INCREASING FAVORITE ACTIVITIES
This is the story of Adrian who is learning about increasing favorite activities to help cope with anxiety and stress. Often, when we're stressed or feeling down, we participate less in activities than we normally would. But doing more of the activities we enjoy can actually help reduce stress and give us more energy! Listen to Adrian's story to learn more.
AFTER A MONTH AT THE NEW HIGH SCHOOL, ADRIAN BEGAN MAKING NEW FRIENDS AND CONNECTING WITH CLASSMATES THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA.

WOW, I CAN'T BELIEVE PEOPLE WOULD SAY THIS! I THOUGHT THEY WERE MY FRIENDS.

THE POSTS WERE MEAN AND HURTFUL RUMORS ABOUT ADRIAN.

ADRIAN DOESN'T TELL ANY FAMILY OR CLOSE FRIENDS ABOUT THE POSTS, NOR DOES ADRIAN RESPOND. ADRIAN THINKS THAT RESPONDING TO THE LIES WILL ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE.

EVERYTHING SEEMED TO BE GOING WELL UNTIL SOME SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS ABOUT ADRIAN Began APPEARING.

ADRIAN'S FAMILY RECENTLY MOVED FROM A RURAL RESERVATION TO A LARGE CITY. THIS MOVE IS A BIG CHANGE FOR ADRIAN, BUT ADRIAN IS HOPEFUL ABOUT GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START.
ADRIAN FEELS SAD AND HURT BY THE RUMORS AND CHOOSES TO STAY IN THEIR BEDROOM MOST DAYS AFTER SCHOOL, NOT TALKING TO FAMILY OR WANTING TO DO ANYTHING.

HAVE YOU EVER FELT THIS WAY? NOT WANTING TO DO ANYTHING OR TALK TO ANYONE WHEN YOU FEEL DOWN OR SAD?

THIS HAPPENS TO A LOT OF PEOPLE. THEY STOP DOING ACTIVITIES THEY ENJOY, AND THEY PULL AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT THEM, LIKE THEIR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND COMMUNITY.

THE PROBLEM IS WHEN YOU DO THIS, IT OFTEN LEADS TO MORE SADNESS AND LONELINESS AND FEELING DEPRESSED. YOU MAY FEEL MORE TIRED AND YOUR MOOD MAY DIP EVEN FURTHER.

MOOD

ALTHOUGH IT MIGHT NOT SEEM LIKE IT, DOING SOMETHING ENJOYABLE, EVEN WHEN YOU FEEL SAD, CAN HELP YOU FEEL BETTER AND IMPROVE YOUR MOOD!
Sometimes even a brief 5-minute activity, like getting outside or talking to someone, can make you feel better. Doing several short activities during the day works even better!

I'm not even sure where to start.

No problem. I'll walk you through how to build your favorite activities into your day!

First, keep track of your moods and feelings throughout the day. Look for patterns.

There are free apps you can use on your phone to track your mood during the day or you can simply write it down.

How many activities are you doing per day? What are you doing when you feel the best? What are you doing when you feel the worst?
Now, create a list of activities you enjoy doing and make you happy. If you can’t think of any, consider something new you’ve always wanted to try.

It’s important that when making your list, you choose activities that tend to be better at improving mood.

Categories of Activities

- Enjoyable
- Social
- Physical
- Helping
- Mastery
- Distracting
- Spiritual

These activities usually fall into the following categories...

Activities that are social and involve others, such as talking to, playing with, or just spending time with people you like.
 PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVE MOVING YOUR BODY AND EXERTING ENERGY, LIKE SPORTS OR DANCING.

HELPING OR SHOWING CARE FOR OTHERS CAN MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD TOO!

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO LEARN MY TRIBAL LANGUAGE FROM MY ELDERS.

I DON'T ENJOY IT, BUT HOMEWORK HELPS KEEP MY MIND OCCUPIED.

Spiritual activities can give you a sense of meaning and purpose in your life through connections to community, nature, or art.
**Powwow Dancing**
- Enjoyable
- Social
- Physical
- Helping
- Mastery
- Distracting
- Spiritual

If you choose activities that fall into more than one category, you’re even more likely to improve your mood! For example, **Powwow Dancing** is enjoyable, social, physical, and spiritual!

I can do one of these activities every day after school. But, on weekends, I can do up to two activities.

It’s also a good idea to have a plan if something gets in the way of you doing one of your activities.

Oh yeah, mom works Saturday and can’t drive me to the Powwow that day. So, I’ll catch a ride with Kai.

Finally, set reminders on your phone to help you follow through on your scheduled activities.
Remember, you have the ability to affect how you feel. Increase your favorite activities when you’re feeling down. Don’t stop doing them.

After trying out these activities for a week or two, reflect on how you feel. Have you noticed a difference? Has your mood changed?

