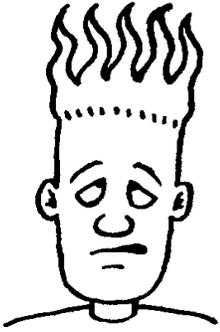


How to *Activate* Yourself



The Problem

When people feel depressed they tend to slow down both mentally and physically. Everything you do feels like an effort, so you do less. You then feel guilty for doing less. You then start to believe that you can do nothing and that you'll never feel better, or get over it. This makes you feel even more depressed, and it becomes even more difficult to do anything. This forms what we call a vicious circle; the harder things become to do, the more depressed you get, which makes things even harder to do.

The Way Out

To make yourself feel better, we need to try and break this vicious circle. A good way to do this is by becoming more active.

Activity makes you feel better - if nothing else, activity takes your mind off painful feelings. It can give you the sense of being more in control, and you may even find there are things you enjoy doing.

Activity makes you feel less tired - Normally, when you are tired you need to rest. When you feel depressed, the opposite is true, and you need to do more. Doing nothing will only make you feel even more tired than you feel already.

Activity motivates you to do more - In depression, the more you do, the more you feel like doing.

Activity improves your ability to think - This means that putting problems into perspective will become easier.



Although doing activity will help you begin to overcome your depression, getting started is not always easy. This is because when people are depressed they tend to think negatively of themselves the world and the future, and therefore tend to find themselves thinking, "I won't enjoy it", "I'll only make a mess of it", "It's too difficult", etc. These thoughts will make taking action even harder.

Later we will work directly on the thoughts which are stopping you from getting down to what you want to do. We will learn to notice and challenge them, so that they don't stand in your way.

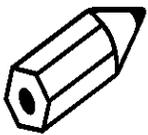
Many depressed people firmly believe that they are doing nothing, achieving nothing, and enjoying nothing. They find it difficult to organise their time productively, or to involve

themselves in things they normally enjoy. a way to help you plan your day productively and enjoyably is to use an Activity Schedule.

An Activity Schedule is an hour-by-hour record of what you do, and is a way of showing just how you are spending your time.

Step 1: Self Monitoring

1. For the next few days, record exactly what you do, hour-by-hour.



2. Give each activity a rating of between 0 and 10 for PLEASURE (P), and for MASTERY (M). Your pleasure score is how much you enjoyed doing the activity, and your mastery score is how well you thought you did the activity, what sort of sense of achievement you got out of doing it. Therefore:

P0 = you had not enjoyed the activity at all.

P10 = it had been extremely enjoyable.

You can use any number between 0 and 10 to indicate the degree of enjoyment or pleasure you experienced.

Similarly

M0 = no sense of achievement.

M10 = you feel you did really well at your chosen activity.

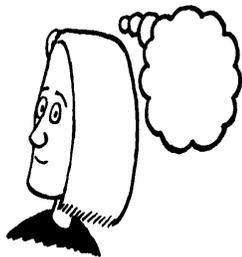
3. It is important to rate your activities for P and M when you have just completed the activity, not some time later. If you wait until later, your negative thoughts and depressed feelings will make you devalue what you had done earlier. It is much easier to remember things that we don't like or enjoy than the good and positive things we do. Rating you activities immediately will help you to start to notice even small degrees of pleasure and achievement which might have gone unnoticed before.

4. Mastery should be rated according to how difficult the activity was **for you now** not for how difficult it was for you before you got depressed, or how difficult everyone else would find it. When people feel depressed, things that used to be very easy, become difficult, so make sure you give yourself credit when you achieve them.

Your Activity Schedule will show you in detail exactly what you are doing and enjoying, which will help you to challenge the belief that nothing goes well for you. You may find that you are more active, achieving more, and getting more enjoyment out of things than you had thought. And even if this is not the case, your Activity Schedule will help you identify what it is that is getting in the way.



Step 2: Planning Ahead



Now that you know how you are spending your time, the next step is to plan each day in advance. This way you can plan to do the sort of activity that you enjoy and that make you feel you are achieving something.

1. Structuring your time will allow you to feel that you are taking control of your life again, and give you a sense of purpose.
2. Having a set framework for your day will help you to keep focused and will also help you to keep going when you are feeling bad.
3. Once you have set out your day in writing it will seem less uncontrollable. You will have your day broken down into manageable units rather than a long stretch of time which can sometimes feel like forever.

Hints to help you stick to your Activity Schedule

1. Set aside a particular time each evening to record what you have done during the day and to plan for tomorrow. It is useful to do this at a time when you are not likely to be interrupted.
2. If you are finding it hard to get down to doing a particular task, tell your muscles in detail what to do. Use specific instructions like "Legs walk", "Hand pick up pen. Now write". As soon as you have told yourself what to do, do it. Don't allow any pause for doubts to creep in.
3. Watch out for negative thoughts which tell you can't do things. Write them down and answer them at once, then act on the answers.
4. Remove distractions. Turn off the television and take the phone off the hook.
5. Avoid going to bed. Use your bed for sleeping in at night, and not for using during the day. If you feel you need to relax during the day, then do it some other way such as, listening to music or reading.
6. Reward yourself for what you have done.



7. Give yourself cues for action. You could set an alarm to signal the time to start or end an activity. Put signs up around the house to remind you of what you are supposed to be doing. You could tell someone in your family that say 7:30 is you time for planning the next day, and get them to remind you if you get distracted.



8. Give yourself encouragement. start the day with an activity which will give you a sense of achievement and which you have a good chance of completing successfully.
9. Try to fill your day with an equal number of things which you enjoy doing and which give you a sense of achievement.
10. Stick to the pattern of activities which you have found most rewarding and fulfilling in the past, there's a good chance that once you get going you will find it so again.

