Activity and mood diary

Use brief notes or estimates. Record selected examples afterwards; there is no need to monitor constantly.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

When and how often to record

e.g. Brief notes at a few agreed times for three days.

ENTRY 1 - date / time: _____

Activity and approximate time

e.g. 10 am: made breakfast.

Mood: 0 very low - 10 very good

e.g. Mood 3/10.

Connection, interest or achievement

e.g. A small sense of achievement.

What I noticed about the activity

e.g. Starting was difficult; eating gave the morning some structure.

ENTRY 2 - date / time: _____

Activity and approximate time

Mood: 0 very low - 10 very good

Connection, interest or achievement

What I noticed about the activity

Pattern noticed / next step

e.g. Review which small activities help daily life, even if mood changes slowly.

Copyright Calm Breathing Therapies

Using this resource

Activity and mood diary

What this helps with

Low mood can make days blur together, particularly when you have less energy or withdraw from other people. A brief diary makes patterns more visible. It helps you notice what you are doing, what happens to mood and whether there are moments of connection, interest or accomplishment. You are collecting information rather than aiming for a busy or happy day. Include rest and ordinary self-care; their value may not show up as an immediate rise in mood.

How to use it

1. Choose a manageable day or part of a day to record.
2. Write short notes about activities, including rest and time spent thinking or scrolling.
3. Rate mood roughly from 0 (very low) to 10 (best for you), where helpful.
4. Notice any connection, interest or sense of doing something worthwhile, even briefly.
5. Review the pattern once and choose one small change to try.

A fictional worked example

Ellie expects that everything will feel equally empty. On Tuesday she records staying in bed scrolling, making lunch and taking a short walk to buy milk. Mood remains low, but making lunch gives a small sense of looking after herself, and greeting the shop assistant offers a moment of contact. An evening spent trying to work out why she feels this way leaves her more stuck. The diary does not prove that a walk will cure her depression. It suggests a modest next experiment: getting dressed and stepping outside for a brief, planned errand on another day, with rest afterwards if needed.

Keep in mind

Use approximate notes, not constant self-monitoring. If recording increases self-criticism, simplify the task or complete it with support. Respect physical health limits and access needs. Persistent or worsening symptoms, marked loss of functioning or difficulty with basic care call for professional assessment.

Sources and attribution

Martell, C. R., Dimidjian, S., & Herman-Dunn, R. (2022). Behavioral activation for depression: A clinician's guide (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

NICE (2022). Depression in adults: treatment and management (NG222).

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

Copyright Calm Breathing Therapies