

# The Upward Spiral 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition – Behavioral Activation Tips

One of the most effective approaches for depression is one of the simplest. It's called Behavioral Activation, and it boils down to doing more activities that facilitate an upward spiral and fewer activities that trigger a downward one. For an even greater impact, find a mental health professional, coach, or mentor who can provide more support and guidance.

In this quick guide we'll focus on doing more positive activities. There are 5 main types to focus on:

1. **Enjoyable** – Activities that are fun, rewarding, calming, exciting, or even ones that simply sustain your attention
2. **Achievement** – Activities where you improve a skill or complete a task, contributing to a sense of mastery or accomplishment.
3. **Meaningful** – Activities that create a greater sense of purpose or connection to other people or to ideas larger than yourself
4. **Physical** – Activities that get your body moving, like hiking, biking, playing sports or even household chores.
5. **Social** – Activities done with other people.



To help you get on the right track, think back to the best times in your life. What kind of activities were you doing regularly? What are some activities you enjoy that you don't do as much as you used to? What activities are you good at or help you feel competent and successful? Importantly, when it comes to activities, it's not the thought the counts. It's the doing. So try to do more of them now.

**Instructions:** Look at the suggestions below to get inspiration or just brainstorm. Pick 3 activities from different categories (e.g. enjoyable, physical, and social). Then figure out a good time to do each (even just briefly) and do it right now or put it on your calendar and do them.

Many activities fit in more than one category (so you might get a 2-for-1 or even a 3-for-1). A walk with a friend in nature, for example, could be *physical*, *social*, and *enjoyable* all at once. But you don't have to do everything (in fact, trying to do too much at once can backfire).

Think of this as a menu of options, not a rigid plan. The goal is to notice what works for you and build momentum, one choice at a time.

And if you're regularly doing any of these activities, now's your chance to appreciate how much you're already doing to help yourself and your brain. Put a check mark next to them and give yourself a pat on the back.

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<b>Enjoyable</b>	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Meaningful</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Social</b>
Taking a bath	Taking a shower (or other self-care)	Spending time with family	Going for a walk	Spending time with family
Watching sports	Washing dishes or doing laundry	Going to church or religious activities	Yoga	Going to church or religious activities
Playing sports	Doing a puzzle (crossword, jigsaw, etc)	Watching your favorite sports team	Playing sports	Playing sports
Spending time with a good friend	Paying bills	Spending time with a good friend	Going for a run or bike ride	Calling a friend or family member
Reading a book	Reading a book	Reading a book	Going to the gym	Throwing a frisbee with a friend (or child)
Drawing or other arts	Making crafts or gifts	Visiting a museum or art gallery	Cleaning your house	Visiting a museum or art gallery with friends
Taking a vacation	Planning a vacation	Writing in a journal	Dancing	Dancing
Playing music	Going to the gym	Making a gift for someone	Situps/Pushups	Working at a coffee shop
Eating	Completing a task at work	Creative writing (e.g. short story or screenplay)	Running errands	Writing a thank-you letter
Listening to a podcast	Practicing a musical instrument	Joining a local sports league	Swimming	Taking a trip with friends or family
Going to concerts or plays	Going for a walk, hike or run	Checking an item off your bucket list	Hitting golf balls	Playing board games or card games
Cooking or baking	Cooking or baking	Volunteering	Playing catch	Volunteering
Watching TV or movies	Taking a class (e.g. dance, cooking, woodworking)		Going for a hike	Taking a class
Gardening	Fixing things around the house	Being in nature	Yard work	Joining a running group

*Disclaimer: This guide is not intended to treat or diagnose any illness. It is for educational purposes only. For medical or mental health concerns please consult a physician or mental health professional.*