottery, movie making)
8. Needle work (knitting, crocheting)
9. Restoring antiques or refinishing furniture
10. Photography
11. Woodworking or carpentry
12. Collecting things
13. Other:

### **Health and appearance**

1. Going to the gym
2. Having picture taken
3. Getting new clothes, shoes or jewellery
4. Doing an exercise class
5. Putting on make up or purchasing it
6. Having sex
7. Going to the hairdresser/barber
8. Having hot bath or shower
9. Getting a manicure or pedicure
10. Having a spa, or sauna
11. Getting a massage or facial
12. Putting on perfume or cologne
13. Preparing self to go out
14. Improving appearance (having teeth fixed, new glasses or contacts, eating more healthily, starting an exercise program)
15. Getting a makeover or facial
16. Other:

## BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION FOR DEPRESSION

### *LIST OF BOOKLETS*

1. Introduction to BA for Depression
2. Monitoring activity and mood
- 3. Roadmap: The Activation Plan**
4. Finding direction: values, flow and strengths
5. Avoidance and the depression TRAPs
6. Problem solving
7. Thinking habits
8. Next steps

**We hope you have found this booklet helpful. We welcome your feedback.**

You can give comments to your therapist or by emailing us at [slm-tr.SPTS@nhs.net](mailto:slm-tr.SPTS@nhs.net) or writing to us at Talking Therapies Southwark, Middle House, Maudsley Hospital, London SE5 8AZ.