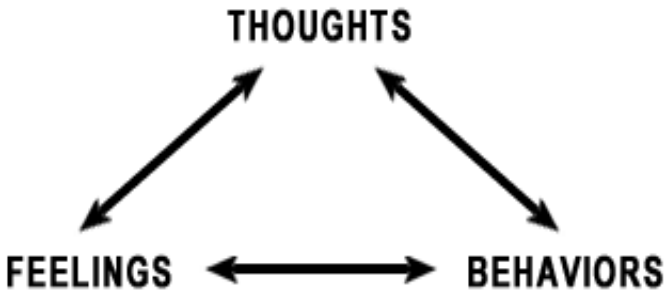
HANDOUT 20: THE IMPORTANCE OF PLEASANT AND MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES

After experiencing a disaster it can be very difficult to get back in the habit of having fun. But we know that feeling depressed occurs when people have more negative experiences in their life than positive ones. Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all related, so if you don't do enjoyable things, then you will have negative thoughts and you will feel bad.



When too many serious problems are happening, it's hard to remember to take time for yourself. Sometimes we feel we don't have any more energy. But taking the time to engage in pleasant activities is important. It's really important to fight against the urge to "veg out" or turn to other negative coping habits. It may take some time, and it may not even feel fun at first, but if you stop doing rewarding activities then you will continue to feel bad, and if you feel bad you won't want to engage in enjoyable activities. Reversing the downward spiral takes extra effort.

Another thing that can make us feel bad is failing to be productive or engage in meaningful activities. There are some activities that aren't fun but are important, such as housework, laundry or paying the bills; going to work; or taking care of ourselves. Failing to engage in these activities can also have a big impact on mood.

Making pleasant and meaningful activities a part of your daily lifestyle is an important first step toward healing. Handout 21 contains a list of activities that people sometimes enjoy. Please identify at least five different activities that you will commit to doing before the next session. This list is intended to give you ideas about things that you might enjoy. You do not need to stick to the items on the list, you can come up with other activities that are either meaningful to you or that you might enjoy. Handout 22 contains a list of personally meaningful life areas you may want to focus on.