

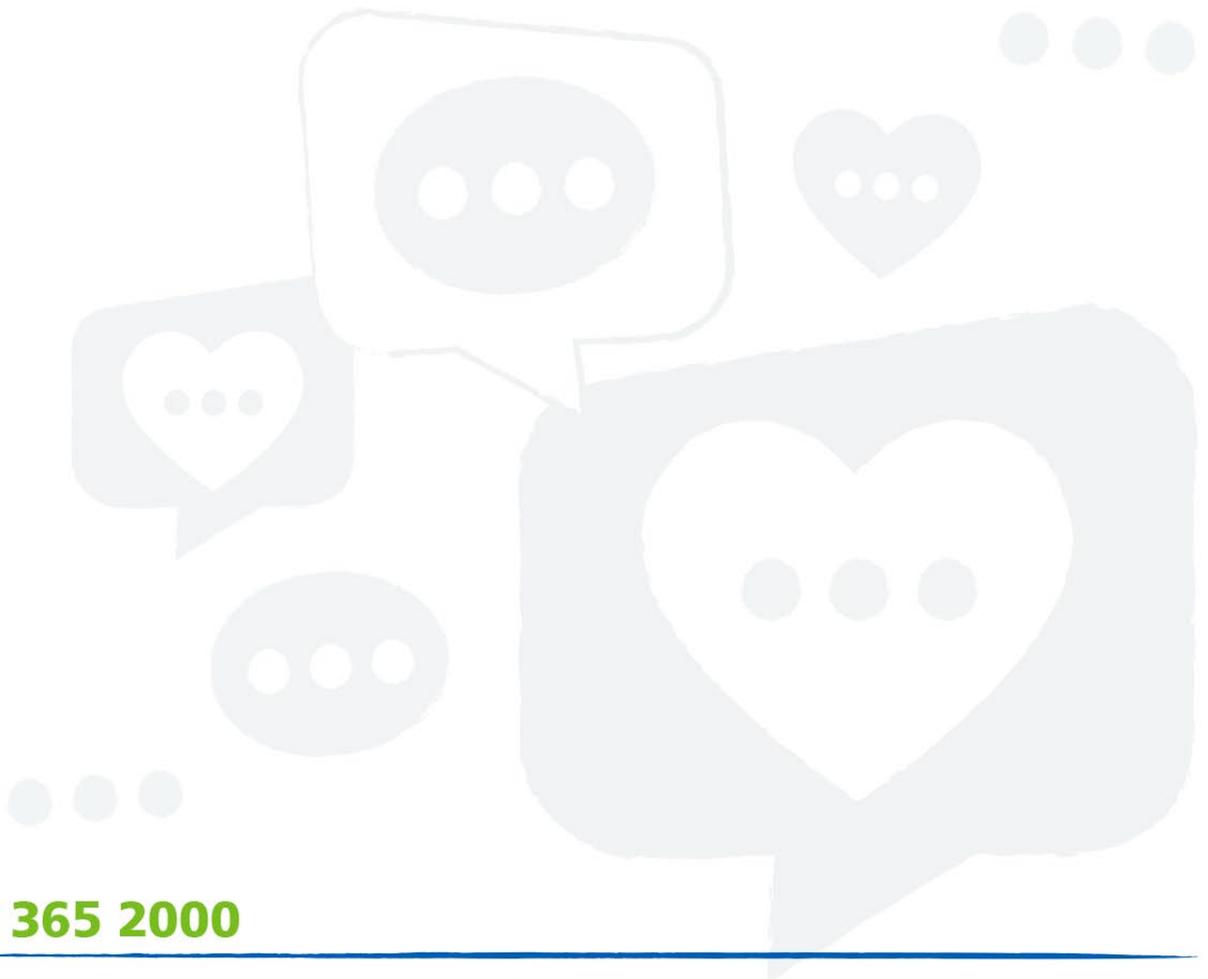


Talking Therapies  
**Workbook...**

**Workbook 3**

# Behaviours and low mood

A behavioural activation self-help guide



 **0300 365 2000**

# Contents of this booklet

<input type="checkbox"/> What is low mood?.....	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Are all behaviours helpful?.....	4
<input type="checkbox"/> How do I start to make changes?.....	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 1.....	7
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 2.....	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 3.....	12
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 4.....	14
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 5.....	16
<input type="checkbox"/> What if it isn't working?.....	17
<input type="checkbox"/> Challenging negative thoughts.....	19
<input type="checkbox"/> Notes.....	20
<input type="checkbox"/> Further resources.....	21
<input type="checkbox"/> Useful contacts.....	22



