

# Get Active Feel Good!

Paul Farrand, Adrian Taylor, Colin Greaves & Claire Pentecost



## Mark's case study

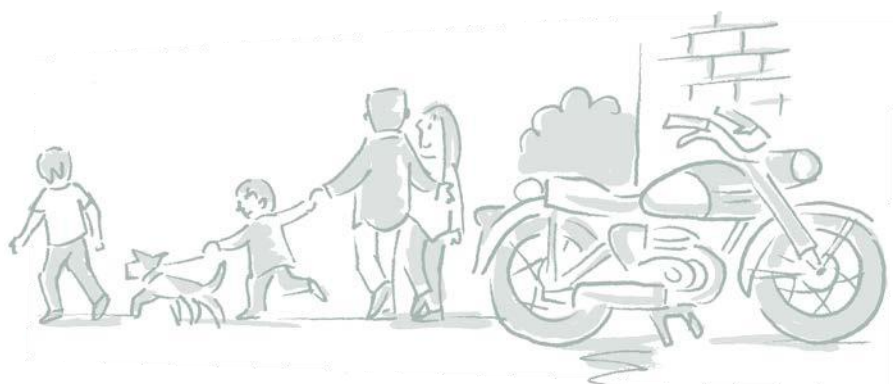


## MARK'S STORY

Mark's story is about someone who used behavioural activation to help improve his low mood. Once his mood began to lift he was encouraged to gradually increase his physical activity.

Mark is a thirty nine year old father of two with three main loves in his life. He loves Emma his wife and sons Aaron and Max, his work as a carpenter and his dog Barney. The past few years were very good and recently Mark secured a loan to buy new premises for his successful carpentry business. Whilst he loved the new set up at work, it meant longer hours at work which resulted in him spending less time at home with his family.

About a year ago, Mark's world was turned upside down when Emma became unwell with breast cancer. He was very worried about Emma and started to feel guilty as he had to spend a lot of time at work and not at home where he felt he should be. Although Emma recovered, Mark's mood had become very low, he was having difficulty sleeping and was not eating well. He was also no longer doing the things he used to love, such as dropping Aaron off at school, tinkering around with his motorcycle or walking Barney. At first Emma put this down to the shock of her illness. But with no improvement in his mood Emma finally managed to convince Mark to see his GP.



## MARK'S FIRST APPOINTMENT

### Following an assessment with Sally, a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP), Mark was identified as having depression.

Sally explained what depression was and then identified how it was linked to Mark's feelings of tiredness, thoughts that he had 'Let Emma down' and could explain why he had given up a lot of the things he used to enjoy. Sally also listened to the way in which Mark's difficulties were impacting on his life, and working together they identified some things Mark wanted to get out of treatment.

Sally then introduced something called Behavioural Activation and explained that research has shown it to work well for depression and was recommended by the NHS. She said it put structure back into people's lives by helping them to gradually build up their everyday activities and supporting them to become more physically active. Mark really liked the idea of getting physically active again so Sally gave him a self-help programme called 'Get Active; Feel Good!'. She explained how it would take him through behavioural activation. Her job was to support him working through the programme at his speed. Sally then set up a time to see him and requested that he complete a 'My Starting Point Diary' over the course of the next week. This would help them both see how much activity he was currently doing.



## What Do You Want to Get Out of Treatment?

The first thing to think about was identifying some things Mark wanted out of treatment.

Today's Date 5th March

### Item 1

Walk Aaron to school every day.

I can do this now (circle a number):

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

Occasionally

Often

Anytime

Today's Date 5th March

### Item 2

To take Barney out on longer walks most days again

I can do this now (circle a number):

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

Occasionally

Often

Anytime



## SESSION 2

During the next session Mark and Sally reviewed his 'My Starting Point Diary'.

### Mark's Starting Point Diary

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Morning	What	Work	Work	In bed feeling
	Where			drained
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	In bed feeling
	Where			drained
	Who			
Afternoon	What	Work	Work	In bed feeling
	Where			drained
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	In bed feeling
	Where			drained
	Who			
Evening	What	Watched Television	Fell Asleep	Had a bath
	Where			
	Who			
	What	Went to bed early	Went to bed early	Watched television
	Where			
	Who			
Comments		Felt tired	Did not want to do	Did not go to work
			anything after work	as too tired, slept
				a lot

