

Behavioral Activation for Major Depressive Disorder

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Presenter Notes

SLIDE 4

- Ferster – functional analytic theory - lack of reinforcement triggers and maintains episodes of depression; Depressed individuals engage in a high degree of avoidance and escape behaviors, creating an environment that lacks positive reinforcement. Similarly, the sudden absence or withdrawal of positive reinforcers can trigger onset of depression. The goal is to determine the functional relationship between the environment and the patient's behavior to decrease avoidance and increase contact with positive reinforcers.
- Lewinsohn – theory of response contingent positive reinforcement – examined in a research lab and demonstrated relationships between # of pleasurable in which depressed individuals engaged and depression severity

SLIDE 5

- Behavioral Analytic Theory: For example, sitting on the front stoop of one's house resting your head in your hands is just that - sitting. However, you may be sitting there waiting for a friend to pick you up to go to a show or you may be sitting there to escape from a nasty argument with a partner. In those two instances "just sitting" serves very different functions. In the first it functions as an approach behavior, engaging in life. In the second it is an escape or avoidance behavior.

SLIDE 6

- 16 session protocol

SLIDE 7

- Like all CBT sessions, begin by reviewing self-report measures especially suicide item, homework, problem-solve non-completion
- Outside in approach (goal directed, not mood-directed activation)

SLIDE 10

- Before assigning for homework, do an example day (usually day of session) and obtain a reference scale for mood ratings (0-10)

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- Sample mood monitoring chart, can be adapted for use
- Here only monitoring mood, eventually add in sense of accomplishment and pleasure
- Apps can also be used for mood monitoring

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- Activity scheduling breaks this cycle: promoting sense of accomplishment/pleasure which is less likely to make mood worse

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- Reminder that this is not easy, at first, it will feel tiring or be very challenging, but gets easier over time as it leads to improvements in mood
- Goal is to balance pleasurable activities with those that provide a sense of accomplishment

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- Fill in examples with patient

SLIDE 14

- Goal is for client to experience a success
- Again, emphasizing balance between accomplishment and pleasure

SLIDE 15

- Define avoidance
 - Unintentional, natural response to depression
 - Temporary relief is reinforcing
 - All behavior serves a purpose, and exists in a context of reinforcement/punishment
 - Work with client to identify their ABCs (antecedent, behavior, consequence)
 - Focus is on unpleasant emotions rather than thoughts

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- Session 7 about mid-way through treatment, review session
- Going back to goals, now that they have an understanding of what happens when they are depressed: Generate a list of problematic behaviors and aspects of the environment that they would like to change
 - **A** – Assess: assess mood and behavior
 - **C** – Choose: choose alternative behaviors (generate a list, or draw on alternative behaviors from previous sessions)
 - **T** – Try: try them out (practice in session!)
 - **I** – Integrate: integrate the behaviors by *repeating them* – encourage a scientific mindset
 - **O** – Observe: observe the results
 - **N** – Never Give Up

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- [sample choosing alternative behaviors worksheet]

SLIDE 20

- Extreme life stressors or buildup of low-level stress can lead to depression
- Effect of low energy and motivation in our ability to manage stressors while they are still small

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- Withdrawal from stress in the short term can be adaptive but using it consistently can lead to more problems
- Return to bill example
- Use TRAC skills to help identify ways of coping with life stressors

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- Review “outside in” approach
- Breaking tasks into more manageable steps
 - Identify the overall goal to be achieved
 - Identify the component parts to that goal
 - Identify potential problems with each component and create behavioral solutions
 - Explicitly schedule small, achievable tasks into the clients’ weeks as homework

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- Reciprocal relationship between relationship stress and depression

SLIDE 25

- Consolidation phase of treatment, integrating knowledge of skills and application to life problems