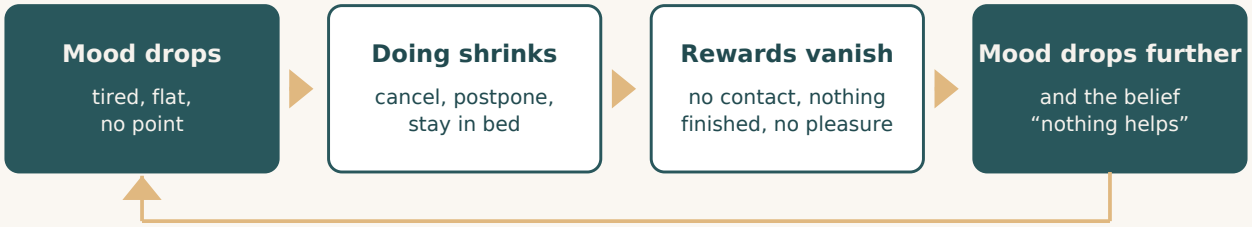
Behavioural Activation

Getting moving when you can't — and why waiting to feel like it never works

Low mood is not only a feeling. It is a drop in doing. When energy and hope fall away, the first things to go are the ordinary activities that quietly hold a life together — seeing people, finishing things, going outside, making something, cooking a proper meal. Those activities are not luxuries that can wait until you feel better. They are the very things that make feeling better possible. When they disappear, mood has less and less to feed on, and the drop deepens.

The low-mood loop



Each turn of the loop takes a little more out of you — and none of it happens because you are lazy or weak.

The one thing to hold onto: motivation comes after action

Low mood tells you "I'll do it when I feel like it". The trouble is that feeling like it is produced by doing, not the other way round. Nearly everyone who has dragged themselves to a walk, a coffee with a friend or a pile of ironing agrees on the same two things: before it felt impossible, and afterwards they were glad they went. So the question stops being "do I want to?" and becomes "what is worth doing today, even if I don't want to?"

Two ways the loop gets stronger

What it looks like	What it quietly costs you
Withdrawal	Cancelling, sleeping through the day, scrolling, avoiding phone calls. It feels like kindness to yourself, and it works for about twenty minutes — then it removes the one thing that could have lifted you.
Obligation only	Pushing hard through the must-dos with nothing pleasurable or meaningful left in the week. You look fine and feel hollow, and exhaustion deepens the flatness.

This is a method, not a test of willpower, and it is not "think positive". You are not trying to enjoy yourself on demand. You are rebuilding the parts of a week that a person needs — one small, planned action at a time.

The activities that actually feed us

Behavioural activation doesn't just ask "what did you do today?" It looks at what a day was made of, because different kinds of activity supply different kinds of nourishment. A week of errands and chores can be full and still leave you emptier than before. Four areas are worth checking — most people find one or two have quietly dropped out.

Purpose

The sense that your day points at something that matters to you — bigger than the to-do list. Not necessarily a career or a cause: tending a garden, looking after a pet, a prayer or meditation, a creative project, helping a neighbour, or work you believe in.

Belonging

Contact with people who know you, and a place where you are expected. Not a crowd — one reliable person is often enough. A walk with a friend, a call you didn't have to make, a class, a choir, a volunteer rota, or a café where the staff say hello by name.

Achievement

The feeling of having done or finished something. Low mood attacks this first, so it has to be re-measured in small units: a shower, the washing hung, a repaired hinge, an email sent, ten minutes of exercise. Progress, not perfection.

Pleasure & rest

Sensory enjoyment and recovery that isn't earned by productivity — music, a hot bath, a favourite programme, a good cup of tea slowly, sunlight on your face, a book, a laugh. Doing nothing on purpose counts, if it is chosen rather than drifted into.

What low mood whispers about each one

Area	What low mood whispers	What actually helps
Purpose	*"What's the point — it won't make any difference."*	It rarely survives as a feeling — keep it as a practice.
Belonging	*"I'm a burden. They'd rather I stayed out of it."*	The people who care usually notice the silence.
Achievement	*"It doesn't count — it should have been done already."*	Wait for it to feel like an achievement and nothing ever will.
Pleasure & rest	*"I haven't earned a break."*	Pleasure is maintenance, not reward. Deprived of it, energy falls.

Underneath all four sits the physical layer: daylight, movement, a rough sleep-and-meal rhythm, and alcohol kept low. Mood is a bodily event as much as a mental one — a ten-minute walk outside is worth planning as seriously as anything else on this page.

Notice this week: which of the four has gone quiet in your life? Don't fix it yet — just name it. That answer is the best place to start on page 3.

Exercise: planning a week back

Work through steps 1–3 on one day, then use the grid for the week that follows. Keep each action small enough that you would do it even on a bad day — if it feels ambitious, halve it. If anything here brings up something painful, bring it to a session rather than pushing through alone.

1 The last three days, honestly

List roughly what you actually did, hour by hour. Beside each activity write two numbers out of 10: P for pleasure, A for achievement ("showered — P2 A5"). No editing.

2 What the numbers tell you

What gave you more than you expected, and what drained you? Where did P or A sit above zero? Those are your clues — not what you think you should enjoy.

3 One small thing for each of the four

One purpose, one belonging, one achievement, one pleasure — each under fifteen minutes. Write when and where, plus your answer to what might get in the way.

This week's grid — write it, then tick it off as you go

Day	Purpose	Belonging	Achievement	Pleasure & rest
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

After each activity, rate it out of 10 and notice the gap between what you predicted and what happened. Predicting "I won't enjoy it" and then scoring it 6 is where the loop starts to loosen.

Bring this sheet with you, or request a free 15-minute enquiry call at wellnesscp.co.uk/contact