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Behavioral Activation Activity

When depression sets in, we often withdraw from many activities due to low energy and a lack of interest. Although this response is understandable, it frequently leads to more severe depression symptoms.

Why do we avoid activities:

1. An immediate sense of relief from dodging what we think will be difficult.
2. Not experiencing the reward from engaging in the activity, thereby further diminishing our motivation for it.

Behavioral activation is designed to break these patterns. Many of us are waiting to feel better so we can get back to the things we used to enjoy. However, it's much more efficient to gradually start doing rewarding activities, even if we don't feel like it. The interest in the activities will follow. This approach is the foundation of behavioral activation for depression.

Step 1: What do you value? When we're clear about our values, we're more likely to find rewarding activities that derive from them. Examples of values include, relationships, faith, education & work, physical health, responsibilities at home, and recreation/leisure. Write down your top value domains.

Step 2: Identify life-giving activities: think of activities that fall under each of the values that you identified and add them to the paper where you recorded your value domains.

Step 3: Rate the difficulty of each activity:

- 1 for easy
- 2 for moderate
- 3 for hard.

Write it down.

Step 4: Plan the order of completion: now that you have a good understanding of how challenging each activity will be, you can plan which ones to start with. Pick at least 5-10 that will get you started. That way you'll have a road map to follow over the next couple of days.

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Step 5: Schedule activities into a calendar. The more specific you are about scheduling our plans, the more likely we are to complete them. Pick a time and date for each activity. Aim to match the activity with the best time of day for you.

Step 6: Complete the activity: before you complete the activity, set an intention to be as fully present as possible. What's around you? Feel what you feel and notice what you hear.

Book: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Made Simple By Seth J. Gillihan
Worksheet Created by: Janay Bailey, LMHC