

Week 3/Video 5: Socializing is Self-Care

Now let's shift our attention to our behaviors and creating helpful behavioral habits.

First, let's acknowledge that you've already begun modifying your behavior. Your homework over the past 2 weeks has included implementing new sleep and exercise strategies. Because you've been working on these things, you are already on the road to creating new healthy habits! It's now just a matter of repeating the new strategy over and over until it becomes second nature.

Another behavioral strategy for improving your mood relates to connecting with others and being part of community. Engaging in social interactions is a major component in improving depressed mood. When depressed, some people feel a pull to withdraw and isolate. Some people stop hanging out with their friends, stop talking to family, and stop being around people in general. It's as if it just takes too much energy to talk, even to people you love and typically enjoy being around. Sound familiar?

This is a symptom of depression. Even though you feel like being alone, the remedy to depression often lies in interacting with others. Research has shown that talking, physical contact such as hugs, or even just being near other people can decrease depressive symptoms and increase happiness. Social interaction is so powerful, in fact, that simply talking with a stranger can positively impact your mood.

This doesn't mean that we are suggesting you go strike up a conversation with a random stranger or sit and have deep conversations with friends or family. The first step may be as simple as studying in the UU instead of alone in your room. The idea is to just get out of your depressive environment and be around people.

If you are open to hanging out with friends but don't feel like talking, try planning an activity in which you can engage without the pressure to talk. Schedule a study date, go see a movie, or play a board game. On **page 32**, there is a section entitled "ideas for socializing." We've created a brief list of ideas to start the brainstorming process.

Please mark a few ideas for socializing that seem do-able for you. There is also blank space for you to list your own ideas that are unique to you and what you would be willing to try.