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Published on *Explorable.com* (<https://explorable.com>)

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Goal-Setting and Behavioral Activation

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Planning an intervention requires specific goals, and mental health is clearly not an exception to this rule. Without a set of clear targets, your entire efforts may be wasted on blind attempts and disappointments.

The process of overcoming depression is a journey - you need to set a clear destination, otherwise you will never know if you have reached where you wanted to go. Make sure you know exactly what you're after even before you start.

Besides, goal setting is also the first step in behavioral activation. This will allow you to gradually regain the life you once had and even make it better.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center. Below it, the text 'Quiz Time!' is written in a white, cursive font. Three quiz cards are displayed in a row, each with a different image and title. The first card shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck, titled 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2'. The second card shows a fan of colorful pens, also titled 'Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2'. The third card shows a Ferris wheel at sunset, titled 'Quiz: Flags in Europe'. At the bottom right of the banner, there is a white button with the text 'See all quizzes =>'.

What Is Behavioral Activation?

As you already know, depression might drain your energy, kill your motivation and prevent you from enjoying activities you love. It might be extremely challenging to get out of bed and you might be inclined to neglect tasks and responsibilities.

Obviously, for your own sake and for that of your loved ones, something needs to change. But where should you begin?

Reinforcing Positive Behavior

Behavioral activation techniques comply with the basic principles of growth activation and commitment to life. In other words, this technique encourages you to learn how to enjoy life again.

It may seem like an impossible task, but bear in mind that behavioral activation is a gradual process. No one expects you to achieve a turnaround in a day. In fact, the whole process will be designed according to your preferences. Simply put, it's alright to start it slow.

Why Is It Effective?

Because behavioral activation is a client-centered approach, your personal needs and specific circumstances will always come first. This is true whether you work with a therapist, engage in self-help or do both.

Instead of doing what others think is right, you can create your own personalized plan. From date and time, to duration and frequency, you'll decide everything.

Building Your Strength

The reason why behavioral activation is often so effective, is that it has an empowering effect. We must understand that a sense of accomplishment can mean a lot to someone who's constantly dealing with self-doubt and negativity.

A Tool for All Goals

But behavioral activation is not just for people who struggle with depression. Everyone can benefit this tool. For example, you can use this strategy to increase the frequency and overall duration of certain activities. It's all about planning and monitoring your daily progress, so that you feel increasingly happier with yourself.

Once you see how much you are able to achieve in a single day, just by planning your activities, you'll likely want more. For many people, this is a good way to increase motivation, allowing you to recover what depression took from you.

Goal-Setting Is Crucial

In case you're wondering how goal setting fits into behavioral activation, here's an example.

Let's say you want to regain control over your life by curbing the negative consequences associated with depression. You can start by implementing small changes and rediscovering the things that once brought joy into your life.

To be more specific, you have to start with relatively small tasks, such as simple chores around the house. This is where goal-setting comes into play, by helping you schedule your activities.

Small Steps Make a Huge Difference

For instance, you can make a habit out of engaging in 5 activities daily, each one with a duration of at least 5 minutes. For instance, you can dust the furniture in your house, fold clothing, do your hair, etc.

Later on, you can increase the number of activities, along with the duration for each one. Remember that your final goal is to regain a sense of accomplishment which will allow you to take control of your own life.

Not only does goal-setting allow you to better schedule your weekly and monthly activities, but it also provides a structured approach to this self-help journey.

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