



# **Behavioural Activation in Groups**

Handbook

## Introduction

This handbook was originally created by Joe Curran and Paul Bliss (Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapists, Sheffield Health & Social Care NHS Foundation Trust) to accompany their group format of Martell and colleagues' Behavioural Activation for Depression (BA). In collaboration with NHS Education Scotland (NES), Joe Curran and Paul Bliss came to Scotland in 2015 to provide training in that group format, Behavioural Activation in Groups (BAG).

Martell and colleagues have been developing BA over the last 30 years. The extensive evidence-base for its effectiveness has led to BA being recommended in 'The Matrix: A Guide for the Delivery of Evidence-Based Psychological Therapies in Scotland' (Scottish Government, 2015), the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) clinical guideline (2010) and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (2009) clinical guideline for the treatment and management of depression in adults.

NES has provided training in Behavioural Activation in both individual (BA) and group (BAG) formats, and Brief Behavioural Activation for Depression (BATD-R), to increase the access for people experiencing depression to evidence-based psychological therapies and to standardise the quality of the therapy available across Scotland. For more information, the most up-to-date version of Martell and colleagues' BA for Depression can be found in the following:

*For people currently experiencing depression*

Addis, M. E. and Martell, C.R. (2004) *Overcoming Depression: One Step at a Time: The New Behavioural Activation Approach to Getting Your Life Back*. Oakland: New Harbinger.

If assistance is required in obtaining a copy of this book, GPs and local libraries should be able to assist through the 'Books on Prescription' scheme.

*Clinical guide for BA Practitioners*

Martell, C.R., Dimidjian, S. and Herman-Dunn, R. (2010) *Behavioural Activation: A Clinician's Guide*. New York: Guilford.

*A digital version can be accessed online via Athens here: <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nhsscotland/detail.action?docID=10356630>*

## Copyright

The following handbook contains material from:

1. Martell, C. R., Addis, M. E. and Jacobson, N.S. (2001) *Depression in Context: Strategies for Guided Action*. New York: Norton.
2. Addis, M. E. and Martell, C. R. (2004) *Overcoming Depression One Step at a Time*. New Harbinger: Oakland.
3. Martell, C.R., Dimidjian, S., Herman-Dunn, R. (2010) *Behavioural Activation: A Clinician's Guide*. New York: Guilford.

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The e-book of Martell et al (2010) is there for BA clinicians to use as a reference. Its limited photocopy license allows worksheets to be copied for personal use or individual clinical work but not for making additional handouts for therapy groups.

# Session 3

Taking action with a  
problem-solving approach

## Session 3

### Agenda

1. Introduction and agenda
2. Recap last session on TRAP and TRAC
3. Review of between-session training
4. Taking action: a problem solving approach
5. Plan next between-session training

### Goals for this session

1. Review between-session training and previous two sessions
2. Introduce taking action: a problem solving approach
3. Discuss and plan next between-session training

## Preparing for change

- ✓ Outside in, not inside out. Don't wait until you feel better to act.
- ✓ Be curious about making changes in your behaviour.
- ✓ Keep an open mind about the consequences of any new behaviour.
- ✓ Look at changes in behaviours as experiments to learn from not as tests of willpower.
- ✓ Choose behaviours which are manageable and realistic.
- ✓ Don't take on too much at once or set your expectations too high.
- ✓ Take things one step at a time. Small steps are sufficient.
- ✓ Avoid self-blaming or criticism as you try to make changes.
- ✓ Saying 'Just do it' often doesn't work otherwise you would have done it already!

## Using problem solving to change my behaviour

### Example

<b>Step 1</b>	<p>Identify a behaviour that you want to change. What do you want to achieve? What is your goal?</p> <p><b>I avoid people. I don't answer the phone; I make excuses if friends ask me to do things. I put things off. This doesn't fit with what's important to me – I want to keep in touch with my friends and make new friends.</b></p>
<b>Step 2</b>	<p>Write down as many possible solutions as you can no matter how odd they might seem.</p> <p><b>Answer the phone 3 4</b>  <b>Phone a friend 4 5</b>  <b>Text a friend 2 5</b>  <b>Accept invitations to go out 4 4</b>  <b>Make suggestions for social activity 3 4</b></p>
<b>Step 3</b>	<p>Rate how <b>difficult</b> each solution might be out of 5 (where 1 is not at all difficult and 5 is extremely difficult). Then estimate how <b>helpful</b> the alternative is likely to be in shifting your mood in a positive direction (where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is extremely helpful). Write down your ratings next to the possible solutions you have identified at Step 2.</p>
<b>Step 4</b>	<p>Choose one of the solutions based on your ratings for difficulty and helpfulness – write this down here:</p> <p>I will... <b>Send a text to my friend.</b></p>
<b>Step 5</b>	<p>Draw up a step by step plan to carry out your solution. Identify what you will do, when, where, how and who with? What could get in the way of you doing this and how might you overcome this? Start with the least difficult steps.</p> <p><b>Check that I have my friend's number and find their last text about going to the cinema. Prepare what I want to say – 'thanks for your text. I'm sorry I didn't get back to you. Do you fancy meeting for a coffee?' Keep my phone charged up. I will send this on Saturday after tea. I won't double check my text once it is sent.</b></p>
<b>Step 6</b>	<p>Carry out your plan. Think about what might help you commit to this e.g. Telling someone about your plan, phone reminders, post-its etc.</p> <p><b>I've set a reminder on my phone.</b></p>
<b>Step 7</b>	<p>Set a date to review your plan. Did you carry this out? What was the effect on your mood? What would be happen if you continued with this? What have you learned?</p> <p><b>I'll review this on Sunday after tea. I didn't do it straight away on Sat – I made an excuse to watch TV but at an ad break I decided that it wasn't too late and I sent it. It felt good to do this – it was a start! My friend has replied asking me when would be a good time and place to meet.</b></p> <p>Consider using worksheet: What are your observations? Remember that it often takes time for changes to have an impact.</p>
<b>Step 8</b>	<p>If you achieved your goal – congratulate yourself! Identify your next step and approach this in the same way.</p> <p><b>I've made a plan to reply making sure that the time and place are realistic for me – my next step is to meet for an hour at the riverside café when it's quiet.</b></p> <p>If you didn't achieve your goal – consider making adjustments to your plan or return to Steps 3 and 4 to select another solution.</p> <p>Have a look at the advice on 'Preparing for change', below, as a reminder to take a gentle experimental approach.</p>

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<b>Step 2</b>	Write down as many possible solutions as you can no matter how odd they might seem.
<b>Step 3</b>	Rate how <b>difficult</b> each solution might be out of 5 (where 1 is not at all difficult and 5 is extremely difficult). Then estimate how <b>helpful</b> the alternative is likely to be in shifting your mood in a positive direction (where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is extremely helpful). Write down your ratings next to the possible solutions you have identified at Step 2.
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*Adapted from Addis, M. E. and Martell, C. R. (2004) Overcoming Depression One Step at a Time. New Harbinger: Oakland.*

# What are your observations?

Use the chart to jot down some notes on what you observed during your experiments.

Date	Situation	Mood and emotions before	New behaviour	Mood and emotions after

# Self-reflection sheet

**Session number:**

1. What did I learn from today's session?
2. What training for the week did I plan?
3. Thinking about today's session, I noticed myself behaving in this way... (Describe...)
4. This way of behaving/being is helpful because...
5. This way of behaving/being may be unhelpful because...
6. If I were to usually behave this way in my everyday life the likely consequences would be...
7. Is there anything I need to change as a result of my reflections?



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