

# 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 youth decide which help most).

**Taking Steps toward Goal:** Identify goal (that is in youth'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 Teen 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 youth should practice.*

### **Points to keep in mind:**

- If there are suicidal thoughts, have a safety plan.
- Problems/Goals: In teen'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.