

Mood and motivation

Ten original resources for More Than Therapy. Choose a page that fits the client's priorities and review the clinical notes before use. The materials support professional care and are not validated assessments.

MOO01 Mapping Activity and Energy

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO02 Taking a Small Meaningful Step

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO03 Comparing Expectations With Experience

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO04 Asking for Support on Low Days

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO05 Responding to Self Criticism Fairly

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO06 Planning for a Difficult Morning

Worksheet | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO07 Understanding Mood and Action

Handout | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO08 Exploring Motivation Without Pressure

Clinician script | 10 to 15 minutes

MOO09 Building a Meaningful Activity Plan

Session guide | 50 minutes

MOO10 Noticing What Still Matters

Journal prompts | 10 to 15 minutes

Fillable responses work in compatible PDF readers. Save each completed worksheet separately in an approved record system.

Clinical notes

Mood and motivation

MOO01 Mapping Activity and Energy

Use descriptive observations rather than interpreting the page as a depression measure. Explore structural barriers, disability, medical factors, and cultural meanings of activity. Scale the task to current capacity.

MOO02 Taking a Small Meaningful Step

Do not equate activity completion with worth or recovery. Assess significant deterioration and safety concerns directly. Accommodate fatigue, pain, poverty, caregiving, and other barriers instead of prescribing increased activity indiscriminately.

MOO03 Comparing Expectations With Experience

These descriptions are informal tracking, not validated symptom scores. Reinforce observation and flexibility. Explore whether a mismatch reflects inaccessible demands, mood related expectations, or other contextual factors before drawing conclusions.

MOO04 Asking for Support on Low Days

Explore whether identified contacts are safe and available. Avoid assuming family support or easy service access. Distinguish a social support plan from individualized safety planning when there are suicide or self harm concerns.

MOO05 Responding to Self Criticism Fairly

Avoid insisting on positive affirmations that feel false. Explore shame, discrimination, perfectionism, and relationship context. If self criticism is linked to significant risk, address safety directly rather than continuing a worksheet alone.

MOO06 Planning for a Difficult Morning

Tailor to disability, work schedules, caregiving, and available resources. Avoid implying that a routine treats severe depression on its own. Consider medical assessment and direct safety assessment when clinically indicated.

MOO07 Understanding Mood and Action

Explain behavioral activation as one approach within an individualized plan. Do not use this handout to diagnose depression or overlook bipolar presentations, medical causes, substance effects, or urgent support needs.

MOO08 Exploring Motivation Without Pressure

Assess worsening functioning and safety needs directly when indicated. Avoid treating low energy as unwillingness. Practical obstacles and health factors may require coordinated support beyond a motivation conversation.

MOO09 Building a Meaningful Activity Plan

Use adult depression guidance within competence and an individualized plan. Adapt for severe symptoms, health conditions, and contextual constraints. This single session is not a complete course of behavioral activation treatment.

MOO10 Noticing What Still Matters

Avoid gratitude pressure or interpreting limited responses as lack of engagement. Offer dictation, drawing, or discussion. Watch for rumination and shift toward support, assessment, or action when writing deepens distress.

Mapping Activity and Energy

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Observe relationships between daily activity, energy, and meaning.

Low mood can make days feel blurred together. Choose one recent day and notice what you did, how your energy shifted, and what gave even a small sense of connection or accomplishment. You are gathering information, not grading yourself.

Look for actual conditions

Recall a morning, afternoon, and evening activity. Note practical factors such as sleep, pain, caregiving, food, access, or work demands. An activity may matter even when it does not feel enjoyable. Rest can also be intentional and useful.

Choose one experiment

Look for something to repeat, simplify, or change. For example, a short walk with a friend may have offered connection, while a complicated errand used more energy than expected. Select one realistic adjustment and decide what you want to notice afterwards.

Morning activity, energy, and what helped or drained me

Afternoon activity, energy, and what helped or drained me

Evening activity, energy, and what helped or drained me

One activity I will repeat or adjust and what I will observe

Taking a Small Meaningful Step

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Translate a personally meaningful direction into one achievable action.

Motivation may be difficult to find when your mood is low. Choose an area of life that matters to you and design a step small enough to begin. The first goal is trying and learning, not feeling better immediately.

