Session 5 Agenda

Session Objectives
- Understand the cycle of inactivity
- Learn what behavioral activation is and how it works
- Identify and schedule behavioral activation activities

Topics Covered
- Behavioral activation

Manual Information
Grades 6-8
CBT and Mindfulness
Depression
7 Sessions

What You’ll Need
Access Session Agenda, accompanying Google Slide Deck and Resource PDFs under What You’ll Need on our website.

Review:
- Icebreaker: Tape Ball

Print:
- Check-In Sheet
- Cycle of Inactivity
- Planning to Get Active

Print or prepare to display:
- CBT Model

Prepare to bring:
- Behavioral Activation Ideas for Teens

Preview and load:
- Video: TRAILS Short Film Series - Behavioral Activation

Prepare to bring:
- Coping Skills Toolbox
- Group folders
- Tape ball, ball, or balloon
- Music to play during activity

Session Overview
1. Check-In and Warm-Up
2. Homework Review and Session Preview
3. What Is Behavioral Activation and Why Does It Work?
4. Practice Behavioral Activation with Mindfulness
5. Behavioral Activation Planning
6. Wrap-Up and Homework
7. Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation
Check-In and Warm-Up

(15 minutes)

**Do:** Have students use the Check-In Sheet to identify and rate their feelings.

**Say:** “In our last session, we started out with an activity to help us relax. Today we will start off with an activity to get our blood moving and energize us.”

**Do:** Mindful Heartbeat Activity

- Direct students to place fingers or hands where they can find their pulse (side of neck, over heart, inside wrist). Some may not find their pulse at first.
- Ask students to think about how they are feeling inside. Have them take 3 deep breaths.
- Have students spread out at arms’ width apart and jump up and down 10 times, or do jumping jacks.
- Ask group members to sit back down and try and find their pulse again.
- Tell them to notice any changes, and focus on their breath until their pulse slows again.
- Have group members rerate their feelings on their Check-In Sheet.

**Leader tip:** For students with differing mobility, consider alternative ways to help increase heart rate, such as only doing the overhead arm raises.

**Do:** After activity, group members can circle “be active” on their Coping Skills Toolboxes.

Homework Review and Session Preview

(5 minutes)

**Do:** Review the Cognitive Coping Comic Strip. Group members were asked to reflect on at least one challenging situation that occurred during the week. They were to write down the situation, 1-2 automatic thoughts, and coping thoughts.

**Ask:** “Would anyone like to share their comic strip?”

**Do:** If possible, provide a small prize for anyone willing to share.

**Do:** Project the CBT Model and preview agenda for the day:

**Say:** “So far we’ve learned how to interrupt the CBT model (think-feel-do cycle) by recognizing automatic negative thoughts and creating coping thoughts, and by using relaxation and mindfulness skills to manage difficult feelings. The last piece of the CBT Model (think-feel-do cycle) is behavior. Today we are going to talk about the powerful mental impact of getting active—how to take steps to improve low mood and low energy by changing our behavior.”
What Behavioral Activation Is and Why It Works

(10 minutes)

Ask: “What does your behavior look like when you’re feeling really sad and low?” (e.g., slow-moving; staying in bed or on the couch; not engaging in activities)

Do: Review the Cycle of Inactivity handout.

Explain:

- The more inactive and slowed down we are, the worse and more hopeless we feel – it’s a cycle!
- The best remedy for a low mood is to be active. Research shows we can improve our mood through regular activity. Being active works on many levels: it impacts our brain and body chemistry, it can positively shape our social lives, etc.
- Sometimes it may feel like we need to wait until we feel better before we get more active, but actually our motivation often follows action. Sometimes to start feeling motivated we actually have to decide to get moving. Our brains can follow our bodies!
- When you know uncomfortable emotions are working against you, try to do the exact opposite of what your emotions are telling you to do.

Do: Introduce Behavioral Activation: Watch TRAILS Video on Behavioral Activation.

Practice Behavioral Activation with Mindfulness

(15 minutes)

Say: “Let’s try a little behavioral activation right now!”

