



## BEHAVIORAL ACTIVATION FOR DEPRESSION. A CLINICIAN'S GUIDE

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**T**his book, *Behavioral activation for depression*, is an extremely practical book, based on scientific evidence regarding the results of behavioural activation, and it can also be applied by psychologists from different theoretical approaches. I believe that it is a tool that every psychologist should have as a reference. It is very well written and explained, and includes worksheets for carrying out the evaluation, monitoring and treatment of patients. Although the subject focuses on depression, behavioural activation (BA) can be applied to all kinds of problems. BA is beneficial to the health of all people and can be used to treat different pathologies. The text invites us to look to the past and the behavioural roots of psychology, emphasizing the importance of behaviour and how its control and management can affect the psychology of the individual. Starting from the outside, it begins with the observable through which it reaches the unobservable. BA is now part of the treatment program in cognitive-behavioural therapies, but here it is presented separately, observing carefully and in depth each of its components and the results observed in depressive patients. BA involves a return to the behavioural roots and it is built on the foundation of work by authors such as Charles B. Ferster, Peter M. Lewinsohn, Lynn P. Rehm and Aaron T. Beck. BA is a brief and structured treatment for depression, which has as its objective behavioural activation and its subsequent impact on mood. The fundamental principles of BA that are developed throughout the book are:

- ✓ Principle 1: The key to change how people feel is to help them change what they do.
- ✓ Principle 2: Changes in life can lead to depression and

short term adaptation strategies can end up blocking people over time.

- ✓ Principle 3: The first clues to understanding what will work as an antidepressant for a particular client lie in what precedes and what follows the client's significant behaviours.
- ✓ Principle 4: Activities are structured and programmed following a plan, not a mood state.
- ✓ Principle 5: Change is easier when you start with something small.
- ✓ Principle 6: The emphasis is on activities that are reinforced by nature.
- ✓ Principle 7: The therapist acts as a coach.
- ✓ Principle 8: An empirical approach to problem solving is insisted on and it is recognized that all the results are useful.
- ✓ Principle 9: Don't say it; do it!
- ✓ Principle 10: Potential and actual barriers for activation are detected.

The therapy is a shared work, together with the client, and it is structured. All therapy sessions are structured by setting an agenda, doing tasks and reviewing the progress with the client. The various types of assignments are monitoring the activity and mood, programming the activity, structuring the tasks, grading the activity, exercises of attention to experience, and interest in maintaining activation. The book also shows us the style and attitude that an effective BA therapist must have: keeping to the session structure, remaining action-oriented, validating the clients' experiences, collaborating with clients, refraining from making judgments, expressing warmth and being honest with clients, and reinforcing the reports or examples of adaptive behaviour. The basis of BA is the process of validating problems and treating them. One of the main tasks of the BA therapist is to begin to clarify the



relationship between the background and the significant behaviours, paying attention to the situations in which a particular behaviour occurs and the functions it serves. The table of activities is the main tool used for the BA rating. There are several elements to be monitored using the table of activities: activity, mood or feelings at the time of the activity, and the intensity of the mood. One can also monitor the sense of mastery or pleasure associated with the activity. The key to understanding what will work as an antidepressant element lies in the observation of what happens before and after the behaviour. The book includes a number of basic principles that should be identified in collaboration with the client and as treatment objectives. During interventions in BA, the client is asked to act according to a predetermined plan or goal, not according to a feeling or internal state. The therapist's task is to act as a coach at all times, actively helping and working with clients to identify and solve problems. The thought is treated as a problem behaviour, and ruminative processes are identified and worked on. Together, the different elements in BA make an acronym in English: **ACTIVATE**. The various components of this term are:

- ✓ **A (Assess)**: Assess the factors that contribute to the client's depression.
- ✓ **C (Counter)**: Counter the avoidance with a structured activation and effective problem solving.
- ✓ **T (Time)**: Dedicate time to the specific elements.
- ✓ **I (Include)**: Include monitoring.
- ✓ **V (Validate)**: Validate.
- ✓ **A (Assign)**: Assign activities.
- ✓ **T (Trouble shoot)**: Identify problems and develop solutions.
- ✓ **E (Encourage)**: Motivate.

To summarize, we can say that cognitive and behavioural interventions provide a more long-lasting prevention against relapse than medication alone. The therapy has long-term benefits and ones that medication cannot deliver. The book emphasizes change, and how this is easier when one starts with something small and when all elements are specified explicitly. Throughout the whole book, there is a constant motivation towards change and problem solving, through the precise and rigorous analysis of all influences, using client validation and positive reinforcement, and also working on perseverance in order to maintain the progress that is made.



## Normas para la publicidad en las publicaciones del Consejo General de la Psicología de España

La Junta de Gobierno del COP ha tomado la decisión de acomodar, de forma más efectiva, el contenido de la publicidad que se inserta en sus publicaciones con los principios que respalda públicamente en torno a la defensa de la Psicología como ciencia y profesión.

La publicidad que se inserte en los medios de comunicación del COP se atenderá, en todos los casos, a los principios éticos, de decoro y de defensa de la Psicología como ciencia y profesión que son exigibles a una organización como el COP.

En este sentido, y desde hace ya bastante tiempo, la Organización Colegial ha venido manteniendo, en diversos foros tanto oficiales como profesionales, que la formación post-grado, referida explícitamente a algún ámbito de la Psicología, debería estar encaminada únicamente a psicólogos. Así mismo, el COP, en su calidad de miembro de la EFPA (Federación Europea de Asociaciones de Psicólogos), está comprometido con el desarrollo del Certificado de Acreditación para Psicólogos Especialistas en Psicoterapia, y los principios que lo sustentan, siendo uno de los más relevantes, la consideración de que la formación especializada en Psicoterapia debe estar ligada a una formación básica en Psicología, y articulada en torno a unos criterios exigentes de calidad.

En consecuencia, y con el ánimo de dar un mensaje claro y coherente a nuestros colegiados y a la sociedad en general, la publicidad de post-grado que se inserte en las publicaciones del COP deberá guardar las siguientes normas:

**1** Cuando se inserte publicidad en alguna de las publicaciones del Consejo General de la Psicología de España (Infocop, Infocop Online, Papeles del Psicólogo, Psychology in Spain, Boletines de distribución por correo electrónico) que haga referencia expresa o implícita a formación postgrado en algún campo de la Psicología, dicha formación deberá estar dirigida únicamente a psicólogos, y el texto del anuncio deberá decir expresamente que dicha formación está dirigida únicamente a psicólogos.

**2** Cuando se inserte publicidad en alguna de sus publicaciones (Infocop, Infocop Online, Papeles del Psicólogo, Psychology in Spain, Boletines de distribución por correo electrónico) que haga referencia expresa o implícita a formación en el campo de la Psicoterapia, dicha formación deberá estar dirigida únicamente a médicos y psicólogos, y el texto del anuncio deberá decir expresamente que dicha formación está dirigida únicamente a psicólogos o médicos.

**3** En ningún caso, los anuncios insertados en cualquier publicación colegial podrán incluir referencia alguna a acreditaciones concedidas por sociedades nacionales o internacionales que no hayan suscrito los correspondientes acuerdos de reconocimiento mutuo con la EFPA (Federación Europea de Asociaciones de Psicólogos) o el Consejo General de la Psicología de España. Se excluyen de esta norma las acreditaciones concedidas por organismos oficiales españoles.

Consejo General de la Psicología de España