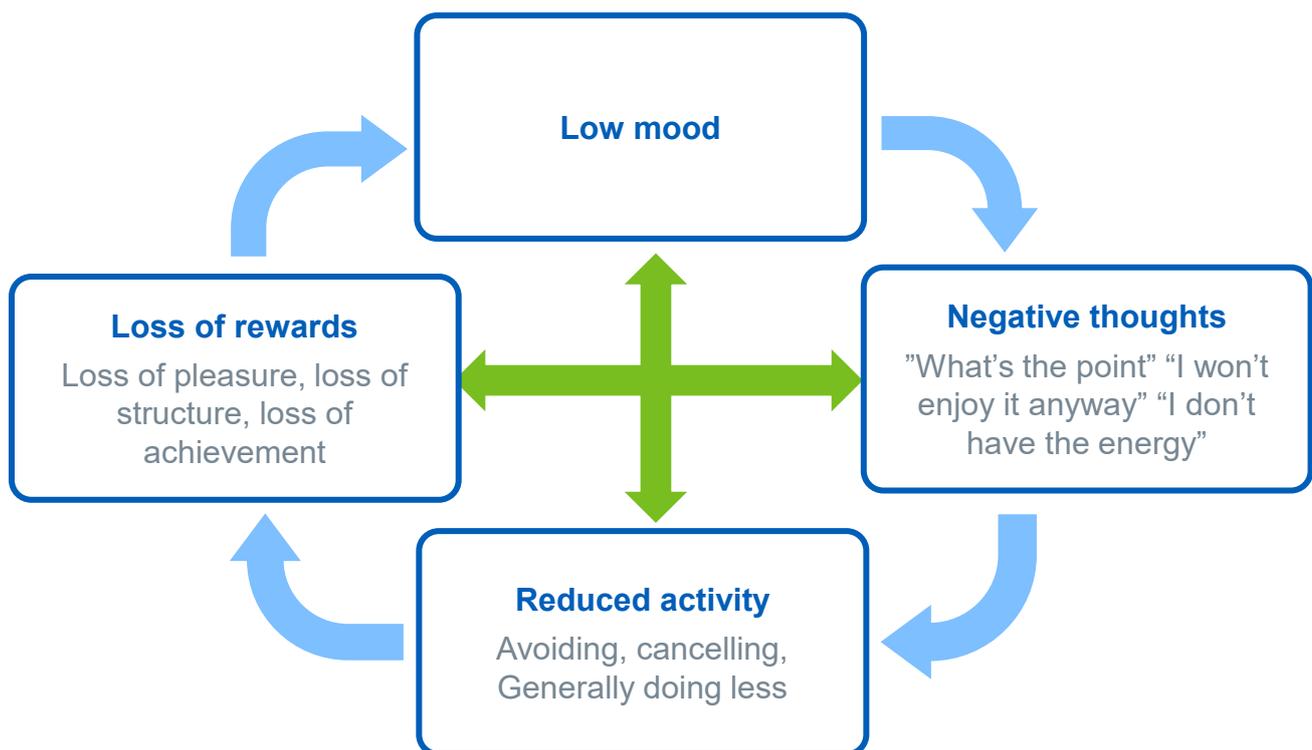
Work through the above and tick once completed.

# What is low mood?

Low mood and depression can present in very different ways for different people and can last for varying amounts of time. Some common symptoms can include changes in sleep, appetite, mood, thoughts and motivation.

## Low mood cycle

Reduced activity, as you can see in the cycle below, can result in us missing out on feelings of achievement and enjoyment. The diagram below shows that when we feel down, we often find ourselves unknowingly stuck in this cycle which can sometimes reduce our activity to a point where we are avoiding or putting off important things in our lives.



### Reflect

Consider what symptoms you notice and check in with yourself. How are you feeling? Do you recognise any of these symptoms?

# Are all behaviours helpful?

Sometimes we can find that we not only stop engaging in behaviours which can be helpful to us, but that we can also start doing things that aren't helpful for us in the long-term (although these things can sometimes bring us some temporary relief).

## Examples

- Withdrawing
- Isolating** ourselves from friends or family
- Using **alcohol or drugs** to cope with how we feel
- Neglecting** ourselves (e.g. by not eating or showering as much)
- Harming** ourselves as a way to cope with how we feel
- Excessive **spending**
- Seeking **reassurance** from those around us
- Pushing ourselves** towards goals that are unrealistic
- Stopping hobbies** and activities that bring us pleasure.

