

Build Mastery

DBT, CBT, BA

Therapy approaches including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Behavioral Activation (BA), and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) all recommend **increasing the number challenging (or “mastery”) activities in your daily life to increase your positive emotions**. Challenging activities increase positive emotions by making opportunities for feeling accomplishment and pride in overcoming a challenge, increasing self-esteem and self-efficacy, and by increasing the novelty and variety in your daily life.

In this worksheet, we'll provide tips for adding challenging activities to your daily life, and present a checklist of ideas for you to try.

Tip #1: Find the right level of challenge:

Activities should be mildly to moderately challenging. Start small to increase the chances that you can keep this habit up.

Tip #2: Get out of your comfort zone

to make challenges especially rewarding. For example, if you have a very physical job and hobbies, try a cognitive challenge.



Cognitive

- Solve a crossword, sudoku, or logic puzzle
- Memorize a poem
- Do mental math (without a calculator)
- Learn five new words in another language
- Play a memory game
- Try a brain-training app
- Summarize a podcast or article
- Write a movie or show review



Physical

- Hold a plank, wall sit, or yoga pose
- Do push-ups, squats, or sit-ups
- Jump rope for a few minutes straight
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Go for jog or bike
- Learn a dance move or routine
- Set and meet a daily step goal
- Walk somewhere “the long way”



Creative

- Sketch a still life in 10 minutes
- Create a drawing in one continuous line
- Sing or play a melody you that create
- Take creative photos of ordinary objects
- Write a haiku or short poem
- Write your name in a specific font
- Make a collage with cut-out images
- Write a story in only six words



Hands-on

- Sew on a button or repair a tear
- Fold an origami figure with instructions
- Bake or cook something from scratch
- Make the best paper airplane you can
- Make a homemade greeting card
- Rearrange and declutter a drawer or shelf
- Repair something in your home
- Hang pictures on your wall

**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*



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Social

- Give a sincere compliment
- Start a short conversation (small talk)
- Reach out to a friend
- Join a group activity or class
- Ask someone about their day
- Introduce yourself to someone new
- Practice voicing your opinion
- Do a small good deed for someone



Outdoors

- Identify three plants or trees using an app
- Go on a color walk and notice a single color as many times as you can
- Learn how to build a campfire
- Hike a new trail
- Learn and listen for three bird calls
- Skip rocks across a pond
- Plant a flower, herb or vegetable



Digital

- Learn one new feature on your phone
- Organize your email inbox
- Improve the strength of your passwords
- Organize your phone's photos
- Delete files you no longer need
- Learn a new skill in programs or apps you frequently use
- Learn and use a new keyboard shortcut

For next steps, check out our worksheet on [tracking mastery activities](#).

To see the other parts of the ABC PLEASE skill, check out our [handout](#).

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Just for fun

- Try a new card or board game
- Dance to an entire song
- Try juggling two to three objects
- Play your favorite game from childhood
- Write a song parody
- Sing along to your favorite song
- Create a scavenger hunt for someone
- Plan a trip or staycation



Wellness

- Try mindful breathing for five minutes
- Try a new yoga pose
- Take a cold shower for a minute or two
- Write one page in a journal
- Visualize a relaxing place for five minutes
- Take a walk and notice as many sensory details as you can
- Try eating a snack as mindfully as you can

Practice opposite action for...

- Fear: approach, engage, act confident
- Anger: kindness, gentleness, empathy
- Disgust: approach, perspective-taking
- Sadness: engage, get active, challenge
- Shame: make amends, act confident
- Guilt: tell someone, repeat the behavior
- Envy: resist attacking, gratitude list
- Jealousy: resist controlling, share

Opposite action is very likely to cause discomfort, but don't try it if the action will cause you harm. Learn more with our [worksheet](#).





Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



[Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

Search our collection of therapy worksheets by mental health topic, therapy modality, or demographic group. Our free, psychologist-developed worksheets make therapy exercises understandable and relevant to daily life. Find worksheets for help with ADHD, anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, and other common mental health challenges.