

Treatment for PTSD with Comorbid Depression

People with PTSD often also experience significant depression. Although it is usually best to treat the PTSD first (on the assumption that the depression will improve once the PTSD symptoms reduce), it is sometimes worth addressing the depression directly during the course of treatment for PTSD. While there are several evidence based treatments for depression, the best place to start is often activity scheduling. This is useful for trauma survivors even in the absence of depression, especially for those who have not resumed their normal role, since it provides much needed structure to their day to day lives.

In explaining this approach to depressed clients, building their motivation is crucial and it is important to discuss the benefits. The systematic scheduling of activities has a range of potential positive mental health implications including:

- Increased enjoyment and quality of life
- Feeling a greater sense of control over one's life
- Distraction from problems and negative thoughts
- Feeling less tired, having more energy
- Improved motivation – the more you do, the more you'll feel like doing
- Improved capacity to think clearly
- Improved relationships with others

In working collaboratively with clients to construct an activity schedule, we teach them to plan events through their day, to record what they actually did, and to review their sense of mastery and pleasure for each event. This latter phase helps to attack negative thoughts such as “I can't do anything right” and “I don't enjoy anything any more”.

An activity monitoring sheet is provided below. In helping the client to generate activities, it is often useful to build in certain events each day. For example, they may wish to include therapy homework, physical exercise (if only a walk), some housework and/or study, and at least one pleasant event everyday. By structuring these activities into a timetable, the client feels more in control and is more likely to achieve these daily goals.

People with depression often find it hard to generate ideas for activities that they may find enjoyable. To assist with this, many therapists use a *Pleasant Events Schedule* (see below). Encourage the client to find at least a few things to schedule from this long list of potentially enjoyable activities.

Daily Activity Schedule

This pro forma is designed to help people to plan and track their activities.

PROSPECTIVE: Plan your activities on an hour-by-hour basis at the start of the day Date: _____	RETROSPECTIVE: At the end of the day, record what you actually did and rate each activity with an M for mastery or a P for pleasure
8-9 am	
9-10 am	
10-11am	
11-12pm	
12-1pm	
1-2pm	
2-3pm	
3-4pm	
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<p>PROSPECTIVE:</p> <p>Plan your activities on an hour-by-hour basis at the start of the day</p> <p>Date: _____</p>	<p>RETROSPECTIVE:</p> <p>At the end of the day, record what you actually did and rate each activity with an M for mastery or a P for pleasure</p>
4-5pm	
5-6pm	
6-7pm	
7-8pm	
8-9pm	
9-midnight	

* Rate mastery and pleasure activities from 0 to 5: the higher the number, the greater the sense of satisfaction.

Pleasant Events Schedule

Adapted from D. J. MacPhillamy & P. M. Lewinsohn, Pleasant Events Schedule, Form III-S, University of Oregon, Mimeograph, 1971.

Read through the following list of pleasant events and choose a few that you would be willing to try and/or schedule into your weekly routine	
Being in the country	Playing golf
Wearing expensive or formal clothes	Fishing
Listening to sounds of nature	Seeing grandchildren
Contributing to charities or political groups	Rearranging or redecorating your room/house
Dating, courting	Going to a health club, or gym
Talking about sports	Playing golf
Having friends come to visit	Fishing
Meeting someone new	Listening to music
Going out to visit friends	Having coffee, tea etc., with friends
Going to a rock concert	Gardening, landscaping
Giving gifts	Horseback riding
Playing football or cricket	Going to a sports event
Reading stories, novels, poems, plays, magazines, newspapers	Protesting social, political, or environmental conditions
Planning trips or holidays	Having a sauna
Photography	Going for a bike ride
Buying things for yourself	Acting
Wrestling or boxing	Taking a long, hot bath
Learning a language	Getting a massage or back rub
Using cologne, perfume	Dancing
Going to a bar, tavern, club	Water skiing, surfing, diving
Washing your hair	Sitting or lying in the sun
Going to lectures or talks	Travelling
Going to a restaurant	Cooking meals
Creating or arranging songs	Going to the movies
Washing your hair	Being in the city

Exploring (hiking away from known routes)	Singing
Playing music	Going to a barber or beautician
Playing cards or board games	Going to a party
Doing puzzles or maths games	Being with someone you love
Swimming	Going to church functions
Going to the beach	Going to the library
Having lunch with friends or associates	Playing a musical instrument
Running, jogging	Shopping
Playing tennis	Snow skiing, ice skating
Walking barefoot	Preparing a new or special dish
Bushwalking	Wearing informal clothes, "dressing down"
Driving long distances	Beachcombing
Playing cards or board games	Riding a motorcycle
Doing puzzles or maths games	Attending the opera, ballet, or a play
Swimming	Just sitting and thinking
Playing videogames	Looking at the stars or the moon
Playing frisbee or catch	Going to a fair, show, circus, zoo, fun park
Woodworking, carpentry	Surfing the net
Talking about philosophy or religion	Doing housework or laundry, cleaning things
Writing stories, novels, poems, plays, articles	Wearing new clothes
Writing letters, cards, or notes	Going to auctions, garage sales, etc.
Watching people	