

# GET GOING

Treating depression

Tending to something when the issue is too abstract, like emotions can be is quite an issue. Here's the tool to make it less abstract. Dolor is a broad term in Latin which seems to cover plenty of what we DON'T want – pain, ache, hurt, grief, sorrow, misery and anguish.

Print the PDF below, keep it close and add to it every waking hour for a week for starters. That's seven pages to get some perspective. Some people like it and don't mind, if that's the case I don't mind if you go for two or even three weeks initially.

This is the way to make things less abstract and get some perspective on the situation, to see what actions result in whatever emotions and symptoms. We'll track what you do and what the results are. Some specific things ought to lead to the earlier mentioned Dolor.

The results of the DDD is the foundation we then use to analyze and fix several things. If we don't know what affect energy, mood, pain, rumination/brooding and anxiety it's far harder to do something about it.

## So... How do you do it?

» Once per hour, take a minute to reflect on what you've done or what you're doing.

Behaviors are practically everything you do. Here called "activity", but the point is the same. You'll likely just be able to write down the "main activity" you've been tending to however. When you cook you do several things, as well as the fact that you might tend to kids, a phone, listen to something, do some dishes, pick up a thing or two from the floor or something else. Cleaning is equally wide, and regardless of if the activity is wide or not - it's not uncommon today to do several things in an hour, even if you've just "done one thing". "I worked in excel in my office" - and the phone rang twice, you texted four people, one coworker asked something and you had to run to the bathroom.

When you're doing this exercise - have this in mind.

How often do you truly do ONE thing? It's not necessary to keep to exactly one thing at all times, that would be an unreasonable demand to begin with, but it might give some perspective. It's alright if you just write

down the "one big thing" you did for the hour, but mash a couple in there if it fits and you did tend to "mainly two".

» What's your energy-level for the hour?

1-10. 10 is perfect. 1 is completely exhausted.

If you're tired, can you differ between the three types?

Physical, mental and sleepy.

» Add a word or two about your mood.

1-10 works on a scale between depressed and excited - but words might say more.

» If you're in pain add 1-10 here.

How much pain are you in? You might add where it hurts in the comment-field or to the right.

» What's your stress-level?

1-10. 10 is STRESSED. 1 is completely relaxed.

» Rumination and brooding.

Thinking about something again and again or having dark and bad thoughts?

» Are you anxious?

Add a level 1-10 here.

» Comment about anything that might be relevant.  
Food/drinks might affect mood (hangry!) as well as the  
rest of the parameters.

If you are really bothered by sleep we might tend to sleep CBT which seems to work really well. Start by filling out the part about sleep here and we'll get a picture of what it looks like.

Fill it out in the morning.

How well did you sleep? 1-10. Very subjective.

How many times did you wake up at night?

Did you feel fully rested when you woke up? Don't use the feeling from minute ONE, give it a few minutes, whatever that might be...

How long did it take to fall asleep yesterday?

# BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION

Do what's worth doing -  
to get where you'd like to be

Goals and having something to aim for is necessary.  
Why do anything at all if you don't?

We want you to have goals with every day. Find things that are worthwhile doing. Ideally things you'd LIKE to do. Things to feel meaning, interest, happiness and everything else worth feeling. You'll want to turn to doing more and more of what's worth tending to to break out of the passive, tired and unwanted just... existence. Just being, without purpose, and just drifting around tiredly, isn't really worthy. By getting up and doing there's a bigger chance of getting the consequences you want. Nothing ever really solves itself, I'm afraid, so it'll have to be done by your hand. Breaking the status quo is the next step.

Tending to this in an active, thoughtful and thought through way is useful for plenty of people. Sometimes I even wonder why HEALTHY people don't do this more. Acting will take you where you want to go. Neither being passive, nor doing the wrong thing will take you where you'd like to get. So you might have to try, experiment and evaluate, change things up, "fail" - and try again.

Let's see if we can make an example of the value of this by making an example of the opposite. That usually gets the point across good enough. You wake up and it's instantly a bad day. Perhaps you've slept poorly, perhaps you just usually think days suck as soon as they start. "Today I woke up - and the day was ruined". You're tired and you're feeling blue. Instantly. You're not in the mood of anything and you'd prefer to keep sleeping all day since you're not quite as aware of your existence when you sleep, and that's a comfort.

