# What Is Behavioral Activation and How Does It Help Depression?

Unfortunately, depression is quite common in our modern world. According to the World Health Organization, 280 million people in the world struggle with [depression](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression#:~:text=An%20estimated%203.8%25%20of%20the,stigma%20associated%20with%20mental%20disorders.). When someone is struggling with depression, one of the main symptoms is not having an interest in activities that they previously enjoyed before dealing with depression. An important part of [depression treatment](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9082162/) is starting to engage in these activities again. With time, the person struggling with depression will hopefully begin to see changes in their mood.

## What Is Behavioral Activation?

[Behavioral Activation](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2882847/) (BA) is a practice taught in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) that helps patients improve their mood by modifying their behaviors. This form of mental health treatment is effective because engaging in activities that bring pleasure frequently can lead to better moods throughout the day. It can be difficult for people dealing with depression to find motivation on their own. However, BA gives the framework for how to fight depression and improve mental health.

## How Does Behavioral Activation Work?

Within CBT, Behavioral Activation works because it targets one of the most challenging parts of depression. Finding motivation to engage in activities can be challenging, but using the practices taught in Behavioral Activation helps to make the process easier. This form of [depression treatment](https://thejcn.com/DOIx.php?id=10.3988/jcn.2024.0148) helps patients find what is important to them by exploring their values. They can then use their values to find activities that allow them to live by their values daily. This helps to bring meaning to people’s lives and decreases symptoms of depression. Behavioral activation uses other techniques, such as activity scheduling, noticing avoidance patterns that come up.

## How Does Behavioral Activation Help Depression?

Behavioral Activation helps with depression because it addresses one of the main aspects of depression, which is inactivity or withdrawal. Behavioral activation also uses positive reinforcement, which can help to make other areas of treatment easier or more natural over time. This depression treatment helps people use their values to bring meaning into their lives and improve their [mental health](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7770387/).

Depression is a common mental health condition and often requires several forms of treatment. Some treatment that exists for depression currently are medication, psychotherapy in person, teletherapy, and lifestyle changes. Behavioral Activation is a part of [Cognitive Behavioral Therapy](https://www.apa.org/ptsd-guideline/patients-and-families/cognitive-behavioral) (CBT) and is practiced during psychotherapy with a licensed therapist. Behavioral Activation helps people dealing with depression move past inactivity and move towards a meaningful life. While this practice is usually not the only form of treatment, it’s a great addition to a treatment plan for someone trying to fight their depression.

If you are interested in working with us in our offices or via teletherapy, please [reach out to us](https://michiganpsychologicalcare.com/contact.php).

**References**

[https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression#:~:text=An%20estimated%203.8%25%20of%20the,stigma%20associated%20with%20mental%20disorders.)

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