

Activity planning¹

If you're finding it difficult to decide how to fill in your day, you might want to try planning your day in advance. This way you can avoid having to make a lot of minor decisions throughout the day. Moreover, the day ahead might not seem quite so overwhelming. Activity planning involves the following steps:

- ❑ Set aside time to plan the day (eg the previous evening or early in the morning).
- ❑ Start the day with an activity that provides pleasure and achievement. You can either:
 - Plan to do a number of the activities that you have rated as being high on pleasure or achievement.
 - Use the problem-solving technique to determine how your time might best be spent. Perhaps you can think about your short-term or long-term goals and choose activities that will help you achieve these goals.
- ❑ The list of pleasant things to do might help you think of activities you enjoy. (Ask your clinician for a copy.) Don't forget exercise as an important activity.
- ❑ Try breaking the day down into smaller parts if it seems too difficult to plan a whole day at a time.
- ❑ Try to obtain a balance between pleasure and achievement. For example, if your day is filled with duties and chores (which may give you a sense of achievement but little pleasure) there will be little time for relaxation and enjoyment. You may not feel very satisfied at the end of the day. Or, if chores are ignored you may feel that nothing has been achieved and that important tasks are piling up and becoming overwhelming.
- ❑ If you have problems getting started on an activity, try telling yourself exactly what you need to do (eg *'Stand up, walk to wardrobe, open the door, reach in with my hands, get out clothes'*).
- ❑ You may want to ask your partner or family to encourage you and to remind you to do the activities you have planned.
- ❑ Don't let your activity plan be too rigid. Accept that disruptions can occur. Consider your alternatives and don't try to make up for every activity that has been missed. Go on to the next activity on your list.
- ❑ Plan for quality not quantity (eg spending half an hour weeding part of the garden is more realistic than planning to weed the whole garden).
- ❑ Don't expect miracles. Overcoming depression requires steady work. Even though some activities may help you feel a bit better straight away, these activities don't provide an immediate 'cure' for depression.
- ❑ When tasks seem overwhelming, use goal-planning principles. When planning goals you would:
 1. specify exactly what you want to achieve
 2. break the tasks down into smaller steps
 3. use problem solving to plan each step and highlight any difficulties that may occur
 4. put the plan into action
 5. focus on what has been achieved after each step has been completed — don't devalue and discount your achievements
 6. continue with each step until the task is complete.

Example:

1. Your goal is to make a vegetable patch and a flowerbed.
2. The steps are:
 - choose some new plants
 - pull out the old plants (need gloves and a shovel)
 - prepare the soil (need compost and fertilizer)
 - put in the new plants.
3. If you are having trouble working out which plants to use, you can take a simplified problem-solving approach:
 - List the names of all the plants you are considering using.
 - List the pros and cons of each plant (eg needs sun, needs to be planted in spring, grows quickly, looks pretty, etc.).
 - Choose which plants to use.
4. Buy the new plants, compost, gloves, and fertilizer; pull out the old plants, and so on.
5. Congratulate yourself after each step. Remind yourself about how much progress you are making. Show someone else what you have done.

Continue with each step until you have finished the new garden. Then sit back and enjoy what you have achieved. Once again, show someone else what you have done.

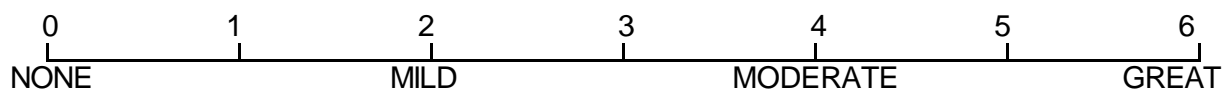
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Diary of daily activities

Please list all activities undertaken during the day. Rate each activity (using the scale below) for *sense of pleasure (P)* and *sense of achievement (A)*.

	SUNDAY	P	A	MONDAY	P	A	TUESDAY	P	A	WEDNESDAY	P	A
8.00am												
9.00am												
10.00am												
11.00am												
12.00pm												
1.00pm												
2.00pm												
3.00pm												
4.00pm												
5.00pm												
6.00pm												
7.00pm												
8.00pm												
9.00pm												
10.00pm												

RATING SCALE FOR SENSE OF PLEASURE (P) AND SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT (A).



Diary of daily activities (continued)

Please list all activities undertaken during the day. Rate each activity (using the scale below) for *sense of pleasure* (P) and *sense of achievement* (A).

	THURSDAY	P	A	FRIDAY	P	A	SATURDAY	P	A
8.00am									
9.00am									
10.00am									
11.00am									
12.00pm									
1.00pm									
2.00pm									
3.00pm									
4.00pm									
5.00pm									
6.00pm									
7.00pm									
8.00pm									
9.00pm									
10.00pm									

RATING SCALE FOR SENSE OF PLEASURE (P) AND SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT (A).

