

## Module 9:

# How behaviour can change in psychosis



### This module will explain:

- how avoidance and apathy can set in
- how to bring some hope back
- how reconnecting with important people and roles in your life can make a big difference
- how low mood can develop
- how keeping active can lift your mood

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## Plan for today's session

How was your week?

What would you like to talk about today?

## Evaluating today's session

Summary of what we talked about today

What will I do during the week?

How was today for me?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Apathy and avoidance

Psychosis affects everybody in different ways. Even when someone is no longer anxious or distressed, they often describe feeling tired and wanting to avoid familiar faces and places. There can be a sense of apathy (lack of interest or concern) and difficulty getting back the motivation even to do simple things.

Many who suffer from apathy describe having difficulties with memory and paying attention. They find it much harder to make decisions. This “mental fog” can leave you not knowing what to do next. Even small challenges can seem too big to take on. Feeling stuck can be very frustrating. When this happens, it is important to try to regain your sense of hope.

## Hope

If you don't feel hopeful or confident it can be a good idea to “fake it, till you make it”. Even a small spark of hope can get things going in the right direction. Hope means believing that your life can get better and that you can have a good life. This should be the case even if you sometimes have mental health problems.

## Look back at module 4 for help

If apathy and avoidance have become problems for you, it might help to look back at the stepping stones approach of breaking problems into small steps to make them easier to solve. This was described in Module 4 “Tools to help solve problems”

As Loa Tzu said: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”.

## How to bring back hope

There are four simple steps you can follow to bring hope back into your life.

1. Write down a plan: Most people who struggle with a problem don't have a plan to tackle it and as a result feel stuck.
2. Talk about your plan: Tell positive people you know about your plan. When you speak about your plan out loud, you are helping to programme your mind to believe in it. The more the plan is discussed the more will your mind think that it might work
3. Discuss your progress: Each week you should discuss your progress with someone you trust. When you consider the steps you are going to take, your mind slowly starts to believe in your plan.
4. Follow the plan; Even if you don't really believe in it. When you start taking actions you send a strong message to your mind, telling it that there might be hope. If you got some results, no matter how small, your sense of hope will start to return.

At the end of this module there is an activity schedule. This is an example of a plan that might help you to feel better and stronger.

## Adding structure to your life

Our sense of hope is more likely to return when we structure each day. This allows good habits to become automatic again. To boost your sense of wellbeing and hope about the future it is important to:

- sleep well in a routine way
- do regular exercise
- eat healthily
- take relaxing baths or showers
- meet people we like
- do things we enjoy

## Social connections

Apathy (lack of interest or concern) can also lead to you stepping back from seeing people as you might be afraid your relationship with them will not be the same. You might worry that they will feel uncomfortable when you meet them. It is normal to feel self-conscious when meeting people after you have recovered from any sort of problem with your health. Living a full life is much more difficult to achieve if you consistently try to avoid other people. If someone close to you was feeling stuck, would you want them to avoid you or to shut you out of their life?

Connectedness means having good social connections in your life. It means feeling part of a group or community rather than feeling alone or isolated. Your health and recovery will nearly always be helped by staying connected or re-connecting with important people in your life.

## Meaningful roles

At different stages of life, everybody has different roles – things they do or things they are responsible for. Some roles are ones we decide for ourselves, but others might occur because of the circumstances we find ourselves in. Being a friend, a worker, a student, a brother/sister, a carer, a parent, a member of a club or owning a pet are some different roles that might be important to you. Some roles really suit us and others can be difficult to keep up. When they mean a lot to us, they can be an important part of our identity.

When anybody has a difficulty with their health, they might have to temporarily give up some of their roles until they feel better. Sometimes others have taken on our roles and it seems hard to get back into that role again. There can be a real sense of loss and sadness if we lose an important role.

Have you thought about the different roles that you have had in the past and what would be the most important roles for you in the future?

Your different roles made you the person you were in the past and can shape the person you will be in the future.

