# Introduction to Behavioural Activation

## 8 key take-aways

- Depression is a clinical condition with 10 common symptoms. Not everyone with depression will experience all of these symptoms
- Unhelpful behaviours associated with depression can include: avoidance, escape, withdrawal, rituals, impulsive behaviour and rumination
- Absence of positive reinforcement is the key mechanism that maintains depression: **the less we do, the worse we feel; the worse we feel, the less we do**
- Depression is the result of missed opportunities to connect with people and things that can act as sources of positive reinforcement by giving us emotional rewards: pleasure, achievement and connection with what is important to us
- To break the vicious cycle of depression we need to be driven by purpose rather than our low mood: **rather than wait to do something before we feel better, we need to do something in order to start to feel better**

- Behavioural activation has four core elements:
  - Functional analysis
  - Activity scheduling
  - Goal setting
  - Relapse prevention
- The aim is to identify and reduce those behaviours which are unhelpful and identify and increase those which are enjoyable, purposeful and rewarding
- The 4R's of activity scheduling are: Replace, Reinstate, Reduce, Restructure

## 5 Top Tips

- Keep a written calendar of scheduled activities that are rated for enjoyment, achievement and connection
- Break down more challenging activities into steps
- Don't try to fit everything in at once, pace yourself
- Make the most of good feelings by creating a box of objects with happy associations and good memory cards
- Create a relapse signature by identifying: triggers & warning signs, what activities are most and least helpful, those around you who can best support you