Mark was alarmed to see how his week mostly consisted of working, watching television and sleeping, and contained very little physical activity. He was also shocked to see that whilst Emma was doing things with the boys at the weekend, he was sleeping or doing very little on his own. This made him feel very sad. However it also helped him realise that he really needed to do something to sort himself out. He felt a bit better when Sally said that the way he felt was perfectly normal, and that with his hard work and her support for Behavioural Activation they could get on top of his depression.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Work	Work	Watched television	Took Barney out
Work	Work	Walked to shop	Tried to read newspaper
Work	Work	Fell asleep	Helped make lunch
Work	Work	Watched television	Fell asleep
Took Barney out	Got takeaway	Had a bath	Watched television
Had a bath	Watched television	Watched television	Went to bed early
Relaxed after taking Barney out, A bit better today	Struggled today, looking forward to weekend	A disappointing day, felt tired and no energy	Nice to get out with Barney, but flagged later in the day

## WORKSHEET A

**Mark knew a little about Behavioural Activation already as he had read the bit about it in ‘Get Active; Feel Good!’, but was pleased to go through it again.**

Sally started by explaining how most people’s lives are made up of three types of activities called routine, pleasurable and necessary. She then helped Mark to identify a few of each and write these in Worksheet A.

He was soon able to identify a few activities in each area and Sally suggested that he complete the list at home before the next session. Mark was happy to do this but was concerned that some of the activities would be too hard. But Sally helped him to grade them in terms of how difficult they were.

### Mark’s Worksheet A : Identifying activities

Under each type of activity write down what you want to be able to achieve.

<b>Routine</b> e.g. cooking, walking the dog, food shopping	<b>Pleasurable</b> e.g. going out with friends, reading	<b>Necessary</b> e.g. paying bills, walking children to nursery
Cooking proper meals!	Restore my motorbike	Pay work invoices
Shave	Going out with Emma	Get car tax paid
Taking Aaron to school	Taking boys to ‘Pleasureland’	
	Taking Barney for a walk	



## WORKSHEET B

**Mark was asked to write down all the activities identified in Worksheet A, or any new ones he thought of, in terms of how difficult he would find them to do on Worksheet B.**

Initially Mark struggled as he found all activities very difficult and put them all in 'The Most Difficult' section. However, with some support from Sally he remembered some advice in 'Get Active; Feel Good!' about breaking tasks down into easier ones. Using this advice he was able to break the task 'Take Aaron to school every day' to 'Take Aaron to school on two days a week' which he felt was far more possible. Using this method Mark was soon able to organise his activities from least to most difficult.

Once Mark knew what he was doing he was encouraged to complete Worksheet B on his own, as Sally was keen to use the remainder of the session help Mark begin to put the 'Least Difficult' activities into Mark's 'Next Steps Diary'.

### Mark's Worksheet B : Listing activities according to their difficulty

Least difficult	Medium difficult	Most difficult
Shave every day	Order parts for the motorbike	Pay work invoices
Take Aaron to school two days	Cooking	Go for a meal with Emma
Take Barney on a 10 minute walk to the park	Take boys to 'Pleasureland'	
	Take Aaron to school	

Sally then worked with Mark to begin to put some of the activities from the 'Least Difficult' section of Worksheet B into the 'Next Steps' diary. She stressed it was important that Mark spread these activities across the entire week, that they felt manageable, and could be done at a specific time. Sally was however worried that Mark had written down 'pay work invoices' in the 'Most Difficult' section but this was not added to the diary. She asked Mark what the consequences of not paying the invoices could be. He admitted that if he did not pay them soon it could be quite serious.

### Mark's Week 1 Next Steps Diary

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Morning	What	Walk Aaron to	Shav e	Shav e
	Where	school 8.20-8.30	7.45	7.45
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	Work
	Where			
	Who			
Afternoon	What	Work	Work	Work
	Where			
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	Work
	Where			
	Who			
Evening	What			
	Where			
	Who			
	What			
	Where			
	Who			
Comments		Felt v ery tir e all morning	Felt good to f eel clean and smart today	Glad nothing planned for today

Equally however he felt that this activity was just too difficult to manage. Sally therefore helped Mark problem solve ways he may be able to get these invoices paid, and it was decided that sharing this difficulty with Emma may help. Once Mark understood how to put activities into the diary he was encouraged to give it a go and see what he could manage over the next week. At the end of each day Sally also suggested that he write any comments he may have in the diary. These would be useful to discuss at their next session.

