



## Evidence Base for Behavioral Activation (BA)

### Selected References

1. Cuijpers, P., Karyotaki, E., Harrer, M., & Stikkelbroek, Y. (2023). [Individual behavioral activation in the treatment of depression: a meta analysis](#). *Psychotherapy Research*, 33:886-897.

This meta-analysis of 22 randomized controlled trials compared Behavioral Activation (BA) with waitlist, usual care, and other control conditions and found that BA is an effective, relatively simple type of therapy that can be applied broadly in differing populations.

2. Dimidjian, S., Barrera, M., Martell, C., Muñoz, R. F., & Lewinsohn, P. M. (2011). [The origins and current status of behavioral activation treatments for depression](#). *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 7, 1–38.

This review summarizes the origins of a behavioral model of depression and the BA approach to the treatment and prevention of depression.

3. Dimidjian, S., Hollon, S. D., Dobson, K. S., Schmalting, K. B., Kohlenberg, R. J., Addis, M. E., Gallop, R., McGlinchey, J. B., Markley, D. K., Gollan, J. K., Atkins, D. C., Dunner, D. L., & Jacobson, N. S. (2006). [Randomized trial of behavioral activation, cognitive therapy, and antidepressant medication in the acute treatment of adults with major depression](#). *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74(4), 658–670.

Authors tested the efficacy of BA by comparing it with cognitive therapy and antidepressant medication in a randomized placebo-controlled design in adults with major depressive disorder. This study found that among more severely depressed patients, BA was comparable to antidepressant medication, and both significantly outperformed cognitive therapy.

4. Fortney, J. C., Bauer, A. M., Cerimele, J. M., Pyne, J. M., Pfeiffer, P., Heagerty, P. J., Hawrilenko, M., Zielinski, M. J., Kaysen, D., Bowen, D. J., Moore, D. L., Ferro, L., Metzger, K., Shushan, S., Hafer, E., Nolan, J. P., Dalack, G. W., & Unützer, J. (2021). [Comparison of Teleintegrated Care and Telereferral Care for Treating Complex Psychiatric Disorders in Primary Care: A Pragmatic Randomized Comparative Effectiveness Trial](#). *JAMA Psychiatry*, 78(11), 1189–1199.

This pragmatic randomized comparative trial examined the effectiveness of treating patients with bipolar disorder and/or posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) using two approaches: (1) telepsychiatry/telepsychology-enhanced referral, and (2) telepsychiatry Collaborative Care including BA. They found significantly improved outcomes for patients enrolled in either randomized group, so they recommend that clinics implement whichever approach is more sustainable in their context.

5. Jakupcak, M., Wagner, A., Paulson, A., Varra, A., & McFall, M. (2010). [Behavioral activation as a primary care-based treatment for PTSD and depression among returning veterans.](#) *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 23(4)*, 491–495.

This preliminary study of Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans found that primary care-based BA treatment improved PTSD, depression, and quality of life for patients. Additionally, the study found that patients were highly satisfied with this treatment.

6. May, D., Litvin, B., & Allegrante, J. (2024). [Behavioral activation, depression, and promotion of health behaviors: a scoping review.](#) *Health Education & Behavior, 51:321-331.*

The authors reviewed studies in which BA-based interventions were used to promote a variety of health behaviors in individuals with depression, including substance use, exercise, medication adherence, and occupational and social success. Most studies showed that BA was effective in promoting specific health behavior change and reducing depression.

7. Mazzucchelli, T., Kane, R., & Rees, C. (2009). [Behavioral Activation Treatments for Depression in Adults: A Meta-analysis and Review.](#) *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 16(4)*, 383–411.

The authors concluded that BA interventions were effective treatments for depression in adults.

8. Soucy Chartier, I., & Provencher, M. D. (2013). [Behavioural activation for depression: Efficacy, effectiveness and dissemination.](#) *Journal of Affective Disorders, 145(3)*, 292–299.

This systematic review on low-intensity BA interventions for depression reviewed BA’s theoretical foundations and efficacy, determining its potential as a low-intensity intervention. Authors concluded that BA could be a viable option as a low-intensity guided self-help treatment for mild to moderate depression.

9. Stein, A. T., Carl, E., Cuijpers, P., Karyotaki, E., & Smits, J. A. J. (2021). [Looking beyond depression: A meta-analysis of the effect of behavioral activation on depression, anxiety, and activation.](#) *Psychological Medicine, 51(9)*, 1491–1504.

This meta-analysis offers updated evidence that BA is effective in treating depression, and preliminary evidence demonstrates its efficacy in treating anxiety and facilitating activation.

10. Wang, X., & Feng, Z. (2022). [A Narrative Review of Empirical Literature of Behavioral Activation Treatment for Depression.](#) *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 13.*

This review presents a conceptual overview of BA and the evidence supporting its efficacy for treating depression. Authors concluded that there is evidence of BA’s effectiveness for sub-threshold and clinically diagnosed depression, as well as depressed patients with mental or physical comorbidities.