Do: Get group members up and moving. Encourage participants to mindfully engage in today’s behavioral activation activity. Review the definition of mindfulness:

Say: “Being mindful is the skill of being fully present—observing what is happening inside ourselves and around us, without judgment. We take a break from thinking about anything that happened, or anything we need to do. We can enjoy activities more if we practice mindfulness.”

Do: Hand out Coping Skills Practice Log.

Ask: “How is everyone feeling right now?” Have group members rate their feelings from 1-10 using the Coping Skills Practice Log.

Do: Pick a quick, fun activity to get the group members moving. Some ideas include:

- Icebreaker: Tape Ball (To save time, you can also use a ball or balloon for this activity.)
- Relays or an obstacle course
- A quick dance party! Pick a popular song or ask a volunteer to play an upbeat song from their playlist.
Do: After activity, have group members rerate their feelings on their thermometer using the Coping Skills Practice Log.

Behavioral Activation Planning

(15 minutes)

Say: “In order to make behavioral activation really work, we need to plan for the activities and make sure we think about both obstacles and rewards.”

Do: Hand out the Planning to Get Active worksheet.

Explain:

- Use the worksheet to plan physically active goals for this week. (Save video games and TV shows for rewards.)
- You can get extra ideas from the Behavioral Activation Ideas for Teens handout.
- Fully participate in what you are doing, be non-judgmental toward yourself and others, and be kind and compassionate to yourself.
- Make sure to incorporate rewards and make goals realistic.
- Share activity and reward plans with the group.
- Problem-solve barriers

Wrap-Up and Homework

(2 minutes)

Explain: Sometimes when we’re feeling low we may not enjoy these activities right away, but they can still help us feel better in the long run if we stick with them. Note that we will continue to talk about other helpful activities next time, but that this week we should focus on getting active and moving our bodies.

Do: Assign the at-home activity for the week:

Group members should carry out the activities they planned on their Planning to Get Active worksheets. Have group members write their planned activities on the Coping Skills Practice Log. Encourage them to notice and log their feelings before and after each activity using the Coping Skills Practice Log.
Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation

Use the suggestions below to modify this lesson for virtual formats.

- Consider using the accompanying TRAILS slide deck for this lesson.
- Display the CBT Model for review while explaining the agenda for the day.
- Use screen sharing to show the Cycle of Inactivity.
- Use screen sharing to display the lesson's video, TRAILS Short Film: Behavioral Activation, as well as all the session worksheets when appropriate. You can also send the links to students by email to review on their own before or after the lesson.
- Have a virtual dance party for the "getting active" activity! Be sure to get involved in this as well. You can suggest that volunteers play a song of their choosing.
- Have group members share creative ways to get active while at home. Have them write these examples in the group chat feature, or use the hand-raise feature and share their answers verbally.
- Display the Planning to Get Active and Coping Skills Practice Log and ask group members to download them and complete them at home over the next week.
Session 5:
Leader Reflection

Topics Covered
• Behavioral activation

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Behavioral Activation
☐ Reviewed the CBT model and explained that behavioral activation interrupts the model at “behavior,” leading to improved outcomes and situations, more helpful thinking, and improved feelings
☐ Described the cycle of inactivity and its relationship to depressed mood
☐ Described the beneficial effects of exercise/physical activity on symptoms of depression
☐ Helped the group build behavioral activation calendars with rewards
☐ Taught the group how to problem-solve anticipated barriers and noted that activities might not be enjoyable at first

Group Skills
☐ Spent 20-30 minutes preparing for the group, reviewing activities, becoming familiar with content, resources to share, videos, activities, etc.
☐ Used materials from the TRAILS website, including videos or worksheets, while working with group members
☐ Protected time for group and stayed focused throughout (did not multi-task)
☐ Set an agenda at the beginning of the group
☐ Encouraged group member participation, particularly among those who are generally quiet
☐ Created a warm, inviting, respectful space for the group
☐ Kept the group on task related to content and did not go into unrelated topics
☐ Actively participated in skill practice (e.g., coping skills, sharing of feelings, etc.)