

Take a moment ... to change how you feel by changing what you do

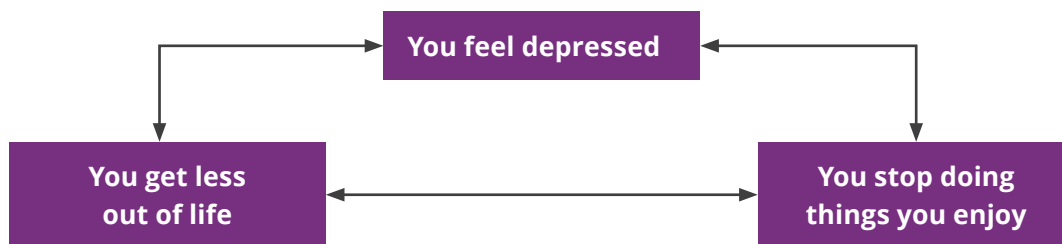
What you eat and drink has a direct effect on how your body feels. Caffeine makes you jittery, fatty foods make you feel sluggish, blazing-hot ghost peppers give you heartburn, and so on.

But did you know that what you do has a direct effect on how you feel emotionally? It's true. When you change your activities, you begin to change your outlook.

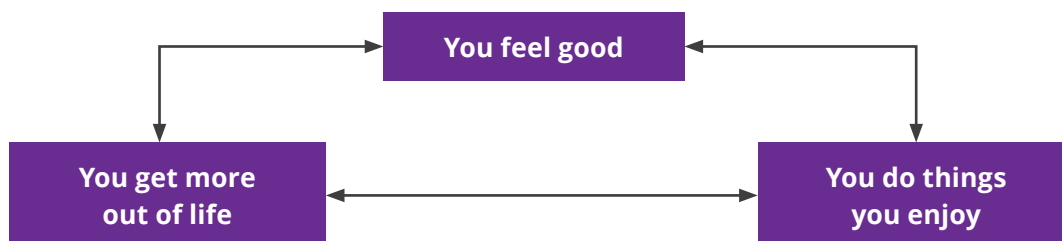
Introducing behavioural activation^{38,39,40}

An increasingly popular form of psychotherapy, behavioural activation (BA) is based on the notion that people suffering from depression and other mood disorders often become withdrawn and avoid activities they would ordinarily enjoy. Therapists help patients identify and schedule pleasurable activities, turning a vicious cycle into a virtuous one. One study found BA to be as effective as cognitive behavioural therapy—the gold standard for talk therapy—with two-thirds of patients reporting a 50% reduction in symptoms.

Vicious cycle of depression



Virtuous cycle of activity



38 <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-guide/behavioral-activation-guide>

39 <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/07/160722212245.htm>

40 <https://www.verywellmind.com/increasing-the-effectiveness-of-behavioral-activation-2797597>

Five steps to improve your attitude

While you should seek professional help if you're suffering from depression, anxiety or another mental health disorder, you can easily apply the basic principles of BA in your everyday life. Here's how.

1. Decide what matters to you

Make a list of activities that would bring you pleasure. This is not about what you think you should do; it's about what you want to do. Your list might include traveling, volunteering, fostering a pet, sewing a quilt, learning how to build websites, mastering a musical instrument, tinkering with an old car, or tackling challenging jigsaw puzzles—whatever would bring you joy.

2. Develop SMART goals

Set short-term goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-specific (SMART). If you've never been very athletic, don't decide to run a marathon. Instead, plan to jog around the block three days this week.

4. Be mindful

If you find your thoughts turning negative in the midst of an enjoyable activity, stop and regroup. Take a few minutes to close your eyes, breathe deeply and reflect on the progress you've made.

3. Recruit an accountability partner

Ask a friend or family member to hold you accountable. Or better yet ask them to join in the fun. And remember: these activities should be fun.

5. Celebrate your success

Find tangible ways to reward yourself for the progress you made. That—plus the enjoyment your activities are providing—should encourage more progress in the future.

In our hectic lives, we often neglect our mental health. That's why it's so important to take a moment to think about this important aspect of overall health. At our Mental health resources hub, you can find the information to prevent and manage mental health conditions.

Also, Aetna International members can access the Health Hub—register if you haven't already—to quickly find self-care tools, professional services, member offers, and to submit and track claims and more. Within the Health Hub, you can learn more about the Wysa app, which offers instant access to AI-driven mental well-being support. The app is free for members to download and includes a free one-on-one session with a human coach. For more information about your health care benefits, contact your plan sponsor or one of Aetna International's expert sales consultants for group business or individuals and families.

Take a moment...Discover. Breathe. Heal.

Mental health support resources: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/workplace-mental-health-support-resource.html>

Health Hub: <https://www.aetnainternational.com/members/login.do>