

## **Behavioural Activation: Quick start guide.**

This is the quick start guide to using Behavioural Activation. You can find the full, more in-depth, process at [www.depressioninnewdads.com](http://www.depressioninnewdads.com).

**Step 1:** Use the Behavioural Activation diary (download it [here](#)) to record all of your activities over the next week. This includes all social engagements, work and sleep. Even if you spend an hour just staring out of the window, that's an activity. Write it down in the time slot on the sheet.

**Step 2:** As you complete each activity, give it a rating for **Pleasure** and **Achievement** on a 0 to 10 scale. For instance, I might give the activity "taking the baby to the park" a pleasure rating of 6 and an achievement rating of 5. Do this for each activity as you go. You can see an example of a completed diary [here](#).

**Step 3:** After one week of using the diary, take some time to review it. You will notice that some of the activities you have engaged in will have rated more highly than others in terms of Pleasure and Achievement. Here we have evidence that some activities lift your mood more than others. We need more of these.

**Step 4:** Take a [blank behavioural activation diary](#). Now we are going to plan ahead for the next week by deliberately incorporating the activities which created positive experiences for us last week. So, for example, "taking the baby to the park" we might choose to do again twice over the next week. As such, I write this down in the diary to be completed on Wednesday at 5.00pm and Saturday at 2.00pm. Repeat this process of choosing highly rated activities from the previous week and scheduling them for the week ahead. To begin with, just choose 3 or 4 activities – we don't need to over-commit ourselves at this stage.

**Step 5:** Put this new schedule into action. As much as is possible try to stick to the plan, even if you don't feel like it at the time. Remember, **depression will try to talk you out taking action – we need to do the opposite and stick to the plan**. Continue to rate each activity for Pleasure and Achievement and keep recording any other activities that you engage in.

**Step 6:** Take some time to reflect upon how doing these planned activities has made you feel. Did your depression lift, if only for the time spent doing these activities? If it did, then we need to continue with this process – **Plan, Do, Rate**.

You can use the [PHQ-9](#) on a weekly basis to rate the effect of Behavioural activation upon your depression symptoms.