## Thursday

## Friday

## Saturday

## Sunday

Walk Aaron to school 8.20-8.30	Shave 7.45	Small food shop with Emma 9.30-10.15	Shave 9am
Work	Work		
Work	Work	Cook a simple meal 1.30-2	Tinker with motorbike 2-2.30
	Work		
Take dog out 5.30-5.45			Pay work invoices 6pm
Not as tired this morning. Exhausted this evening	Glad nothing planned for today	Glad to get out of house this morning. Felt exhausted after dinner	Once I got going felt better. Great to sort work invoices and work on the motorbike

## AS THE WEEKS PASSED

With Sally's help Mark continued to increase his activities. Together they reviewed progress made during the previous week.

### Mark's Week 5 Next Steps Diary

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Morning	What	Walk Aaron to	Walk Aaron to	
	Where	school 8.40-8.50	school 8.40-8.50	
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	Work
Afternoon	Where			
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	Work
	Where			
Evening	Who			
	What	Tinker with the bike	Cook dinner	Walk dog 6-6.15
	Where		5-5.45	
	Who			
Comments	What	Read to the boys		Read to the boys
	Where	6-6.15		6.45-7
	Who			
		Really enjoyed reading to the boys	Really wanted to rest when I got home but forced myself to cook dinner	A little tired today but enjoyed time with the boys



## Thursday

## Friday

## Saturday

## Sunday

Walk Aaron to school 8.40-8.50		Shopping for 3 days groceries 10-11.30	Family walk with the dog 10-11
Work	Work		
Work	Work		Read the paper 1-1.30
Work	Work		
Walk dog 6-6.15	Walk dog 6-6.15	Cinema with Emma 7.30-9.30	Tinker with the bike 3-4
			Read to the boys 5.30-6
Felt really good today and noticed that my mood lifts when out with Barney especially at the park	An OK day	Down but better in the evening. Feel more tired if activity is less enjoyable	Mostly a good day, really felt like I got a lot done today

When good progress had been made, they continued to schedule in new activities from Worksheet B into the 'Next Steps' diary to use the following week. It was not always easy going however. During his fourth week of treatment Mark found it really difficult to complete the activities he had set himself and became so upset that he gave up altogether. However, he did attend the next session and was glad that Sally was pleased to see him.

Together they reviewed the 'Next Steps' diary to identify what had gone wrong. With Sally's help, Mark was soon able to identify that, as the previous two weeks were so successful, he had got a little carried away and added too many activities for that week. To make matters worse he added them just to the first two days following the session! Although having a setback, Mark now felt he had a much better idea as to how to proceed.

Since then things had gone really well. When looking back over his previous 'Next Steps' diaries, Mark realised how much more he was now doing and how his life was looking almost normal again.

## MOVING ON WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

**During the sixth support session Mark discussed feeling really proud with his progress. He was spending more time with his family, and was really pleased to have started working on his motorbike again; even if it was still in bits in the garage!**

Mark also highlighted how he felt better in himself. He was beginning to find his old energy again, was eating better, was more focussed at work and was having fewer guilty thoughts about Emma and her cancer. Scores on the questionnaires filled out every week with Sally also indicated his low mood was beginning to lift.

Mark was really pleased with his progress and was interested when Sally talked again about increasing physical activity. Looking over his previous diaries they both noticed how much he seemed to be enjoying the activities that required him to be physically active. They also noticed that many of these activities were outdoors. In particular it was clear that Mark really enjoyed taking Barney for a walk which he now managed most days, although even now he still felt a little tired afterwards. Sally and Mark also discussed the wider health benefits of being physically active. Mark was keen on this as over the past 12 months his physical health had got a lot worse and he had put on weight.

However, Mark was also aware that he had not done a lot of physical activity since playing football in his twenties. Whilst wanting to get fitter, equally he did not feel exercising was right for him at the moment. Sally, however, soon put Mark at ease. She discussed how being more physically active did not have to mean doing more exercise. It could simply mean focussing more upon the things he was already doing that included movement and trying to build these up.

To help Mark think about different types of physical activity Sally introduced him to Worksheet C. Sally stressed that as well as the activity involving movement it was equally important that Mark only chooses physical activities that he would enjoy, and where possible could build up over time if he wanted to. After some discussion Mark was able to identify several physical activities, some from looking back over his diary and some new ones. He wrote these down in Worksheet C. Mark and Sally then identified any problems that may arise when trying to do the physical activities and also tried to identify potential solutions.



