

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What will be expected of me in BA?

A: In BA, you will work with your provider to increase your activity level, especially by practicing activities that are pleasurable and important to you. First, you will identify your values in important life areas. Once you have identified life areas and associated values, you will use them to identify, plan and perform daily activities. You will also be expected to come to therapy and complete assignments weekly.

Q: Do I only focus on behaviors in BA?

A: Although the focus of this treatment is behavior change, this does not mean that thoughts and feelings are ignored. BA suggests that changing one's behavior will ultimately lead to changes in thoughts and feelings.

Q: How will I know if BA has been helpful?

A: You will know BA has been helpful when you notice that your thoughts, feelings and overall quality of life have improved. You and your provider may also track how much your depression has declined by using an outcome measure, such as the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9).

Who We Are

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences' Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP) trains military and civilian behavioral health professionals to provide high quality, culturally-sensitive, evidence-based behavioral health services to Service members, Veterans and their families.



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Behavioral Activation for Depression

What is Behavioral Activation for Depression?

Behavioral Activation (BA) is one of the therapies recommended by the Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense for depression. BA for depression is a behavioral treatment focused on teaching patients ways to increase rewarding activities to combat depression. In BA, the emphasis is on decreasing avoidance and isolation through guided activity, such as reading or going on a walk instead of a more passive activity like watching television. BA has strong support based on decades of research and is very effective with various populations, including service members and veterans. Research supports the effectiveness of BA even among more severely depressed patients. BA usually requires 2 to 20 sessions for significant improvement. Sessions last about 50 to 60 minutes and can be delivered in individual or group formats.

If you decide to participate in BA, you will be asked to:

- Attend sessions regularly
- Work with your therapist to set goals
- Monitor your mood and daily activities
- Practice pleasant and important activities in your own life
- Provide feedback to your therapist about your progress and the helpfulness of the therapy



BA is a short-term psychotherapy for treating symptoms of depression, which may include:

- Feeling sad, depressed or hopeless
- Experiencing loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Feeling worthless or having extreme guilt
- Being irritable or agitated
- Having difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Experiencing loss of energy or feeling fatigue
- Having an increase or decrease in appetite or sleep

What are the Goals of BA?

The overall goal of BA is to gradually decrease avoidance and isolation, which can often maintain or worsen symptoms of depression. You can do this by increasing your engagement in activities that you find pleasurable, productive, and valuable over time. BA can help Service members achieve personal goals and solve problems by learning and practicing new skills.

What Will I Be Doing in BA?

Throughout BA treatment:

- You will work with your therapist to set specific treatment goals that are directly related to life areas that you value.
- You will learn to monitor your mood and your daily activities, and ultimately increase pleasurable, strengthening activities in your life.

These new skills will help relieve your depression and lead to a better quality of life. It will be important for you to practice the new skills learned in-session in your everyday life to help you feel better.