



A 50-minute activity and mood group

An Everyday Insight tool
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A facilitator guide for one 50-minute session of behavioral activation. Use it with the 50-minute handout.

What the session is for

Members see how activity and mood affect each other by looking at one ordinary day, then each plans one small activity for the coming week. The aim isn't to fix anyone's schedule. It's for each member to notice the link for themselves and leave with one concrete step.

What you'll need

- The 50-minute handout for each member, three pages, and a pen.
- A whiteboard or flip chart.

The session at a glance

MINUTES	STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS
0 to 5	Welcome and norms	A check-in, then the norms.
5 to 13	Activity and mood	The cycle, on the board.
13 to 28	Yesterday	Each member rebuilds yesterday hour by hour.
28 to 40	What stands out	Patterns, described, not judged.
40 to 50	One activity and close	A plan for the week, said out loud.

Welcome and norms, 0 to 5 minutes

Ask for a word about how each person is arriving, with passing allowed. Then set the norms out loud.

- **Nobody has to share.** Passing counts as full participation. Someone can do the whole activity silently and still get a great deal out of it.
- **No comparing days.** There's no better or worse day to bring. A day spent in bed is as useful to look at as a busy one.
- **No advice unless someone asks.** When a member describes a hard day, the urge is to tell them what would help. Hold it. Ask what they noticed instead.
- **What's said here stays here.** Say it anyway, since a log of someone's day can get personal. Be clear about the limits, too. You can't promise what other members will repeat, and you'll need to act if someone's safety is at risk.

Two ways in. Nobody ever has to show their page. In discussion, members can always talk about the process instead of the content, like what it was like to rate the hours, without saying what they did. Say so each session: "You never have to tell us what's on your page. If you want to talk, you can talk about what this was like."





Activity and mood, 5 to 13 minutes

Draw the cycle on the board: feeling low leads to doing less, doing less leads to feeling lower. Then draw the other direction.

SAY “When you feel low, you tend to do less. You skip the walk, put off the call, stay in. That makes sense in the moment, but doing less usually leaves you feeling worse, and then doing anything gets harder. It can work the other way too. Doing something that matters, even something small, often changes how a day feels. Today we’re going to look at how one day actually went.”

Yesterday, 13 to 28 minutes

Members work silently on page 2. Read the instruction aloud, then give time. Walking through the day in order helps memory.

SAY “Pick one feeling to follow, like low, anxious, or calm. For each hour from when you woke up, write a few words about what you were doing and rate that feeling from 0 to 100. Blank hours are fine. You’re not grading the day. You’re just writing down what happened.”

Pleasure and mastery. They’re optional, and worth adding for groups that can handle a little more. Pleasure is how much someone enjoyed the hour. Mastery is how much it felt like an accomplishment, given how things are for them right now. Getting dressed on a hard morning can be high mastery. The two often point to activities the feeling column misses.

What stands out, 28 to 40 minutes

What stands out. Keep it descriptive. Ask what was going on in the best and hardest hours. Avoid “you should,” and let members draw their own conclusions. If someone says “I wasted the whole day,” bring it back to noticing: “What do you see if you look at it as information?”

QUESTIONS

- What surprised you about how yesterday went?
- What was going on in your best hour, and in your hardest?
- Was there an hour that felt better than you expected?
- What’s one small thing that could fit into a day like yesterday?

One activity and close, 40 to 50 minutes

Planning the activity. Small and specific beats big and vague. “Walk to the corner after lunch on Tuesday” works better than “exercise more.” Ask for a day and a time, then what might get in the way and what they’ll do if it does. Plans that name an obstacle and a response ahead of time are carried out more often than plans without one. After the activity, members rate the feeling before and after. That rating is what lets them see what doing it actually did.

SAY “Most of us wait to feel like doing something before we do it. When mood is low, that feeling may not come. So we work from the outside in. You plan the activity, you do it anyway, and you notice what happens to the feeling afterward. Motivation often shows up after you start, not before.”

Do a round. Each member says their activity and when, in one sentence, with passing allowed.





What to watch for

- **Logs turning into scorecards.** Ratings and plans can become new ways to feel like a failure. Keep everything framed as information.
- **Waiting to feel ready.** Members may say they'll do the activity once they feel better. Name the pattern gently and go back to working from the outside in.
- **"Should" activities.** Plans made of chores someone thinks they ought to do tend not to happen. Make sure at least one activity brings enjoyment or connection.
- **Real barriers.** Money, pain, transportation, caregiving, and shift work are real limits, not excuses. Help the member find something that fits inside them.
- **Safety concerns.** If a member mentions suicide or self-harm, or it shows up on a page, respond calmly, don't explore the details in the group, check in with them privately right after, and follow your setting's risk procedures. In the US, 988 is available by call or text at any time.

Notes by setting

- **Inpatient units.** Rebuild a day on the unit instead of a day at home, and plan activities that can happen there, like a walk in the hall, a call, or a group. Don't depend on homework, and expect members to come and go.
- **Intensive outpatient and partial hospital programs.** When sessions are a day apart, a single evening of logging is plenty, and each plan should be small enough to try before the next session.
- **Substance use treatment.** Boredom and empty hours are common triggers, so the log often shows when risk is highest. Plan activities that fill those hours and steer away from places and people tied to use.
- **Outpatient groups.** Members have time to log and to try activities between sessions, so the follow-up carries more weight here.

Sources

Behavioral activation follows C. R. Martell, S. Dimidjian, and R. Herman-Dunn, Behavioral Activation for Depression, Guilford Press, 2010, and the revised brief treatment by C. W. Lejuez and colleagues, Behavior Modification, 2011. If-then plans draw on P. M. Gollwitzer and P. Sheeran, Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 2006. The forms in these handouts were written for Everyday Insight.

