

**MODULE 4**  
*Behavioural Strategies for  
Managing & Preventing Depression*

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# The Depression Cycle

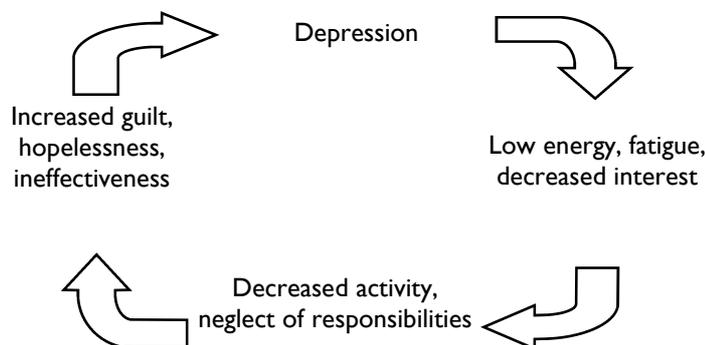
The symptoms of depression can bring about some drastic changes in a depressed person's life, daily routines, and their behaviour. Often these changes can perpetuate the depression and prevent the depressed person from getting better.

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?

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.

## 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.

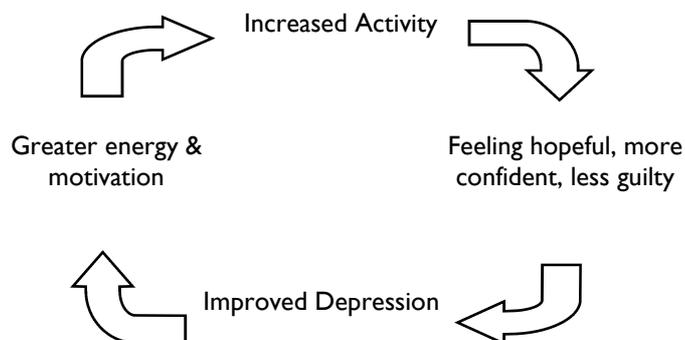
Use the worksheet on the next page to set up a few pleasant or fun activities and one or two simple tasks for yourself this coming week. Think of it as an experiment, and see if you feel better after you have engaged in some pleasant activities.

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. Card and board games
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:

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# 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.