Start with meaning

Select a direction such as caring for yourself, maintaining a relationship, learning, or contributing. Translate it into an observable action. "Take care of myself" could become "Put a glass of water beside my chair" or "Send a message to schedule an appointment."

Make the first step easier

Specify where and when you will begin. Reduce preparation, invite support, or make a two minute version. If you cannot do it, notice the barrier and adjust the plan. A smaller step is useful information about what your current situation requires.

An area of life I care about and why it matters

The smallest observable action I can take

When and where I will start and what could make starting easier

What I noticed afterwards and my next adjustment

Comparing Expectations With Experience

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Compare expected and actual experiences to guide an activity plan.

When mood is low, it can be hard to predict how an activity will feel. Choose one manageable activity and compare your expectation with your experience. The result helps you plan; it is not a test you must pass.

Make a prediction

Before the activity, describe the effort you expect and whether you expect pleasure, connection, or a sense of accomplishment. You may use words such as low, moderate, or high. Pick an activity that fits your health, resources, and responsibilities.

Notice more than enjoyment

Afterwards, record what actually happened. Something can be worthwhile without being fun. If the activity was draining or unhelpful, identify whether its timing, length, setting, or expectations need to change. One attempt does not determine whether the activity will always help.

The activity, date, and realistic amount of time

Before trying it I expect this effort and this experience

After trying it I noticed this effort and this experience

What I learned and what I would repeat or change

Asking for Support on Low Days

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Prepare a specific support request and an alternative route.

Support can be easier to use when the request is specific. Think about a day when your mood is low and identify one person or service that could help with a practical task, companionship, or getting care.

Match the request to the need

Name what would help today. Examples include sitting together for ten minutes, getting a ride to an appointment, sharing a meal, or having someone check in later. The other person may be unable to help; that does not mean the need is unimportant.

Prepare more than one route

Write a short request and a backup option. You can include a boundary: "I would appreciate company without advice right now." If low mood is worsening or you feel unable to stay safe, use your clinician's agreed support or urgent care plan instead of relying only on informal contact.

What I need and how another person could help

A person or service I can contact and how to reach them

The words I could use to make my request

My backup if that option is unavailable

Responding to Self Criticism Fairly

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Replace a global self attack with a specific and compassionate response.

Low mood and harsh self talk can reinforce each other. Choose one critical statement that appeared recently. This page helps you describe the situation accurately and respond in language that allows responsibility without attacking your whole identity.

Separate the event from the label

Notice the difference between "I did not return the call" and "I am a terrible friend." The first names a behavior you can address. The second turns one event into a verdict about you. Context can explain difficulty without erasing its impact.

Pair fairness with action

Ask what you would say to someone you care about in the same circumstances. Keep the response believable. For example, "I have been overwhelmed, and that call mattered. I can send a brief apology and suggest another time." Choose repair or support where it fits.

What happened and the critical statement that followed

Relevant context and any responsibility I want to acknowledge

A fairer response I can believe

One repair, care, or support action I can take

Planning for a Difficult Morning

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Create a flexible morning plan that prioritizes essential needs.

Some mornings require a simpler plan. Choose a few actions that help you meet essential needs and begin the day at a realistic pace. This page is for reducing decisions, not proving productivity or pushing through illness.

Identify the essentials

Choose up to three basics that fit your circumstances, such as prescribed medication as directed, food or water, hygiene, childcare, or contacting work. Set out one item the night before if that helps. Include rest or assistance when needed.

Create a flexible version

For each action, name a smaller version and a source of support. "Make breakfast" might become "Eat a prepared snack." Decide what can wait. If symptoms or functioning have changed substantially, contact an appropriate health professional rather than assuming you only need a better routine.

My three essential needs for a difficult morning

The smallest workable version of each action

One preparation or support that can reduce the load

What can wait and when I will check how I am doing

Understanding Mood and Action

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Explain how meaningful activity can fit within care for low mood.

Mood can affect energy, concentration, relationships, and the actions available to us. Actions and circumstances can also affect mood. A useful plan pays attention to both personal choices and the conditions that make those choices easier or harder.

Why small actions can matter

A difficult period may lead to less contact, fewer rewarding activities, and more unfinished tasks. Carefully chosen activities can help reconnect a person with support, routine, or meaning. This does not require waiting for enthusiasm, and it does not mean that being busy is the goal.