- What do you usually do less those days?
- What don't you want and what won't you do?
- Think about it. Take just a few seconds or even scribble down a few words and activities to help me get my point across.
- The day sucks, you're depressed and everything is somewhere between gray and black. What do you do, think and feel?

Some common things you don't do might be to exercise, socialize, cook decent food, solve problems, get outside and try new things.

Instead you might stay passive in bed or on the sofa, watch tv or similar, snack, keep to yourself and ruminate and brood.

The bad start keeps you doing what you don't truly want to do in the long run, but you get there by being emotional and get tempted into doing what's comfortable short-term rather than beneficial long-term.

What would you think in a day like that?

How would you feel in a day like that?

You're far from pleased.

It's rather thoughts like "I'm worthless and I'm not getting anything done."

Feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness.

Anxiety, shame, sadness and a total lack of initiative.

## **Thoughts will affect your physiology**

Frown and make an angry face and you'll signal anger to the brain and actually feel more angry than before quite soon. Suddenly there's a positive feedback loop keeping itself going. Being one emotion, living that emotion and doing what the emotion tells you to do will enhance it and keep it going. The thoughts at the

end of the day won't be better than at the start if you keep embracing the emotion and empowering it. Going to bed after a day like that might make your sleep horrible and you're back at it again the next morning. That'll have to come to an end.

It started out with you just blindly following the emotion without a thought of the consequences. Those behaviors keep the emotion around. Bad emotions are good guidelines if they keep you away from doing bad things and get you going with the good ones. If that's not the case, you can't really rely on those feelings to make progress. In cases like these everything works in perfect harmony and you get everything working towards more misery.

You'll have to actively break it by doing something. Something you've actually thought through or it'll keep bringing you down.

Step one, accept the emotion. The emotion is there, and for now that's fine. It's a notch harder to directly change the emotion than to just act in another way. Accept it and go from there. But then do what you ought to do. Not what the emotion tells you to.

The example of getting angry by having an angry face will however work in reverse as well. The classic with having a pencil in your mouth to force the lips to get close to a smile seems to work. Though, we'd like something more useful to rely on rather than just faking a smile all day. There's likely plenty of people who do so for quite some time in their lives and they're still miserable. You ought to act towards your goals in relation with your values to do processes you like and achieve what you appreciate. Things that matter.

So instead of doing what feels manageable really short term you'll have to start out by thinking a little and get some perspective. "It's like this now - what should I do about it?" You will, of course, have to work within your limits and boundaries, just as everyone else always have to. Tending to "pacing" is practically just to avoid demanding more of yourself than what's manageable and realistic in the more or less long term. Doing more than you've got capacity for isn't what I demand. I simply want you to strive in the right direction. What do you really like? It's not impossible that you'll answer "nothing" to this question right now. But generally and when things are closer to and rather as they should? Then what do you like?

## What do you WANT to do with your life?

Meet someone, achieve something, help a friend, do something "necessary". Positive things will lead to positive results and positive emotions. If "it's what you do that defines you" works - and you keep doing things that make you feel and be good, and ideally even make others feel good - that might be a part of the way out. Combat whatever you don't want and like with actions, waiting for something to just pass works fine if it's a cold, but this is no such thing. Just this approach and this small tool has been shown to work wonders.

## The theory and mechanics of things where behavior activation works really well is actually quite simple.

1. One thing or another (or why not a big bunch at once?) starts it all. Stress, negative life events, sickness, death or economic trouble...
2. Those lead to biochemical processes that signals for you to start feeling down, tired and a bunch of other depressive symptoms.

3. Activity drops. Sadness or depression makes you less active.
4. Getting less active gives less positive results. No surprise really.
5. When you lack positive results you get depressed, feel a lack of meaning and you get stuck. This one leads back to point 2.
6. Around and around it goes... Which is why it must be broken. The point of the exercise is to break the cycle!

When several things are entwined with each other it gets a bit more messy. Sleep and depressive troubles positively influence each other. That's a bad thing.