**Activity:** Fill in the worksheet **My Life Roles**

# My Life Roles: How important is each role to you?

## Worksheet

Roles	Satisfying Yes / No	I had in past	I have now	I would like in the future
Friend				
Brother / sister				
Parent / son / daughter				
Partner / spouse				
Aunt / uncle				
Carer				
Child-minder / babysitter				
Pet owner				
Playing sport				
Volunteer				
Member of club / team				
Part of church/religion				
Worker				
Student				
Neighbour				
Other (Specify)				

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



From the list you have just completed you might have a better idea of what will be your priorities for roles in the future. It makes sense to invest your time and energy in people, roles, activities, and hobbies that you valued in the past – they made you the person you are and can shape the person you will be in the future.

**What are some of the roles you want?**

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## How low mood and depression can develop

Sometimes it can be hard to fight the apathy, to keep connected with people, and find satisfying roles. Our mood and sense of wellbeing can slip very quickly or sometimes so gradually that we hardly notice it. Depression is when you are sad, lonely or have a low mood for a long period of time. It is common and normal to feel sad or low for short periods. It only becomes a problem when the feelings or mood lasts for many weeks and make it difficult to follow your normal daily routine.

The symptoms of depression can cause changes to a person’s life, daily routine and behaviour. Often these changes make the depression worse and make it harder to get better. About 12 percent of the population (one in eight) experience depression severe enough to require treatment at some time.

There are many different experiences of depression.



## How depression affects you

(put a tick beside the ones which you experience)

### Thinking

- View yourself, the world and others in a very negative light
- Find it difficult to think anything is positive or remember positive experiences
- Spend most of your mental energy on:
  - criticising yourself negatively
  - believing you are responsible for bad events but not for good events

**Other types of thinking:** .....

### Feelings

- Intense low mood
- Hopelessness

**Other types of feelings:** .....

### Behaviour

- Avoiding other people
- Participating less in enjoyable activities
- Not looking after yourself
- Avoiding anything difficult or challenging

**Other types of behaviour:** .....

### Body

- Slow, heavy and inactive
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Increased pain
- Reduced or increased appetite
- Reduced interest in sex

**Other effects on your body:** .....

**Activity:** Do you have any of the features of low mood? Add answers to the categories below.



 **Worksheet**

**Thinking**

When feeling low what do I spend most of my mental energy on?

**Feelings**

How do I feel when I'm feeling low?

**Behaviour**

What do I spend my time doing when I'm feeling low?

**Body**

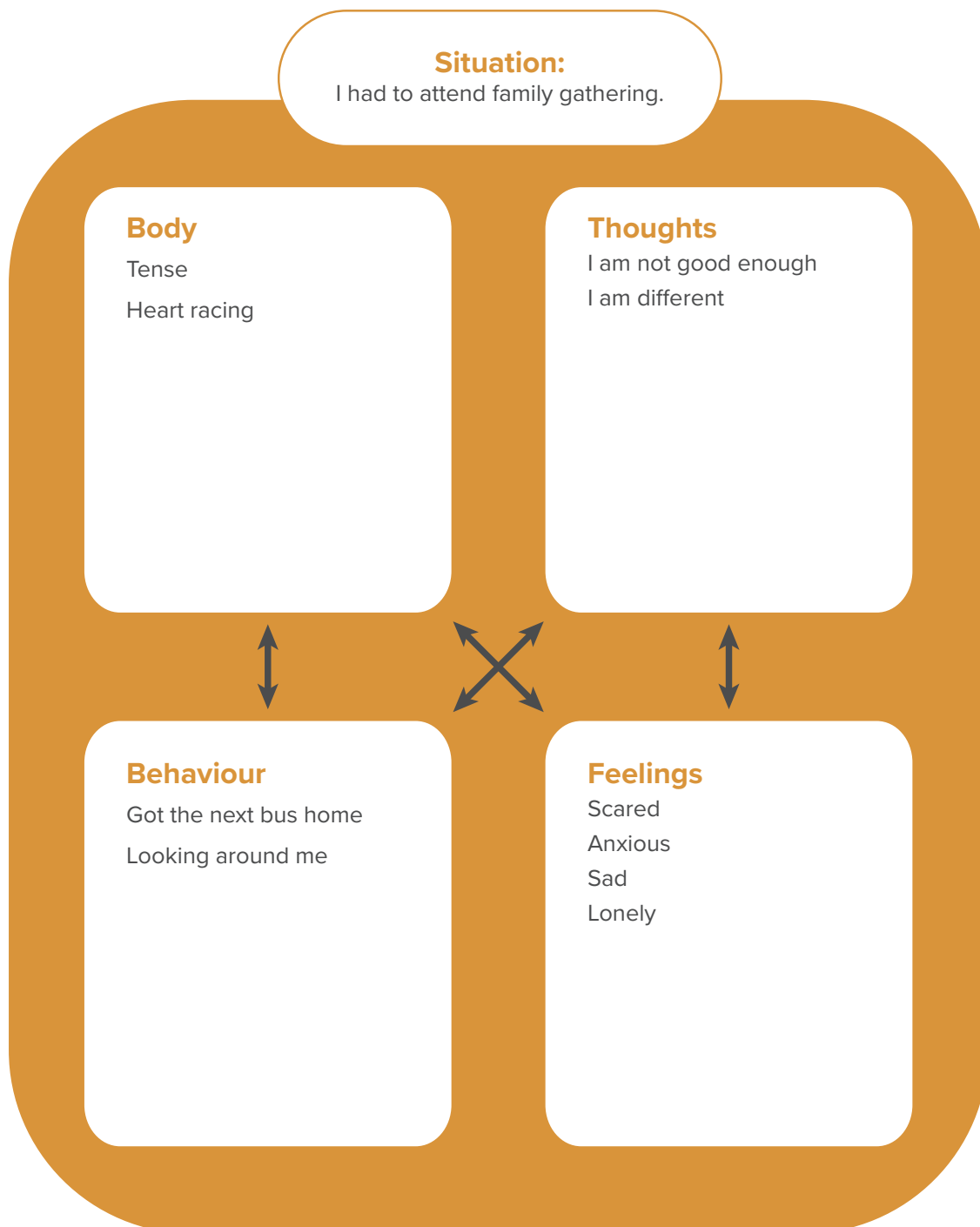
How does feeling low affect my body?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## What is the depression cycle?

