

Behavioural Activation in Mental Health

With so many people in our society today struggling with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and many other mental health disorders, a common result is difficulty with daily function. This can be for a variety of reasons, but one of the most common is low motivation. Herein lies a major aspect of the OT role within mental health: behavioural activation.

While many people may assume a psychological approach is sufficient to help someone recover from a mental health crisis, this is not always the case. It has been demonstrated that a multidisciplinary approach can have much stronger results. While a psychotherapist specializes in working on areas like thought patterns, the impact of trauma, and emotional processing skills, the occupational therapist focuses directly on daily function through Behavioural Activation.

By assessing a client's values and priorities through both clinical interview and tools such as the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM), we co-create a therapy plan that targets activities that are most likely to motivate the client. We then use SMART goal principles to make sure our goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Every week we set new mini-goals for a client to work on throughout the week that the client feels is challenging but achievable.



SMART
goal principles

We use a variety of strategies in our Behavioural Activation program to achieve results the individual clients find meaningful.

These include:

- Remembering why the goal matters—how is it tied to their values and priorities?
- Making a schedule.
- Accountability.
- Using alarms or timers to assist with time management and grounding.
- Using rewards to encourage participation in challenging or low-motivation activities.
- Breaking overwhelming activities down into steps.



Building motivation and momentum is difficult when in a mental health crisis, but Block Building Therapies is here to provide practical, evidence-based, hands-on support to clients to help enable them to resume participation in the things that matter most to them. This is a crucial step often before a client is able to return to work: if they have a solid, functional foundation in their personal lives,

it is more likely that they will be able to sustainably add a return to work back into their days with confidence. We prioritize interprofessional communication with the client's other team members to ensure we are working collaboratively so that the client gets the maximum benefit out of their therapies.

For further assessment, therapy, consultation and/or education on Occupational Therapy in Mental Health, contact Block Building Therapies at:

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Referral forms for new assessments are also available online at our website: www.blockbuilding.ca