

Behavioral Activation

For all of us, it is important to stay engaged in positive, rewarding, and meaningful activities on a daily basis. This healthy habit makes natural sense yet can be difficult to manage when we are stressed or have physical, emotional, or cognitive health challenges.

Behavioral Activation is a psychological treatment approach that helps us connect with and routinely involve ourselves in personally rewarding activities. Many mental health problems can make it challenging to concentrate on, engage in, and appreciate positive experiences. This is sometimes called reward dysregulation by scientists and may involve parts of the brain that process emotions and stress reactions. First developed and still used as a very effective treatment strategy for depression, clinical research now shows that this approach can also help with a range of mental health concerns such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, chronic pain, eating disorders, distressed relationships, and others.

Importantly, Behavioral Activation treatment involves a therapeutic strategy that helps individuals of all ages (children, teens, young adults, adults, older adults) and across diverse cultural contexts and heritages. This means that Behavioral Activation is considered a research-supported means of helping people from a wide range of ethnic/racial and religious backgrounds, along with individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, are veterans, have low income, and live in rural areas. Because this treatment approach is always tailored to what matters for each person, research shows that Behavioral Activation helps diverse individuals in Western societies as well as across the globe.

Behavioral Activation is a low-intensity, short-term treatment approach that usually consists of 10 or fewer sessions. Behavioral Activation involves specific actions and steps that go beyond “staying busy” or “doing nice things for yourself.” Specific steps are taken to create and maintain daily lives that include fulfilling, valuable, and meaningful activities. Activities are often tailored to individuals’ personal values and do not necessarily need to cost any money. Even seemingly small rewarding activities can have a powerful, positive impact as they build over time. Developing the habit of engaging in rewarding activities may retrain our brains to better pay attention to the positive aspects of each day and improve overall life satisfaction.

Behavioral Activation may be offered by therapists for individuals, families, or groups and can also be provided in community settings by health workers and volunteers. Sometimes members of one’s chosen family or friends are included to help support these efforts. It is also possible for some people to use Behavioral Activation on their own, such as with the help of a book (i.e., bibliotherapy) or by using smartphone apps or web-based interventions.

Behavioral Activation commonly involves a series of steps:

1. Keep track of daily activities and mood for a specific limited period of time.
2. Review notes to figure out which activities improve mood and quality of life.
3. Consider restarting past rewarding activities (that may have been stopped for a variety of reasons).
4. Look over developed lists of positive activities to get new ideas.
5. Proactively schedule and plan for rewarding activities each day.
6. Develop specific strategies to build motivation and overcome procrastination and avoidance.
7. Troubleshoot and resolve problems that get in the way of rewarding activities.
8. Continue this approach over time so that it becomes a healthy daily habit.

What Is Cognitive Behavior Therapy?

Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Behavior Therapy are types of treatment that are based firmly on research findings. These approaches aid people in achieving specific changes or goals. Changes or goals might involve:

A way of acting: controlling salt or alcohol intake, taking medications as prescribed;

A way of feeling: helping a person manage stress;

A way of thinking: understanding that diet and exercise affect blood pressure;

A way of dealing with physical or medical problems: using behavioral techniques to control diet;

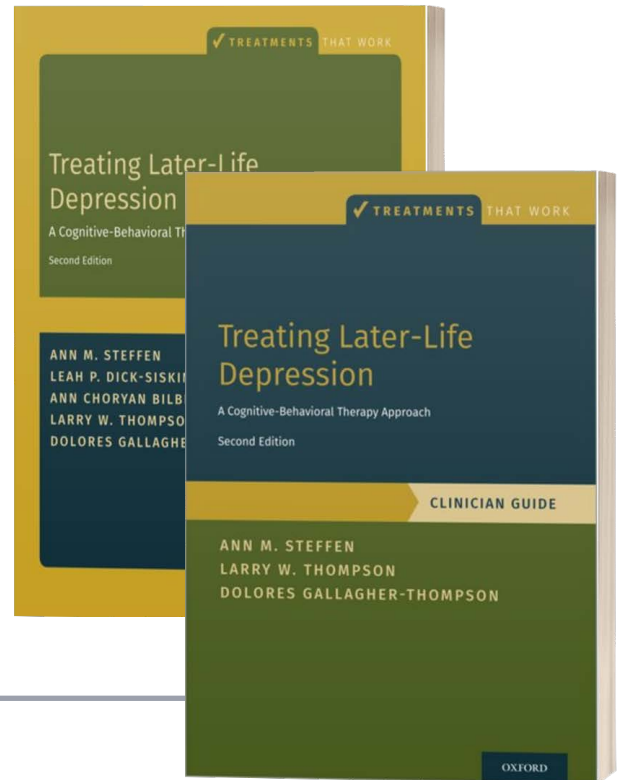
A way of coping: learning to take an active role in one’s own health

Behavior Therapists and Cognitive Behavior Therapists usually focus more on the current situation and its solution, rather than the past. They concentrate on a person’s views and beliefs about their life, not on personality traits. Behavior Therapists and Cognitive Behavior Therapists treat individuals, parents, children, couples, and families. Replacing ways of living that do not work well with ways of living that work, and giving people more control over their lives, are common goals of behavior and cognitive behavior therapy.

Treating Later-Life Depression

A Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Approach, 2e
Clinician Guide & Workbook

Save 30% with promo code
ASPROMP8 on oup.com/academic



- Offers a personalized approach that gives clinicians and clients choice of which materials to use
- Provides specific recommendations for use in telehealth practice and with groups
- Includes built-in supports for culturally sensitive practice

New to this Edition:

- Follows a modular treatment framework to allow for personalized attention to individual client needs
- Revised treatment materials to be inclusive of adults in middle age
- Increased focus on cultivating positive emotion, values-based living, and self-compassion reflects the state of current clinical practice in CBT

Ann M. Steffen, PhD, ABPP is a board-certified geropsychologist and professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. **Leah P. Dick-Siskin, PhD** has almost two decades of experience coordinating geriatric partial hospitalization programs and co-authored the book *Cognitive Behavior Therapy with Older People*. **Ann Choryan Bilbrey, PhD** completed her postdoctoral training at Stanford University's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and is the Associate Director of the Optimal Aging Center. **Larry W. Thompson, PhD, ABPP** is a board-certified geropsychologist and an emeritus professor from Stanford University School of Medicine. He is the co-founder of the Optimal Aging Center. **Dolores Gallagher-Thompson, PhD, ABPP** is a board-certified geropsychologist and active emerita professor at Stanford University School of Medicine. She is the co-founder of the Optimal Aging Center.

Clinician Guide: 978-0-19-006843-1 | 392 pages | Paperback | Oct 2021

Price: \$65.00 **\$45.50*** USD | £41.99 **£29.39*** GBP

Workbook: 978-0-19-006839-4 | 384 pages | Paperback | Oct 2021

Price: \$54.95 **\$38.47*** USD | £35.99 **£25.19*** GBP



Follow @OUPPsychology



OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS