

CBT Worksheet: Behavioral Activation

Using planned action to rebuild contact with pleasure, mastery, connection, and routine.

Why action can come before motivation

Depression often reduces activity, which reduces opportunities for reward and accomplishment, which can deepen depression. Behavioral activation reverses this by scheduling small, meaningful actions even when motivation is low.

Four activity categories

- Pleasure: something mildly enjoyable or soothing.
- Mastery: something that creates accomplishment or progress.
- Connection: contact with another person or community.
- Care: sleep, food, hygiene, movement, medication routines, or practical tasks.

Plan small

Choose actions that are specific and realistic. “Walk for 10 minutes at 5 p.m.” is easier to start than “exercise more.” Track mood before and after without requiring the activity to make you feel great.

Try this reflection

Plan one action in each category for the next 48 hours. Which one is small enough to do even if motivation stays low?

Using this resource: For education and skill-building only; not diagnosis, medical advice, or crisis care. If you feel overwhelmed, pause and seek appropriate professional support. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support; call 911 for an immediate emergency.