## Reflect

Do you recognise any of these behaviours?

Do you think they are helpful in the long-term?

This booklet will focus on introducing behaviours that provide **a sense of achievement** and **pleasure**, **improving your mood** and helping you **replace any unhelpful behaviours**.



# How do I start to make changes?

There are many different techniques we use in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) but when we want to make changes to our mood and motivation, the first most effective CBT tool we use is called behavioural activation.

## What is behavioural activation?

Behavioural activation is based on the idea that our behaviour can have a big impact on our mood and how we feel. We already know (from the low mood cycle on page 3) that when we are feeling low and experiencing negative thoughts we do less activities, which means we miss out on opportunities to experience enjoyment and a sense of achievement. The aim of behavioural activation is to increase our activity level and give us the opportunity to start enjoying life again.

One thing that is important to recognise is that we often do not naturally feel motivated to do our usual activities when our mood is low. The way we change this is by trying “**action before motivation**”, the idea that sometimes we are not motivated to do something until we start.



# How do I start to make changes?

## Five steps

Over the next few pages we will go through the five steps of behavioural activation:

- **Step 1 – Recording your current activities and mood**
- **Step 2 – Reflecting on your current mood and balance**
- **Step 3 – Plan changes**
- **Step 4 – Make changes**
- **Step 5 – Review**

### Reflect

Think back to a time when you had to do something you didn't want to do but did it anyway. It might have been a chore in the house or meeting a friend for coffee, anything at all.

We tend to find the first steps of getting up and getting started are the hardest but once we've got started we find we are able to continue. This is an example of "action before motivation".



# Step 1. Recording my current activities and mood

To be able to make changes it's important to understand what you are currently doing.

The first step is to use the worksheet on page 8 to record what you do over the next seven days and reflect on your mood after each part of the day. This is called a baseline diary. The mood rating is 0-10 where 10 is the best your mood could be and 0 is the worst.

See the example below to get an idea of what a baseline diary might look like:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Morning	Woke up at 11am. Had toast at 11.30am. Watched TV.	Woke up at 9am. Had a shower and got dressed. Called a friend at 11am.	Woke up at 9.30am, watched TV in bed. Had breakfast at 11am.
Mood	2/10	5/10	3/10
Afternoon	Tidied kitchen at 2pm. Had late lunch at 3.30pm and watched TV.	Went to the shops and bought lunch at 12.30pm, ate lunch in the park 1pm.	Watched videos on phone 12pm – 5pm. Skipped lunch.
Mood	3/10	6/10	2/10
Evening	Had a bath at 7pm. Skipped dinner. Watched TV and went to bed midnight.	Read my book 5pm. Made and ate ready meal at 7pm. Watched a film and went to bed at 10.30pm.	Had an early dinner at 5pm. Got in to bed and watched TV from 6pm and went to sleep around midnight.
Mood	3/10	6/10	1/10
Comments	Felt low all day.	Enjoyed catching up with friend and having lunch in the park.	Worst day – didn't have energy to do much.

# Baseline diary

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Mood	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10
Afternoon							
Mood	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10
Evening							
Mood	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10
Comments							

## Step 2. Reflecting on my mood and balance

The next step is to look at the week you've had and reflect on any connections between activities and mood.

### Reflect

Which were your best days? What is different about these days? Is there anything you can already see that you could try to change?

We then start to work towards a balance of activities including the general structure of the day (**routine activities**), the things we must do (**necessary activities**) and the things we do for enjoyment (**pleasurable activities**). Sometimes our diary isn't balanced, and it can be helpful to see what we could be missing across our day, or week.

Using your **completed baseline diary from page 8**, fill in the table below writing down what activities you did that were routine, necessary and pleasurable. Once completed, take a moment to think about whether you had a balance in your activities over the past week.

Routine	Necessary	Pleasurable

## Introducing new activities

Now we have an understanding about what you are currently doing, it is important to start thinking about what activities you aren't currently doing as these will be the activities we will work on introducing over the coming weeks.

Use the below table to write down the activities you could begin to introduce into your week, ensuring to categorise each activity based on how hard it will be for you to do.

	Easy	Medium	Difficult
Routine			
Necessary			
Pleasurable			



See page 10 for some activity ideas if you are finding it hard to think of some.

