

Book Reviews

Behavioural Activation: Distinctive Features

Jonathan W. Kanter, Andrew M. Busch and Laura C. Rusch New York: Routledge, 2009. pp.184, £9.99 (pb). ISBN: 978-0-415-44654-9. doi:10.1017/S1352465811000725

This small volume is deceptive in that it contains a comprehensive overview of Behavioural Activation. It has the potential to be an informative and accessible tool for both clinicians involved in the treatment of depression, and as a resource for those treating other disorders where secondary depression is a component. It can be taken as a complete self-contained theoretical approach or as a source of interventions and tools to be used alongside other treatment approaches.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One defines the theoretical background, terminology and driving philosophy of Behavioural Activation. Of particular interest is the chapter on meaning, as seen through the lens of Behavioural Activation and the importance of values in driving the planning of treatment.

Part Two is a more practical guide to implementing a Behavioural Activation assessment and treatment programme. A helpful flow chart covers the process of treatment and the chapter follows a similar structure. There are helpful treatment vignettes to highlight particular approaches and techniques throughout and examples of forms used for recording homework tasks. Of particular interest are the chapters on stimulus control procedures, practical thinking around suicidality from a Behavioural Activation point of view, and a refreshing reflection on the therapeutic relationship and its role as a reinforcer of behavioural change.

Overall, this is an accessible, clear and concise guide to implementing a treatment approach from assessment to follow-up, nicely grounded in theory and research. It serves as a timely reminder of the importance and effectiveness of the “B” in CBT for Depression.

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Overcoming Depression and Low Mood: A Five Areas Approach (3rd ed.)

Chris Williams London: Hodder Arnold, 2009. pp. 400, £23.99 (pb). ISBN: 978-0-340-98605-9. doi:10.1017/S1352465811000737

Now in its third edition, this book has become a seminal addition to the growing body of guided self-help books for depression since it was first published 9 years ago. Written by one of the most prolific CBT self-help clinicians, and backed up by his own evidence-based research, it has become a popular and effective resource for depression for both patients and

therapists; hence its recommended use in low intensity Improving Access to Psychological Therapies services (IAPT).

As with previous editions, it is divided into highly structured workbooks complete with psycho-education and interspersed with diagrams, cartoons and tables. The workbooks have been reorganized in this latest edition to link directly into Williams' five areas approach and readers are encouraged to use his two websites as an additional tool. Among the additions are examples of case studies, followed by a diagram of how these vignettes fit onto the five areas model (people and events around me, altered thinking, altered physical symptoms, altered behaviour/activity levels, and altered feelings and emotions).

In Part One, "Understanding why you feel as you do", the book gently directs the reader to be mindful about how long they should take over each work book and how to decide which ones to work through. In Part Two Williams turns the reader into a thought detective and then a scientist. People are asked to put their thoughts and behaviours under the microscope in the next 14 chapters, from practical problem-solving to overcoming anxiety and avoidance and how to change unhelpful thinking. People are encouraged to complete notes between therapy sessions.

Cosmetically it is much smaller and discrete compared to the original textbook format. However, for those who do not have the second edition, it is a substantial revision of its first incarnation. Some may find it unhelpful that the original index was dispensed with, but arguably the workbooks are small enough for this not to be too much of a problem. People are likely to find the jargon-free and easily readable style very accessible.

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Break Free from OCD: Overcoming Obsessive Compulsive Disorder using CBT

Fiona Challacombe, Paul. M. Salkovskis and Victoria Bream Oldfield London: Vermilion, 2011. pp. 304, £10.99 (pb). ISBN: 978-0-09193-969-4.
doi:10.1017/S1352465811000749

This practical guide enables people to make sense of their symptoms and gives a clear plan to help conquer OCD. The book spends a significant amount of time discussing the cognitive aspect of CBT, and helping the reader to understand the mechanisms that drive obsessive thinking. By doing this, the behavioural exercises make all the more sense, and for me this made it one of the best OCD self-help guides focusing on CBT that I have read for many years.

Throughout the book the authors write in a gentle, kind, supportive and, most importantly, a positive manner, which like any good therapist helps us relax and feel at ease with the authors and what they write. It is written in such an easy to understand style that is neither too simplistic nor too scientific, which means that this book will be helpful for anyone affected by OCD, from late teens through to older people. I would also recommend the book for all therapists involved in treating people with OCD.

Perhaps one criticism is that the book does not really offer any extended advice for people with very severe and entrenched OCD. When OCD is so severe it is hard to see the wood