

LIVING WITH PURPOSE: Clinician Guide

Natalie Hundt, PhD, Maria Armento, PhD, Jeffrey Cully, PhD



The contents of this manual do not represent the views of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or the U.S. government. The graphic design of the manual was supported by the VA South Central Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC).

This manual can be downloaded at www.mirecc.va.gov/VISN16/living-with-purpose-manual.asp. For a hardcopy of the manual, please contact VISN16SCMIRECCEducation@va.gov. Questions for the authors about the content in this manual may be directed to Natalie.Hundt@va.gov.

INTRODUCTION

This guide provides a brief overview of a new guided self-help resource for Veterans with depression. It incorporates:

Behavioral Activation - An empirically supported treatment for depression.

Goal Setting - A technique for encouraging Veterans to become more active in rewarding activities.

Living with Purpose is a guided self-help workbook for Veterans experiencing mild to moderate depression to learn evidence-based skills for reducing depression symptoms by:

- Increasing pleasant activities
- Working on important values in life
- Setting goals



How this workbook can be helpful for Veterans

Many Veterans with depression do not engage in psychotherapy because of barriers like busy work schedules, chronic health conditions, or lack of transportation. This workbook provides an alternative that may better fit into Veterans' busy lives.

This workbook can also be helpful as an adjunct to psychotherapy, allowing Veterans to learn skills independently between sessions. This allows the clinician to use face-to-face time to teach more advanced coping skills.

Veterans who may benefit from this workbook:

- Have mild to moderate depression
- Are interested in self-management of depression May have mild comorbid disorders such as anxiety or PTSD

Have a mental health clinician or case manager at VA with whom they can meet monthly and receive encouragement and have questions answered.

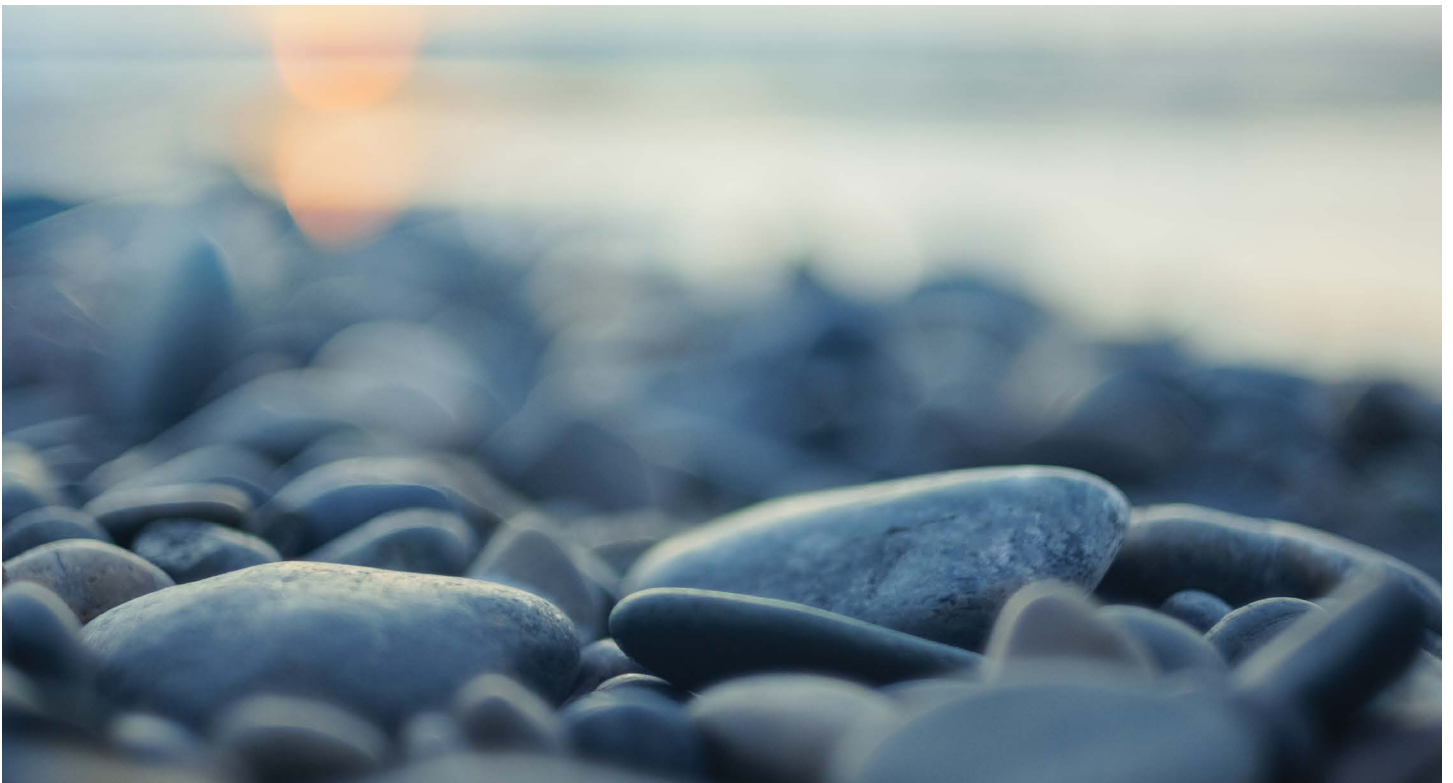
CLINICIANS

This workbook may not be appropriate for Veterans who have:

