

HELPING YOURSELF WITH ACHIEVEMENT THERAPY

An important first step in improving how you feel on many different levels, is to learn more about what you are experiencing. By increasing your understanding of moods and their causes, you will improve your ability to identify your own negative moods and feel better.

Moods tend to linger for periods of time. When your mood is negative, this reduces your enjoyment of life, stops you doing the things you like and disrupts your relationships with others.

Negative moods often feel as though they are caused by bad things that happen, but this is often not the case. When our mood is negative we tend to see the world as though it were bad. The secret of improving mood is to learn how to see the world as though it were good.

Development of frequent negative moods

The more negative moods you experience, the more likely you are to see things in a negative light, leading to more negative moods. This downward spiral can leave you feeling really depressed. However, you can control your thoughts. You can choose what you eat, you choose what you do with body, and you can choose what to with your mind. It just takes a bit of effort.

“But aren’t negative moods important?”

It is important not to ignore negative emotions. Emotions are part of what it is to be human, and healthy moods and emotions enrich your life and steer you in a positive direction. They may also help you to deal healthily with unfavourable life events. It is when the balance between positive and negative feelings slips, and over time you feel you may be experiencing more and more negative moods that mental exercises such as those included in this workbook may be helpful.

What is positive psychology?

Positive psychology is newly emerging field that focuses on the role positivity plays in every day life. Many published studies have shown the beneficial effects of positive thinking on the immune system, health and many psychological problems such as depression and anxiety.

You may experience any of the following benefits:

Increases in...

- Positive mental attitude
- Motivation to achieve more
- Self esteem
- Confidence
- Success

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Help with...

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Procrastination
- Learned helplessness
- Fear of failure
- Perfectionist tendencies

Helping yourself with achievement therapy

Instead of telling you to stop thinking negatively, achievement therapy makes you more positive in a holistic manner. By focusing on positive things in your life, you will find your mood improves and you stop thinking negative thoughts automatically.

It may sound hard to focus on your achievements if you are feeling down. It is not necessary for everything in your life to be ideal to begin to spend time focusing what you have achieved. Research has shown that beginning to spend a small amount of time each day focusing on positive thoughts (in this case your achievements) will help improve your mood. In other words, the more you focus on positive events, the easier it becomes to feel more positive in the future.

Your homework

To carry out achievement therapy, you need to find a quiet place where you can think without being disturbed. You could try doing it before going to sleep, or sitting on a train, or simply sitting by yourself in a room without any distractions. You may also like to try it when you are feeling down or experiencing a low mood, it is up to you.

There are many things in our lives, both large and small, that we might have achieved. Think back over your life, be it the past month or years ago and write down up to 6 things in your life that you have achieved once a day for at least two weeks at a time.

You can use the specific pages in the workbook to write your achievements on or your own notebook. Examples could be for doing well at work, or bringing up children, or completing something that you found challenging. See the start of the achievement records towards the end of the workbook for an example.

When you have finished your list, take the first item and concentrate on the sense of achievement brought about by that item for about a minute. Then move on to the next item and really try to connect with the sense of achievement for the second item. Do this for each of the items in turn. With each item, try to reconnect with the positive feelings you experience when focusing on what you have achieved.

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You should spend about five minutes on this task. Five minutes spent focusing on the positive feelings that arise from thinking about your achievements is usually enough for the therapy to take effect and begin to make you feel better. Five minutes may not seem like a long time, but setting aside specific time to focus on your achievements will make it easier to feel more positive throughout each day. When you carry out this task you may find your mind wandering. Don't worry. Once you notice your mind has wandered, simply bring it back to the task.

Writing down six things you have achieved every day for fourteen days may seem a daunting task, but you will get better at it with practice. Once you start to find it difficult thinking of new things, just try thinking of things from your day rather than the distant past. For instance, "I achieved all that I was supposed to get done before lunch" or "I achieved getting the children to bed before...".

If you are still struggling you can think of even the smallest things "I achieved my goal of eating two pieces of fruit today". It really is not that important what you have achieved, rather that you are spending time focusing on a sense of achievement. This is the key to enhancing positivity in your life, and lessening negative moods.

Example

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

1. I got the housework done. I felt a sense of achievement in doing a job well.
2. I have two children, it has been challenging but a great achievement!
3. I have a job, therefore I have achieved finding work, which was difficult.
4. I have achieved and reached a high standard in what I do, I feel I am good through the work I have put in.
5. I was kind to someone today, I felt I made the world a better place!
6. I feel it is achievement that I get up and get out of the house each day, there were times when that was very difficult for me.

Remember to spend some time focusing on the sense of achievement that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel you have achieved.

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Day 1

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the sense of achievement that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel you have achieved.

Day 2

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below (These can be new items or the same as a previous day)

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Remember to spend some time focusing on the sense of achievement that you experience as you think about and write down the things in your life that you feel you have achieved.

Day 3

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 4

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

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Day 5

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 6

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 7

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 8

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

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Day 9

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 10

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 11

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 12

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

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Day 13

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

Day 14

List up to 6 things that you have achieved in your life on the lines below

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____