## Worksheet C : Thinking about physical activity

Mark thought about activities that he might like to do by thinking about what he might enjoy and what was realistic to fit into his normal week

Proposed physical activity	Difficulties doing physical activity	Ways to overcome difficulties
Walking further and more often with Barney	Possibly get tired, and may not feel like it after work	Will need to make sure I finish work on time and remember that when out I feel I have more energy
Jogging	Not done anything like this, seems too big a step at the moment	Perhaps after I have started doing more walking, but a long way off?
Getting involved with football training at Aaron's School	May take time to organise, have not played for so long my skills will be rusty and I feel out of shape. May be difficult to commit	Great idea but not ready for this just yet, perhaps a longer term goal
Walk Aaron to school	Actually doing this more often now, but mornings so hectic that increasing may be hard to do	Getting both Aaron and me ready the night before and getting up earlier

Looking at the options listed on Worksheet C, Mark decided to increase walking Aaron to school to every morning as he enjoyed this time but that the best physical activity to focus on was 'Walking further and more often with Barney'.

## WORKSHEET D

**Sally then introduced Mark to Worksheet D and discussed the need to make an explicit plan for each physical activity.**

Then after doing the activity to record how long he did it for, and any comments he may have. Sally also introduced Mark to the idea of using a pedometer. Although he had never actually used one he had read about it in 'Get Active, Feel Good!' and was interested. They discussed how it would be great to use it to record the number of steps he took each day. Mark really liked this idea and was keen to see just how much he was doing.



## Worksheet D : Setting and tracking physical activity goals

### My physical activity goals for the week are:

1. Take Barney for a 20 min walk to the park on Monday, Wednesday and Friday after work and 60 min at the weekend
2. Walk Aaron to school everyday
- 3.

Date	Activity 1, 2 or 3	Time and/or steps taken	Comments
14th May	2 1	10 mins 20 mins 4345 steps	Was a bit rushed today, but did both
15th May	2	10 mins 2303 steps	I found I enjoyed the air. Felt good when I got to work
16th May	2 1	10 mins 15 mins 4245 steps	Rained hard today, so not as enjoyable, but felt refreshed, although did not do the full 20 minute walk with Barney
17th May	2	10 mins 2313 steps	
18th May	2 1	10 mins 20 mins 4543 steps	Walked to the park quicker, and had time for a quick game of 'fetch'
19th May	1	60 mins 5744 steps	Great time, wonderful day and loved time with Emma on our walk
20th May	1	60 mins 5842	Struggled a little but made it and got easier
Total number of steps this week		29335	

## OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS

**With Sally's support, Mark continued to increase his physical activity. Everyday he managed to walk Aaron to school before work and was still taking Barney on walks to the park after work.**

Reading 'Get Active, Feel Good!' Mark was also able to increase his physical activity using F.I.T.T. After speaking to Emma at home he realised that increasing the amount of time he took Barney out would be really difficult if he was to carry on spending time with the boys. So he decided to carry on walking for the same amount of time as before but to increase the intensity of the walk. This he did by walking a different way to the park on a route that had a steep hill. More generally however he also noticed that he was also walking more with Emma and the boys. This was clear from his pedometer readings recorded in Worksheet E that had increased week on week and he noticed he was less breathless walking up the hill too.



## Worksheet D : Keeping track of your activity by measuring steps each week

		Week									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total number of steps each week	70,000										
	65000										
	60000										
	55000										
	50000										
	45000			X							
	40000										
	35000		X								
	30000	X									
	25000										
	20000										
	15000										
	10000										
	5000										
	1000										
	0										

## MARK'S WEEK 7 NEXT STEPS DIARY

Sally continued to support Mark with his 'Next Steps' diary to increase his other routine, necessary and pleasurable activities.

### Mark's Week 7 Next Steps Diary

		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Morning	What	Walk Aaron to	Walk Aaron to	Walk Aaron to
	Where	school 8.40-8.50	school 8.40-8.50	school 8.40-8.50
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	Work
Afternoon	Where			
	Who			
	What	Work	Work	Work
	Where			
Evening	Who			
	What	Walk Barney to	Read to the boys	Walk Barney to
	Where	park 6-6.20	6.45-7	park 6-6.20
	Who			
Comments	What	Read to the boys		
	Where	6.45-7		
	Who			
	What	Enjoyed walking Aaron	A bit low this	Nice to spend time
	Where	to school, tired this	afternoon but nice	relaxing with Emma
	Who	evening. I really	to read to the boys	
	What	pushed on the walk with		
	Where	Barney		