As we become less involved in the things that we usually enjoy, we have fewer positive experiences. This makes us feel more depressed. The more depressed we feel, the less motivated we are to engage in the activities we enjoy. This cycle can continue until you are very depressed and very inactive.

Here is a hot cross bun for depression. If you have become low, using a hot cross bun might help you understand what might be holding you back.



# Stopping the cycle of depression

There are four things you can do to stop the cycle of depression.

- **Use support systems**

Talk about how you feel. Talk to people you can trust. This is the most effective way to protect yourself from depression.

- **Understand the problem**

There are many things in your past and your present that have led you to feel the way you do. Work with your coping skills worker to understand these. A diagram can help you see the problem more clearly and remember what seems to make it worse and better.

- **Challenge negative thinking**

Recognise that the way that you think determines the way that you feel. Identify distorted ways of thinking and replace with more rational thoughts.

- **Increase activity levels**

Pick something that you like and find meaningful and do it. Over time, increase your activity levels, particularly physical activity. You will be able to use goal setting to help you increase your activity levels. Your coping skills therapist will work with you on this.

As you do these things, you will become more positive, less focused on yourself and less self-conscious.

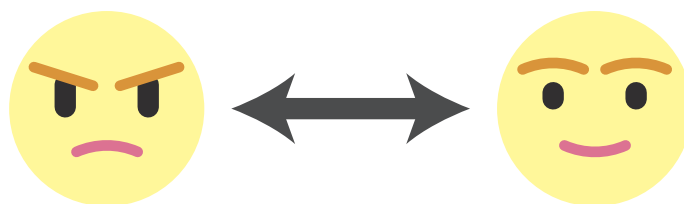
## Using activity to change your mood

Increasing your activity levels, especially physical activity, will help improve your mood.

### Activity helps you feel better.

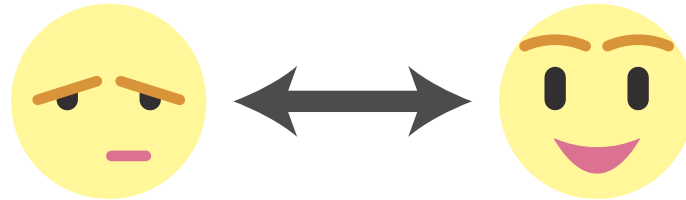
Activity gives you something to think about instead of focusing on negative thoughts. Even small things, such as taking a shower or getting out of bed, can help you feel you are moving forward, taking control and achieving something.

Physical activity also helps release endorphins, which are hormones that make us feel better.