What a useful experiment looks like

Choose something specific, realistic, and personally meaningful. Predict what you expect, try a manageable version, and review what happened. Include care and rest alongside activity. If the task was too demanding, revise it rather than judging yourself.

When a fuller assessment helps

Persistent low mood, loss of interest, or reduced functioning deserve professional attention. A clinician may explore health conditions, medication effects, sleep, substance use, major stressors, and safety. New periods of unusually high energy or much less need for sleep also deserve discussion with a qualified professional.

A question I want to bring to my clinician and an action I want to explore

Exploring Motivation Without Pressure

Mood and motivation | Clinicians | 10 to 15 minutes

Explore low motivation with respect and co-design a realistic next step.

Use this dialogue when a client says they know what to do but cannot begin. Explore barriers and meaning before offering strategies. The client may need rest, practical assistance, assessment, or a different goal.

Understand the stuck point

Clinician: "When you think about starting, what feels hardest?" Client: "Everything takes too much effort." Clinician: "Even a small task feels expensive right now. Can we look at what your day is asking of you?" Ask about energy, pain, sleep, responsibilities, and available support without assuming the cause.

Find a reason that belongs to the client

Clinician: "If one thing felt a little more manageable this week, what would you want it to be?" Client: "I want to answer my sister." Clinician: "What matters about that connection?" Reflect the meaning in the client's own words before planning.

Offer a choice of next steps

Clinician: "Would you like to make a tiny version, identify support, or leave planning for another time?" If they choose a step: "Could a one sentence text count? What would make that possible?" If they decline: "What would be more useful from me today?" Review the experience without grading completion.

The barrier, personal reason, and next choice in the client's words

Building a Meaningful Activity Plan

Mood and motivation | Clinicians | 50 minutes

Structure a session around one achievable and meaningful activity.

Outcome: the client identifies one meaningful activity, adjusts it to current capacity, and chooses how to review the result. Use collaborative language throughout. The client can pause, decline an exercise, or select a different priority.

Minutes 0 to 15

0 to 5: check mood, functioning, and immediate safety needs. 5 to 10: agree on a priority and ask what has been possible since the last meeting. 10 to 15: use MOO01 to notice patterns in activity, energy, demands, and support.

Minutes 15 to 40

15 to 25: use MOO02 to connect an action with personal meaning. 25 to 35: make the action smaller, specify timing, and identify barriers; use MOO04 if help is needed. 35 to 40: rehearse the first step and record an expectation using MOO03.

Minutes 40 to 50

40 to 45: ask whether the plan feels realistic and revise it with the client. 45 to 50: agree on what to observe, how to respond if the plan is not completed, and when to review it. Close with feedback and a brief check in. If assessment needs take priority, replace activity planning with appropriate care coordination.

Activity, smallest version, support, timing, and review plan

Noticing What Still Matters

Mood and motivation | Adults | 10 to 15 minutes

Recognize effort and identify a personally meaningful direction during low mood.

When mood is low, meaning can feel distant. You do not have to produce gratitude or find a positive lesson. Use these prompts to notice what you care about, what you are carrying, and what kind of support might help.

Begin with an honest description

Write about your day in ordinary language. Include effort that might be invisible to others, such as getting out of bed, asking for help, attending work, or choosing rest. A difficult day can contain care without feeling rewarding.

Let meaning remain small

Look for one relationship, interest, responsibility, or value you want to protect. You can care about it while feeling disconnected from it. End with a small action or a request for support, and stop writing if the exercise becomes another demand.

What has been difficult and what effort have I been making?

What still matters to me even if I do not feel connected to it?

What need or limit deserves more attention?

One small act of care or support I could allow this week

Clinical foundations

These sources inform the general clinical concepts. The original resources in this collection are not validated instruments or publisher-endorsed protocols. Links checked October 26, 2026.

S01 Psychotherapies

National Institute of Mental Health | n.d.

General psychotherapy principles, collaborative goals, skills practice, and choosing care.

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies>

S02 Depression in adults treatment and management NG222

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence | 2022

Adult depression care, shared decisions, and behavioral and psychological treatment options.

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng222>

S04 Doing What Matters in Times of Stress An Illustrated Guide

World Health Organization | 2020

Stress coping, present moment awareness, values, and kindness. Original exercises in this library are separate from the WHO guide.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003927>