Looking back over his diary felt really good. He noted that during the last week he had completed some of the activities that at the beginning of treatment were at the top of his difficulty sheet. From his 'Next Steps' diary he was able to identify that he was now doing much more with the boys and Emma. He was even managing to get those difficult necessary activities completed, such as getting the car tax paid.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Walk Aaron to school 8.40-8.50	Walk Aaron to school 8.40-8.50	Take boys to park 9-10	
Work	Work	Shopping for week 10.30-12	Working on motorbike 10-11.30
Work	Work	Pay road tax for car 2pm	
	Work		Family walk 4-4.30
	Walk Barney to park 6-6.20	Read to the boys 5.30-6	
Meal with Emma			
Felt really good today, got loads done	A good day, Starting to feel I am getting back into a good routine	Good day got a lot done. Starting to feel like a good husband again	Lovely time on the beach feel 'normal' again

## PREPARING FOR THE END OF TREATMENT

**Mark reported feeling much more like normal now. He felt much less tired and had more energy than he had for a long time.**

This was also noted by his workmate, who commented how he was much more 'chatty and enthusiastic' at work. His appetite had also returned and he really enjoyed going out for a meal with Emma. He could even enjoy having a pudding now he had lost some weight. Although still feeling worried about the possibility of Emma's cancer returning, he no longer felt any guilt. Given these improvements Sally suggested to Mark that as long as things were still fine next week it may be that his regular sessions could end.

### Preparing for the end of treatment

All was well during the next session. Mark reported increasing his physical activity even further and feeling 'back to normal'. Reviewing what he wanted out of treatment it was clear that he was now doing the things he wanted to do. It was agreed that his weekly sessions with Sally would now end.



## What Do You Want to Get Out of Treatment?

Mark was now able to achieve the things he wanted out of treatment.

Today's Date 4th July

### Item 1

Walk Aaron to school every day

I can do this now (circle a number):

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

Occasionally

Often

Anytime

Today's Date 4th July

### Item 2

To take Barney out on longer walks most days again

I can do this now (circle a number):

0

1

2

3

4

5

6

Not at all

Occasionally

Often

Anytime

## LOW MOOD ALARM AND ACTIVITY TOOLKIT

**Sally discussed ways for Mark to try and stay well and together they went through Step 9 of 'Get Active, Feel Good!'.**

Mark found it really helpful creating his own personal 'low mood alarm and activity toolkit' and thinking about the activities that helped him.

Sally also discussed how it was perfectly normal to feel down occasionally. However if Mark started to feel the way he had written in his 'Low Mood Alarm' for a while and this started to impact on his life again then it could be best to think once again about the things that helped. Sally also indicated how going back through 'Get Active, Feel Good!' could be useful.

## ONE MONTH LATER

**One month later as planned, Sally phoned Mark to check on his progress and see how he was getting along with his physical activity.**

All seemed to be well. He was spending far more time with Emma and the boys and Barney had not walked so much in his life! Mark did say however that he still found some days were better than others. However once he was walking outside with Barney or Emma and the boys things seemed better.

## My low mood alarm and activity toolkit

Last time I was depressed I did the following things differently or stopped doing them altogether...

Took time off work, stopped doing things with the boys, did little around the house, shaved and washed less frequently, more time in the house doing nothing

Last time I was depressed the following unhelpful thoughts ran through my head...

"I should have spent more time with Emma", "I am a waste of space", "I am a bad dad"

Last time I was depressed I felt the following physical symptoms...

Very tired, slow, put on weight, irritable problems sleeping

Last time I was depressed, doing the following activities really helped...

Walking Barney, going to the park with the boys, shaving, spending time with Emma, tinkering with my bike



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Dr Paul Farrand** is a Senior Lecturer within the Mood Disorders Centre and Director of Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner training within Clinical Education, Development and Research (CEDAR) at the University of Exeter. His main clinical and research interests are in the area of low intensity cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), especially in a self-help format. Based upon his research and clinical practice he has developed a wide range of written self-help treatments for depression and anxiety.



**Professor Adrian Taylor** specialises in developing and evaluating interventions and support for health behaviour change as a way of improving and regulating psychological well-being. As one of the Directors of Research in the College of Life and Environmental Sciences at the University of Exeter, he has led and supported many nationally and internationally renowned research studies. His work has featured in a variety of clinical guidelines for helping people to gain control over various health behaviours as well as mood.



**Dr Colin Greaves** is a health psychologist and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Exeter Medical School. He has research expertise in developing and testing interventions to help people undertake lifestyle change. Based upon his research he has developed an intervention to help people with asthma manage their condition, several weight loss interventions and a self-help manual for people with heart failure.



**Dr Claire Pentecost** is a Research Associate at the Mood Disorders Centre, University of Exeter. Her research experience is in designing and delivering programmes for lifestyle change for people with diabetes, depression and other long-term conditions. Claire's most recent research looked at the reasons why some people do, and some people do not take up lifestyle change courses recommended by a GP.



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