- Significant visual impairments or low literacy
- Severe depression
- Serious thoughts of suicide or self-harm
- Serious comorbid disorders (e.g., dementia, bipolar disorder, or substance dependence)

This workbook is appropriate for the following clinicians:

- Anyone who works with depressed Veterans, such as:
 - ✓ Case managers
 - ✓ Social workers
 - ✓ Nurse practitioners
 - ✓ Psychiatrists
 - ✓ Psychologists
- You do not need to have training in psychotherapy



OVERVIEW OF BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION

Behavioral Activation (BA) is a treatment approach for depression that has evolved from Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT). Clinical trials have indicated that BA is as effective as full CBT or antidepressant medications (Dimidjian et al., 2006).

According to behavioral theory, depression is maintained by a lack of positive reinforcement. Individuals who are depressed may withdraw from hobbies and social events, avoid responsibilities, and give up life goals. Instead, they may spend a great deal of time sleeping, watching TV, or simply ruminating about their depression.

Unfortunately, attempts to cope with negative emotions can cause unintended consequences, including less engagement in rewarding experiences.

In Behavioral Activation, the Veteran learns how their behaviors are connected to their moods, monitors their daily activities, identifies valued life directions, sets goals for engaging in more positive and meaningful activities, and then schedules and completes these activities.



Empirical Support

Behavioral Activation has been shown to be helpful for a variety of populations with depression:

- Adults (Dimidjian et al., 2006)
- Older adults (Lazzarri et al., 2011)
- Veterans (Gross, 2011)
- Individuals with physical health conditions (Hopko et al., 2011)
- Individuals with anxiety (Hopko, Lejuez, & Hopko, 2004)

How to use the workbook

- Get familiar with the topics in the workbook
- Identify an appropriate Veteran
- Assess their interest in using a guided self-help approach
- Provide the Veteran with a copy of the workbook



OVERVIEW OF BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION

You might say something like this to the Veteran:

This workbook explains Behavioral Activation, a technique that has been shown to be helpful for reducing depression symptoms.

In this workbook, you will learn about how your behaviors are connected to your moods, keep track of your daily activities, identify values in life, and set goals for engaging in more positive and meaningful activities.

This workbook will guide you through this process and demonstrate how you can use these ideas in your everyday life. If you have any questions, write those down so you can ask me during our next appointment.

I'll make sure to remember to ask you about whether you worked on these things and if you have noticed changes in your life or moods. Do you have any questions so far?



OVERVIEW OF BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION

It is crucial to revisit the topic of this workbook during the Veteran's follow up sessions. First, it reminds the Veteran to bring up any questions or difficulties. Second, it reinforces the Veteran's attempts to change and sends the message that their behaviors are an important part of their recovery. Finally, it gives you an opportunity to collaboratively work with the Veteran to overcome barriers (tips included in Chapters 8 and 9 of the workbook).

During follow-up appointments, set aside a few minutes to check in on their use of the workbook. Possible questions:

- "What goals have you set? What activities have you worked on?"
- "Have you noticed any changes in your mood when you're being more active or doing things you enjoy?"
- "Do you have any questions for me about anything in the workbook?"
- "If you do start working on these goals, how might your life be different?"

TIMELINE	CLINICIAN'S ACTIONS	TIME REQUIRED
Month 1	Conducts scheduled appointment and gives Veteran the workbook with a brief explanation.	2-3 minutes
Month 2	Asks Veteran whether they have been using the workbook, what was helpful, and whether they have any questions.	5 minutes
Month 3	Helps Veteran problem solve around difficulty meeting goals.	3 minutes
Month 4	Encourages Veteran to keep using workbook.	3 minutes
Month 5	Asks Veteran what changes they have noticed since they started using the workbook and praises them for their hard work.	3 minutes

FURTHER READING

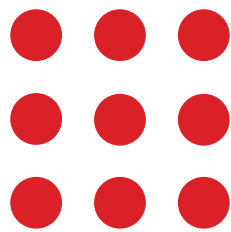
For clinicians interested in learning more about Behavioral Activation:

Addis, M.E. & Martell, C.R. (2004). *Overcoming Depression One Step at a Time*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Productions, Inc.

Lejuez, C.W., Hopko, D.R., & Hopko, S.D. (2001). A brief behavioral activation treatment for depression: Treatment manual. *Behavior Modification*, 25(2), 255-286. <http://web.utk.edu/~dhopko/BATDmanual.pdf>

Martell, C.R., Dimidjian, S., & Herman-Dunn. (2010). *Behavioral Activation for Depression: A Clinician's Guide*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.





**Veterans
Crisis Line**

DIAL 988 then PRESS 1