# Example planner activities



**Routine, necessary and pleasurable activities are different for each person. For example, cooking for one person could be a pleasurable activity whereas for someone else it could be a routine activity.**

See below a list of example activities to give you ideas for activities you could add **into the table on page 9**.

Social	Creative	Recreational	Self-care	Educational
Visit a friend	Cook your favourite meal	Listen to music	Watch your favourite film	Visit the library
Call a family member	Do some DIY	Go for a run	Have a relaxing bath/shower	Do a crossword
Invite someone round	Dance	Read a book	Visit the hairdresser	Visit a museum
Attend a local group	Paint a picture	Do some gardening	Set a goal	Learn a new language
Go out for dinner	Play an instrument	Go for a walk	Wear your favourite outfit	Enrol on a course
Buy a gift for someone	Write a poem	Visit the cinema	Eat your favourite meal	Start reading a new book

# Step 3. Planning my changes

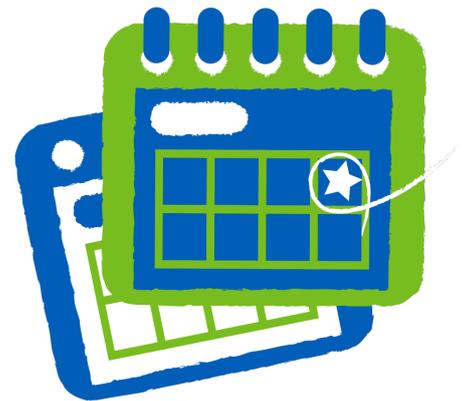
**We can now start to plan the activities we would like to start introducing.**

Use the **blank activity planner on page 12**, adding in the activities you identified in Step 2.

Start by trying to include two to three changes, planning them in your activity planner a week in advance and making sure you're working towards a balance.

It is important when planning your activity planner to make sure any activities you add are **SMART**:

- **S**pecific – What, when, where, with who?
- **M**easurable – How will you know you have completed this activity?
- **A**chievable – Do you have everything you need to achieve this?
- **R**ealistic – Is it realistic?
- **T**ime-focused – What time, what day, for how long?



**Example:** “Go for a walk” would become a SMART goal of: “At 2pm go for a 30 minute walk with the dog around the block twice”.



## Give yourself a reminder

When we write things down it is much harder to ignore them. Once you've finished your activity planner, why not pop it on your fridge.

# Activity planner

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Afternoon							
Evening							

## Step 4. Making the changes

Now that we have an activity plan, we can start to use the idea of ‘action before motivation’ by pushing ourselves even when we aren’t feeling motivated to do the activities.

As you start to work through your activity plan, **use the activity diary on page 14** to record (as you did for the baseline diary), what you did and how you felt after completing each of the activities that you planned in.



### Use the ‘5 minute rule’

If you’re putting something off or struggling to get started, whether that be getting up and having a shower, cleaning the kitchen, or going for a walk – say to yourself ‘I’m going to give this a go for 5 minutes’ to help make the task feel more manageable.

The first few minutes are always the hardest but once you get started, you’ll feel much better and find you have more energy to keep going.



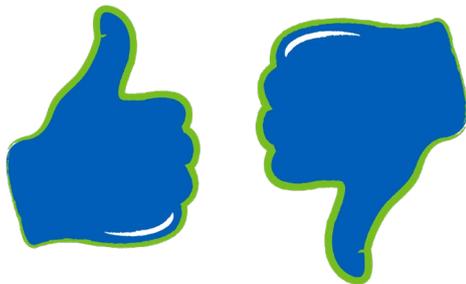
# Activity diary

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning							
Mood	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10
Afternoon							
Mood	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10
Evening							
Mood	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10	/10
Comments							

## Step 5. Review and plan further changes

**The final step is to review how you found using the activity diary and add a balance of routine, necessary and pleasurable activities into your week.**

There is as much to learn from the things that went well as there is from the things that didn't go so well – it is important that you recognise both.



Using what you have learned you can go back to Step 2 on page 9 and consider which activities you could plan into next week's activity planner, perhaps some of the activities you rated as medium difficulty.

Continuing to do this week by week will help you to build on the positive changes you are making.



# What if it isn't working?

Changing how we feel can be a slow process however you should start to feel that bit better each week by following the Behavioural Activation steps.

Here are our five top tips to try if you're finding the steps aren't working for you.

