

Behavioral Activation

What: Getting children and adolescents doing something active, positive, or constructive to improve mood and change depression related thoughts. Acts consistent with GOALS (feel better) not with current MOOD.

Why? Taking the opposite action—being social vs. withdrawing, taking action/steps on a problem vs. doing nothing, improves mood and feelings. These behaviors are hard to do when depressed, but they lift mood and produce change in self-defeating, negative cognitions of helplessness, hopelessness, and self-criticism.

Tell about it: Review CBT triangle (again). Show how not doing things, staying home keeps negative thoughts and feelings going (e.g., review events and mood from past week).

Do: Choose 1 strategy to try [positive activity scheduling, taking steps towards a goal, trying out problem solving]

Positive Activity Scheduling: Generate list of **activities** that lift mood and are possible, make plan to schedule. Can be fun, helping, or self-care (let child decide which help most).

Taking Steps toward Goal: Identify goal (that is in child's ability to reach), break **steps** to achieve down, make plan for taking at least one step a week, review and revise as necessary.

Problem Solving: Name problem, **brainstorm** all possible solutions without comment, choose one to try, make plan for trying this week, review and revise as necessary.

PRAISE; GIVE FEEDBACK TO ENCOURAGE TAKING STEPS

(Can do an In-session Mood Boosting Experiment)

HAVE CHILD RATE MOOD BEFORE AND AFTER (1-10). Discuss and Assign

Weekly Practice. *what activity/step will you do this week? When will you do the activity/step? What might get in the way (problem solve!); Rate your feelings before and after and report back. Discuss how long and when the child should practice.*

Points to keep in mind:

- If there are suicidal thoughts, have a safety plan.
- Problems/Goals: In child's "control" (e.g., make friends, improve grades vs. get iphone, live with mom).
- Being depressed is depressing; it is easy to get discouraged. Provide a lot of reinforcement and praise. Consider checking in to reinforce between sessions. Caregivers often need to be involved to encourage/remind/praise steps/activities during the week.
- Practicing a mood booster IN session allows you to show doing something different CAN work.