Session 7 Agenda

**Session Objectives**
- Understand the cycle of inactivity
- Identify and schedule behavioral activation activities

**Topics Covered**
- Behavioral activation

**Manual Information**
Grades 6-8
CBT and Mindfulness
Depression and Anxiety
10 Sessions

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**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
- Coping Skills Practice Log
- Planning to Get Active
- Behavioral Activation Ideas

**Prepare to display:**
- CBT Model

**Preview and load:**
- TRAILS Short Film: Behavioral Activation

**Prepare to bring:**
- My TRAILS Notes
- Coping Skills Toolbox
- Group folders
- Tape ball, ball, or balloon, or any items needed for chosen icebreaker 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. Behavioral Activation Practice
5. Behavioral Activation Planning
6. Wrap-Up and Homework
7. Suggestions for Virtual Adaptation
Check-In and Warm-Up

(10 minutes)

**Say:** "Welcome back!"

**Ask:** "How is everyone feeling today? Let’s take a moment to think about this. Feel free to use the Check-In Sheet to help identify some of the feelings you’ve been experiencing and rate the intensity of each."

**Do:** Have students complete the Check-In Sheet on their own.

**Say:** "Now that we’ve tapped into how we’re feeling, we’re going to start the lesson for today by getting a little active."

**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.

**Leader tip:** Provide modifications to this activity as needed to support all levels of mobility. For example, students may increase their heart rates while remaining seated by doing overhead arm raises instead of jumping jacks.

**Do:** Encourage group members to re-rate feelings and intensities from their Check-In Sheets and then circle the coping skill “Get active” on their Coping Skill Toolboxes.

Homework Review and Session Preview

(5 minutes)

**Do:** Review the Cognitive Coping Comic Strip. Group members were 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 any coping thoughts they developed.

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

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

**Do:** Display the CBT Model (think-feel-do cycle)

**Explain:**
• So far we’ve learned how to help ease difficult feelings by using relaxation and mindfulness skills.
• We’ve also learned to recognize exaggerated or unhelpful thinking, and create coping thoughts to better manage our feelings about a tough situation.
• The last piece of the CBT Model (think-feel-do cycle) are behaviors.
• Over the next few sessions, we are going to work on learning ways to directly change our behaviors (or what we do) to interrupt our thoughts and feelings before they go into a downward spiral.
• Today we will focus on what to do when our moods are low and we have low energy.

What Is Behavioral Activation and Why Does It Work?
(10 minutes)

Say: “Behavioral activation is simply getting active and moving our bodies.”

Ask: What does your behavior look like when you’re feeling really sad and low?” (Offer examples as needed: moving slowly, staying in bed or on the couch, not engaging in once desirable activities.)

Say: “The more inactive and slowed down we are, the worse and more tired we feel – it’s a cycle!”

Do: Review the Cycle of Inactivity handout.

• 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 body chemistry and our brain chemicals, it can positively shape our social lives, etc.
• Sometimes it may feel like we need to wait until we feel better before getting active, but in fact motivation often follows action. Sometimes, in order 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: Show TRAILS Short Film: Behavioral Activation.

Behavioral Activation Practice
(10 minutes)

Do: Hand out the 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 use a ball or balloon instead of a tape ball.)
- Relays or obstacle course
- Group dance party

Do: After activity, have group members rerate their feelings using the **Coping Skills Practice Log**.

Say: “The best remedy for a low mood is to get active! Research shows we can improve our moods through regular activity, just like we practiced during our short activity today. Some of you noted that you felt better, and that the intensity of your feelings changed after the activity. Even when we don’t feel motivated, getting active can help. Sometimes, we have to do things before we feel ready.”

### Behavioral Activation Planning

(10 minutes)

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

Do: Hand out the **Planning to Get Active** worksheet.
- Encourage students to use the worksheet to plan physically active goals for this week. (Remind them to only schedule TV or video games for rewards.) For extra ideas, refer them to the **Behavioral Activation Ideas** handout.
- Encourage students to make their goals both realistic and specific and incorporate rewards.
- Share activity and reward plans with the group.
- Problem solve barriers students might face.

### Wrap-Up and Homework

(2 minutes)

**Explain:** Sometimes, when we’re feeling down, 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. We will continue to talk about other helpful activities in our next session, but this week we should focus on getting active and moving our bodies.

**Do:** Assign the at-home activity for the week: Students should carry out the activities they listed on their **Planning to Get Active** worksheets. Have students write their planned activities on the **Coping Skills Practice Log**. Encourage students 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.
• Use screen sharing to display the lesson’s worksheets, Check-In Sheet, Coping Skills Toolbox, CBT Model, Cycle of Inactivity, Coping Skills Practice Log, and Planning to Get Active, as well as the TRAILS Short Film: Behavioral Activation. To discuss what behavioral activation is and what it looks like, use the chat function to learn more about what being active looks like for students when they feel sad and unmotivated. It might also be helpful to record the discussion on a virtual whiteboard so that students can see responses in one place.
• To get students up and moving, plan a virtual scavenger hunt! Use the screen-share function to show the students a list of items that you’d like them to find around their homes. Time this activity to last no more than 10 minutes. Use the chat function to engage students in discussion about the activity. Items might include:
  • An item that is blue
  • An item that has the number 3 on it
  • An item that has a rough texture
  • An item that is round
  • An item that starts with the first letter of your name
• Consider having a virtual dance party for a “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.
• Ask group members to download the worksheets Behavioral Activation Planning and Coping Skills Practice Log and complete them at home over the next week.
Session 7: Leader Reflection

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
- Set an agenda at the beginning of group
- Protected time for group and stayed focused throughout (did not multi-task)
- Created a warm, inviting, respectful space for the group
- Kept the group on task related to content and did not go into unrelated topics
- Encouraged group member participation, particularly among those who are generally quiet
- Actively participated in skill practice (e.g., coping skills, sharing of feelings, etc.)
- Provided examples that were relevant to the group