The more you’re able to include these activities in your daily schedule, the better you’ll feel and the easier it will be to deal with things that bring you down.

Now that you’ve learned about increasing your favorite activities to help improve your mood when you’re feeling down, explore other skills in this series that can be helpful to you.
This resource was developed by ICF, an independent third-party contractor, with oversight from a group of experts acting in their individual capacities convened by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 200-2011-3B807/75D30120F00087). Any findings, recommendations, or conclusions in this resource are not necessarily endorsed or adopted by the expert panel members, the National Academies, the CDC, or ICF.

These tools are not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on this website.

*For more information about the group of experts, go to https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/promoting-emotional-well-being-and-resilience
1. WHY AND HOW WERE THESE TOOLS DEVELOPED?


HOW? THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE (NASEM) MADE THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE WITH FUNDING FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC). NASEM BROUGHT TOGETHER A GROUP OF EXPERTS TO DEVELOP WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH DIFFICULTIES THEY FACE EVERY DAY. TOGETHER WITH EXPERTS AT ICF, THEY CREATED TOOLS, BASED ON COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT), TO HELP REDUCE STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION. THE TOOLS ARE MEANT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH DIRECTLY, AND FOR PARENTS TO HELP CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION. TEACHERS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO USE THESE RESOURCES.


2. WHAT IS COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)?

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT) WORKS BY HELPING A PERSON NOTICE HOW THEIR THOUGHTS AFFECT HOW THEY FEEL AND BEHAVE. CBT HELPS THEM TURN UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS AROUND TO MORE HELPFUL THOUGHTS SO THEY FEEL BETTER. EXPERTS TELL US THAT CBT IS THE GOLD STANDARD OF THERAPY FOR CHILDREN, TEENS, AND ADULTS WHO ARE EXPERIENCING STRESS, ANXIETY, AND DEPRESSION.

THE WORD “COGNITIVE” REFERS TO WHAT WE THINK, AND THE WORD “BEHAVIORAL” TO WHAT WE DO. CBT CAN HELP CHILDREN AND TEENS…

• “CATCH” THOUGHTS THAT ARE NOT HELPFUL, “CHECK” THEM, AND “CHANGE” THEM TO FEEL better.

• LEARN TO NOTICE AND DO THE THINGS THAT HELP THEM FEEL BETTER.

• LEARN HELPFUL SKILLS LIKE DEEP BELLY BREATHING AND MINDFULNESS.

CBT WON’T BE ABLE TO FIX ALL THE THINGS THAT MAKE SOMEONE FEEL STRESSED, ANXIOUS, OR DEPRESSED, BUT IT CAN HELP THEM COPE WITH THOSE FEELINGS AND FEEL BETTER.

THESE TOOLS DON’T TEACH EVERY PART OF CBT, ONLY SOME OF THE MOST TESTED AND EASY-TO-USE SKILLS. ALTHOUGH THESE TOOLS CAN’T TAKE THE PLACE OF A MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER, THEY CAN HELP CHILDREN AND TEENS LEARN HOW TO BETTER COPE WITH EVERYDAY STRESS AND ANXIETY.

NOTE: IT TAKES TIME TO LEARN A NEW HABIT, USUALLY 30 TO 60 DAYS, SO IT’S IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS TO KEEP PRACTICING THESE SKILLS REGULARLY. THEY WILL NOT ONLY BENEFIT TODAY, BUT WILL BUILD RESILIENCE AND HELP MANAGE FUTURE STRESS THROUGHOUT LIFE’S JOURNEY.
3. Why are the pronouns “they,” “them,” or “theirs” used to refer to a single person in these tools?

The language we use to describe people and experiences is important. It signifies how we express ourselves and how other people see us. Many times, in English or Spanish, we use different forms of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives that are based on assumptions about a person’s gender. Many people may not view this as a problem, but, for some people, assumptions about gender are not accurate, and can be harmful. Gender inclusive language is used throughout the modules to ensure that all children and teens can connect to our scenarios. They, them, and theirs are pronouns frequently used to refer to a single person when we are not aware of the person’s gender, and/or when a person does not identify as a boy/man or a girl/woman. For example, if a person notices that someone left an item in a classroom but the person does not know who it belongs to, the person might say “oh no, someone left their water bottle” using “their” as a gender neutral pronoun. In Spanish, gender inclusive language is sometimes created using an –e, rather than a feminine –a or a masculine –o.

4. Where should I go if I need additional resources or help?

If you or your child or teen are in need of immediate support, the Lifeline Network is available 24/7 across the United States. You can call (800) 273-8255 or text 741741.

If you are looking to find a provider who can support you or your child’s mental health, you can call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s National Helpline at (800) 662-HELP (4357) or visit their website: https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment.


For additional help, visit our resources page.