**Depression** makes you **passive** which makes you **sleep worse** so you get **tired** and **passive** - and passive made you **depressed**.

**Depression** gives you a **pessimistic view on most things**, you'll **worry, get anxiety and ruminate and brood** - that'll make you **sleep worse**, which will make you **irritated and depressed**.

Notice that **sleeping worse** is included in both and influence everything. Which might make it a good idea to tend to sleep as well. The lovely part with mentioning that? Behavioral activation might aid your sleep as well. If it doesn't quite do the trick, I recommend a CBT approach to tend to the matter.

"Depression" itself is hard to "just quit". It's a bunch of symptoms rather than a specific thing, so it'll have to be broken down into pieces. Feeling down is a large part of it, with negative thoughts - and that's generally affected through this.

Then there's a bunch of other symptoms such as worry and anxiety (where those might be quite well affected by this approach), ruminating and brooding and sleep troubles where sleep, as previously mentioned, can be affected decently with this approach as well. Being tired is likely an effect of other things than just sleep itself, though it's reasonable to start there. Irritation might be agitation from stress. When that's the case - handle the stress. It's a complex matter, but this is a crucial tool to get going.

You'll start out by thinking of what you're doing too much or too little of.

Every single problem - that is within your control - could be defined as you doing too much or too little of something. We'd like to tend to behaviors to influence thoughts and emotions. What you do or don't do will likely result in the thoughts and emotions you look at as problems. Those are what we need to pinpoint - to be able to change them.

External factors that are outside of your control are not part of the exercise. Tend to your own behaviors, thoughts and emotions. That's likely hard enough, anyway.

To behaviors we count actual verbs that other people can witness you doing in this case, even though thoughts and emotions might count as well. Examples of behaviors might be to eat or comfort eating, watch tv, argue, play video games, ruminate, gamble, drink wine, surf the web, check Facebook, work out, look for confirmation, walk, exercise, paint, say no, sit in the sun, play, eat ice cream or have sex.

When depressed it's common to:

Sleep too much - perhaps to avoid other things.

Avoid things that made you feel good earlier, such as working out or social engagement.

Play video-games, watch TV or tending to internet in unreasonable amounts.

Take worse care about yourself by neglecting eating well, showers and chores even though you'd feel better if you did do those things.

Thoughts and emotions are what happens mainly within your head.

- Emotions
- Sorrow
- Indifference
- Dissatisfaction
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Regret
- Shame
- Meaninglessness
- Feeling down
- I'm-not-good-enough
- Anger

## But also

- Happiness
- Interest
- Curiosity
- Ideas
- Love
- Hope
- Expectation
- Feeling proud, energetic, engaged and focused

## **The practical part**

Once here, you could use the examples above, but try not to. Think and give it some time. It's not going to figure itself out, but if YOU figure it out it might be quite rewarding at the other end of it.

» Make four columns.

"Behaviors I do too little."

"Behaviors I do too much."

"Thoughts and emotions I have too little of."

"Thoughts and emotions I have too much of."

Time to think.

» What will happen if you do MORE of your problematic behaviors that you already do too much of?

Will it lead to more or less of the thoughts or emotions you'd like, or rather the opposite?

If you do more of the problematic behaviors, what will happen with what you're already doing too little of?

Will it result in a positive or negative effect on what you truly do want to do?

And then - a bit more realistically and pragmatic - what will happen if you do the opposite?

» What will happen if you do MORE of what you're doing TOO LITTLE of?

What will happen with what you're already doing too much of?

What will happen with your thoughts and emotions?

What will happen if you do less of what you're doing too much of?

What will happen with what you're doing too little of?

What will happen with your thoughts and emotions?

If you'd like to start at once, it's usually the best idea to do more of what you're doing too little of.

This has made a great difference to those who've implemented it earlier. Spending some time to understand what the true problem is in a concrete, solid and tangible way, and to then be able to change it in a really practical way rather than having to tend to something as vague as "depression". Get some perspective with the exercise to then be able to plan when to do more of what you're doing too little of and what to do instead of what you're doing too much of - and through that change what you're actually doing with your days.