## 1. Start with the basics

If you aren't starting to feel better, it may be that you need to first think about your general wellbeing.

Are your **basic needs** being met? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you eating enough?

If we aren't eating well and/or sleeping well we may struggle to see an improvement in our mood when working through activities in our weekly planner. Begin with planning in meal and snack times as well as times to get up in the morning and go to bed at night. If you would like more help around improving sleep, speak to your therapist about our sleep guide.



## 2. Changing activities

Sometimes we can't have a balance of activities because our situation has changed in a way that means we can't do things we used to do. For example, if you move to another area you might find it difficult to find the same clubs you were part of before.

In the same way, if you enjoyed running marathons but your health no longer allows this, it can be difficult to find the same enjoyment in other areas. Some of these barriers can be helped using **problem solving**. If you would like to try problem solving, speak to your therapist about our problem solving guide.



# What if it isn't working?

## 3. Value based goals

If there are activities you can no longer do (whether that be because of your health or change in circumstances) it may be helpful to reflect on **what you valued about that activity** and try to recreate that value in your life with an activity that you can do.

Let's use the example of the marathon runner – What was it they enjoyed about marathons? Was it exercise? Was it the challenge? Was it being outdoors? Was it the people they met? Was it the competition?

By reflecting on what we value we are more able to find a way to incorporate this into our diary. If it was a feeling of competition for example, are there other ways they could find this such as local darts or chess matches?

## 4. Rumination

We can sometimes find that our thoughts go over and over things that have happened or things that we have done which can have a really negative impact on our mood. We call this '**ruminating**'.

We can often find that rumination can lead us to feel less motivated to do things, especially as the things we are ruminating about cannot be changed, so thinking about them isn't helpful.

If you notice that you ruminate, it can be helpful to put a star on the activity diary when you notice this happening and plan something in this time to avoid this.

## 5. Flow tasks

A 'flow task' is usually something that we can focus on in a way that means we don't look at the time and can **effortlessly not think about anything** outside of that task whilst doing it. Examples could include baking, playing an instrument, painting, colouring or playing a game. If there are any activities that 'flow' for you, consider adding them into your diary and see if this brings any relief to how you feel.



Try adding a 'flow task' when you find that you usually ruminate so that you can break this habit by taking your attention away from these thoughts.

# Challenging negative thoughts

When we looked at the cycle of low mood on page 3, we can see that there are some negative thoughts that impact the likelihood of us doing activities. Sometimes this can act as a barrier to changing our behaviour.

Some of these thoughts can be helpful to challenge. See below some possible answers to the barriers we see. You can use the boxes at the bottom to consider your own thought barriers and see what possible answers you can think of.

Negative thoughts	Possible answers
"I can't do anything there are too many practical difficulties"	There are always practical difficulties involved in doing anything – it is part of life. What would I do about them if I wasn't feeling low? Is there anyone who could give me advice on things that I don't know how to handle?
"I can't keep a schedule; I've never been a record-keeper"	Keeping written records is something I can learn. I might not have done it before, but it doesn't mean I can't try it. I have used lists before, for shopping. I could start by listing all the things I have to do.
"It's too difficult"	It only seems difficult because of the way I am feeling. I have done more difficult things in the past.



If you would like some more information on challenging thoughts, ask your therapist for our Thoughts Workbook.

# Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

# Further resources



## Workbooks

**Centre for Clinical Interventions (CCI)** – <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/>

A range of detailed resources and PDF workbooks available to download for free focusing on a range of depression and anxiety related difficulties.

**Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS** – <https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/>

Self-help guides free to download by PDF and print on a range of difficulties including anxiety and depression.

## Smartphone apps (found on Apple and Google Play store)

**WRAP** – Wellness recovery action app

**Mood Tools** – Depression aid

**Fear Tools** – Anxiety kit

**Insight Timer** – Meditation app

## Websites

**Mind** – <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

**Mental Health Foundation** - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

**NHS** - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>

# Useful contacts...



## Talking Therapies:

**0300 365 2000**

(Open 8am to 8pm Monday to Thursday  
8am to 5pm Friday)

Email:

[talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:talkingtherapies@berkshire.nhs.uk)

## Other contacts:

Berkshire Crisis Team:

**0800 129 9999**

(24 hours, specialist service for  
immediate mental health crisis)

Samaritans:

**116 123**

(24 hours, confidential listening service)

NHS Direct / out of hours:

**111**

(24 hours, physical and mental  
health concerns)

**In an emergency always call 999**

