

KEEPING ACTIVE

When a person becomes depressed they often stop doing things. This may include not keeping in touch with friends, taking time off work or avoiding activities which were once pleasant (sports, hobbies). They stop doing these things usually because they don't enjoy them and because they find it hard to get the energy to do them. Sometimes, even if they try and keep up with their usual activities, they find they can't concentrate and make mistakes. Eventually they may just give up.

Often, when the person with depression stops doing things, they begin to feel guilty and see themselves as useless and a burden on their family and friends. The pleasure from life and the sense of achievement that they get from completing things quickly starts to disappear. They may also begin to lose touch with friends and a sense of isolation may set in. This is a vicious circle - the more depressed they feel, the less they do and the less they do, the more depressed they become.

What Can You Do?

Keeping active is an important part of the fight against depression. It is one of the things you can try to help yourself.



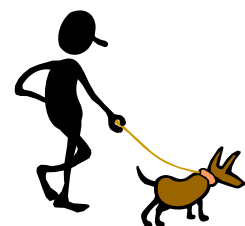
How Do You Start?

It is important to start off slowly. Here is a plan of steps to take:

1. Make a list of the things you enjoyed doing before you became depressed. For each person this list will be different. If you can't think of anything you enjoyed then just write down the things you used to do regularly. There is a list of suggestions at the end of this section to help you.

For example:

- Exercise
- Watching TV
- Doing Crosswords
- Gardening
- Going for a walk
- Reading the newspaper
- Going out with friends



2. Now try and choose one or two things that seem the easiest with the amount of energy and motivation you have at the moment.
3. Once you have chosen one or two activities, break them down into bite size pieces. For example instead of reading the newspaper you might start off by reading only one article or just reading the headlines. Going for a walk could just be walking to the corner shop and back. Going out with friends could be calling a friend on the telephone. Where and how you start isn't so important. The important thing is to make a start, no matter how small that is.

If you try too much too quickly the chances of you completing the task is reduced. This approach requires patience. You cannot expect to do things as well as you did before you became depressed.

4. Now decide when you are going to do it. What day? What time of day? and for how long? Write this down in your activity plan (attached). If the activity involves someone else make sure you ask for their support.
5. Everyday, check to see what plan you have made and try your best to keep to it. To avoid disappointing yourself, make sure you start with small steps of between 10 and 20 minutes about 2-3 times a week.
6. Once you have achieved the task make sure you give it a tick to show you have achieved it. Remember, at this early stage it is not important how well you did the task or how much you enjoyed it. Doing it is the first step to helping you overcome your depression.



But I Don't Feel Like It

You may decide not to do things because you don't feel like it. However, if you wait until you feel like it you will have missed the opportunity to help yourself now.

Motivation comes by doing things: "*First you do, then you feel like doing.*" So don't wait too long. At first you probably will need to push yourself, later you will find it gets easier.

At the beginning the point is simply to try. Don't be too concerned about whether you are achieving anything at this stage. Just start the ball rolling.

Also don't expect to enjoy yourself straight away. Keeping active is not a magic cure for depression. At first you may still feel flat, but soon some enthusiasm will return.



Here is a sample Activity Plan:

Time:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
7-9 AM	Get up at 7.30	Get up at 7.30	Get up at 7.30	Get up at 7.30
9 AM				Do laundry
10 AM	} Go to library	Tidy living room		
11 AM		Get ready to go out		
12 Noon	Lunch at 12.30	Meet friend for lunch	Lunch at 12.30	
1 PM				
2 PM	} Read library Book		} Shopping	
3 PM				
4 PM				
5 PM	Make tea			
6 PM				
7 – 9 PM	Watch TV	Read book		
10 PM- Bedtime	Bed at 10.30	Bed at 10.30	Bed at 10.30	Bed at 10.30

Remember to tick items you have completed and put a cross against any you did not manage.



ACTIVITY PLANNING: A List of Pleasant Things to Do

Things to do on your own

Write a letter to a friend
Write a short story or poem
Write in your diary
Play a computer game
Learn or practise a musical instrument
Paint
Draw
Do some pottery
Sing
Knit
Do some woodwork
Do a jigsaw puzzle
Read a good novel
Read an interesting non-fiction book
Read your favourite newspaper
Study a language
Buy or make a present for someone
Look through your favourite photo album
List things you have enjoyed in the past
Play a card game (eg Patience)

Things to do around the house

Do some gardening
Do some handywork around the house
Rearrange the furniture in the house
Have a big "spring clean"
Do some sewing
Listen to music
Dance to music
Watch television
Play with your pets
Sit in the sun
Make a cake

Social activities

Phone a friend
Visit a friend or neighbour
Prepare a special meal for friends or family
See a play, ballet or opera
See your favourite band
Go to your favourite restaurant or café
Play with your children
Invite friends over for a video and popcorn
Hold a Trivial Pursuit, Pictionary or Charades evening
Ask yourself over to a friend's place

Active things

Go for a stroll, brisk walk or bush walk
Go jogging
Go rollerskating

Hire a bike
Hire a tandem bike
Do some aerobics
Do some weight lifting
Arrange a game of tennis or squash
Kick a ball around the oval
Run up and down stairs for a few minutes
Join an orienteering club
Do 10 minutes of gentle stretching exercises
Play ping-pong
Have a game of golf
Go for a swim
Fly a kite
Go surfing
Go fishing

Things to do away from the home

Walk along the beach
Go to a movie
Visit the zoo
Go to a local market
Go shopping
Go to the library
Visit a bookshop
Visit an art gallery
Visit a museum
Go to a poetry reading
Watch a game of football or soccer

Things to do to pamper yourself

Have (or give yourself) a facial
Have a massage
Give someone else a facial or massage
Buy yourself a new piece of clothing or another special gift
Paint your fingernails
Have a bubble bath
Try out new hairstyles
Have a haircut or get your hair coloured
Hug your favourite person
Eat your favourite food
Try different perfumes in a dept store
Buy yourself a bunch of flowers

ACTIVITY PLAN

Time:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7-9 AM							
9 AM							
10 AM							
11 AM							
12 Noon							
1 PM							
2 PM							
3 PM							
4 PM							
5 PM							
6 PM							
7 – 9 PM							
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