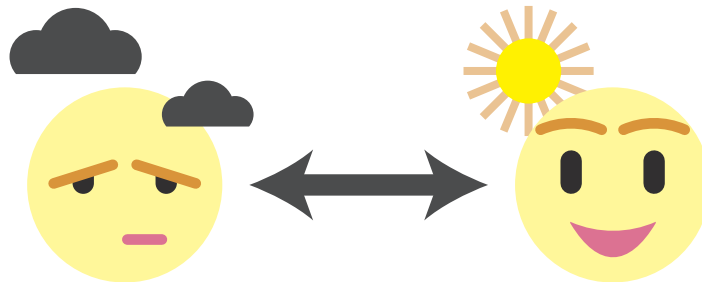
### Activity helps you feel less tired.

Usually when you are physically tired, you need rest. But when you are depressed and physically tired, you actually need to get active. Sleeping more and sitting around will make you feel worse and more tired. It also gives you more time to spend thinking negative thoughts.



### Activity helps you think more clearly.

Doing something positive can often help us think more clearly. Being active gives us time away from our problems and negative thoughts.



## Using an activity diary<sup>23</sup>

An activity diary helps you:

- focus on how you are spending your time
- remember what you have done and
- plan ahead

Your activity diary will help you increase your daily activity in a way that is helpful to you.



<sup>23</sup> The material in this section has been adapted from **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Psychotic Symptoms, A Therapist's Manual**.

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## Using an activity diary

- Plan what you are going to do the next day.
- Plan activities that you are interested in, but that are not too difficult.
- Plan a mix of activities that have a balance between duty and pleasure.
- Break tasks down into smaller steps.
- Plan activities that get you to exercise.
- Be flexible.
- Over time, increase your activity.
- Record your sense of pleasure and achievement for each activity.
- Work towards your goals.

### Plan what you are going to do the next day

Before you go to bed every day, plan what you are going to do the next day.

- In a notebook or on scrap paper, write down the activities that you would like to do the next day.
- Decide when you are going to do each activity.
- In your diary or **Weekly Activity Schedule** worksheet, write each activity next to the time you are going to do it.

### To start, plan activities that you are interested in, but that are not too difficult

Think about how interested you are in an activity and whether or not it will hold your attention. For example, you might think about reading a book, but sometimes it is difficult to stay absorbed. You might decide to watch a video instead because you know it will hold your attention.

### Plan a mix of activities that have a balance between duty and pleasure

It is important to do the things you have to do, like go to an appointment or clean. But you should also try to do things you enjoy or that help you. Here are some examples:

- Have a long hot bath
- Meet a friend
- Do one of the steps from your Stepping Stones plan.

### Break tasks down into smaller steps

Choose tasks that you can manage, and break them into smaller steps.

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'Tidy the house' is a task, but you can break this into smaller steps such as 'put away the clean dishes' or 'vacuum the sitting room'.

### **Plan activities that get you to exercise**

Exercise is important because it does so much for you.

- Keeps you physically healthy and boosts your immune system.
- Produces brain chemicals that are natural antidepressants.
- Improves your mood and sleep.
- Releases our feelings of tension, frustration and anger.

Choose a specific activity for your diary. Instead of writing '4pm: get some exercise', write something like '4pm: walk the dog' or '4pm: cycle for 15 minutes'.

### **Be flexible**

Try to keep to your plan, but don't worry if you can't. If you miss an activity, go on to the next one.

### **Over time, increase your activity**

Your activity diary helps you track what you do and how you feel. You should be able to use it to increase the number of activities you do in a day. But don't rush: build up slowly, so you can be aware of how you feel and how your activity affects you.

### **Record your sense of pleasure and achievement for each activity**

How do your activities make you feel? Next to each activity, note these two things.

- Pleasure (P)
- Achievement (A)

Use a scale of 0 to 5.

- 0 = no P or A
- 5 = lots of P or A

Here is an example.

**4pm Walked the dog for 2km P=2 A=5**

### **Work towards goals**

Use goal setting to work out short-term and long-term goals. The module on goal setting will help you with this.

# My weekly activity schedule

Use a diary or this schedule to plan your activities for the week. Remember to balance pleasant activities with rest and relaxation and the things you have to do, such as cleaning and going to appointments.

	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_