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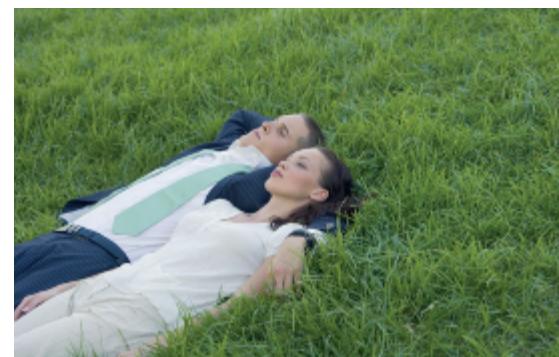


Ideas for activities

If depression has made you very lethargic, getting up and dressed as soon as you wake up might give a good sense of achievement. If you've been getting more socially isolated, make a date with a friend to watch a favourite TV show. If you've not been getting out much, try to take a short walk around the block or down to the shops.

Think about introducing exercise

Once your general activity levels are higher, or if depression has not yet affected your activity levels too badly think about developing an enjoyable exercise routine as a further strategy to defeat depression.



Tips for Beating Depression - Raising Activity Levels

This is one of the quickest and easiest ways to make a difference to depression.

Depression robs you of pleasurable activities

Lethargy and lack of energy are one of the most common warning signs that depression is affecting your life.

The idea of raising your activity levels can sound very daunting when you feel this way - BUT...

Activity does not mean punishing exercise schedules or unpleasant exertion.

Activity means anything that engages your mind or body in any way!

Don't wait to 'feel like it'!

Activity (and the lack of it) has a direct effect on the brain chemicals affecting mood.



Assess how depression has deprived your life of pleasurable activities - from reading the newspaper to going for a walk - and start reintroducing them in small manageable steps. Use the following step-by-step strategy to help you...

Step 1: Fill in an activity record for a week

Note what you have been doing for each hour, or group of hours, after you wake up. Give each section two ratings from 1 (low) to 10 (high). The first rating is for the level of pleasure or enjoyment you had during that period of the day. The second rating is for your sense of achievement during that time. The two ratings might be very different, because some activities might not be enjoyable but might nevertheless give you a sense of achievement.



Step 2: Notice the link between activity and mood

Once you have completed your activity form for a week, look for the patterns and notice which activities have had the highest pleasure or achievement ratings.

Step 3: Make realistic goals for introducing more activity

Think about how to take small steps to build more activity into each day. Start with very small goals, like getting up out of bed and taking a few deep breaths before deciding whether or not to go back to bed (if you usually wake up and find it hard to get out of bed). Choose activities which are mainly pleasurable or likely to give you a sense of achievement.

Step 4: Don't wait to feel motivated

Make a rule that you will 'have a go' for a certain amount of time before you give up on a planned activity, even if it's just 5 minutes, but after that you can give up because you'll have

achieved what you set out to do. If you want to carry on with the task though, of course you can.

Step 5: Chart your progress

Keep filling in activity forms, so you can see the difference you're making.

Step 6: Check depressed thinking

You can keep up the momentum of this strategy by checking for any depressed thinking habits. Where you notice patterns of low scores, try to work out what thoughts or beliefs you have in relation to what you were doing. For example, if getting out of bed has a low score you may find you have an all-or-nothing thinking habit: "I've woken up feeling low again, so the whole day will be bad." Learn more about how to challenge depressed thinking.

