

Preventing Mania Using a Weekly Schedule

Objective

To decrease the likelihood of experiencing a full-blown manic episode using a weekly activity schedule.

What to Know

When you start to cycle into hypomania, there are specific behavioral changes that occur. Your activity level, energy, and libido increase, and you might begin to sleep less. This cycle of increased activity and decreased sleep can escalate into mania.

Energy and activity level changes usually build slowly over time, so you can learn to track the progression of your mood elevation. When you recognize this is happening, it is important to begin monitoring yourself so you can implement strategies to prevent a full-blown manic episode. Here are two strategies you can use.

1. Prevent sleep disruption. Sleep deprivation is both a trigger to and a symptom of mania. If you get little or no sleep, you might be exhausted, but find you cannot slow down enough to fall asleep – leading to an escalation of bipolar symptoms and even psychosis. Or you might enjoy your increased energy, but eventually experience negative consequences, like irritability and paranoia.

Here are some good sleeping habits to prevent a hypomanic or manic episode:

- go to bed and wake up at the same time each day
- avoid napping if it causes insomnia
- minimize sleep disruptions (for example, share night-time responsibilities, bring your favorite pillow when you travel, install blackout curtains, or use ear plugs or a sleep mask)
- avoid overstimulation (for example, engaging in physical activity before bedtime)
- avoid thinking too much at night (do some relaxation exercises or calming activities)
- identify times when your normal sleeping habits are likely to be disrupted (for example, if you have a work deadline or you are traveling)

2. Limit activities. Keep activities at a “normal” level by using an activity schedule to plan and organize your week. You can make sure there is a balance of responsibilities, fun activities, and time for sleep and relaxation. Then, if you begin to suspect you are hypomanic, use a separate activity schedule to monitor your energy, moods, and activities. Compare it to your “normal” and balanced schedule. If your activity levels have increased significantly, slow down and return to your normal weekly schedule. You can ask a friend or family member to support you.

Who can help you? _____

What to Do

Use the following chart to plan out your week. You can also use a planner or online calendar. Be sure to include time for relaxation, enjoyable activities, and sleep. Get into the habit of following your schedule for at least one month, then answer the following questions.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7:00-8:00							
8:00-9:00							
9:00-10:00							
10:00-11:00							
11:00-12:00							
12:00-1:00							
1:00-2:00							
2:00-3:00							
3:00-4:00							
4:00-5:00							
5:00-6:00							
6:00-7:00							
7:00-8:00							
8:00-9:00							
9:00-10:00							
10:00-11:00							
11:00-12:00							

What were some challenges you experienced adhering to a balanced weekly schedule? Describe.

Did you have a balance of responsibilities, fun activities, and time for sleep and relaxation? Why or why not?

Did you ask a loved one to help you? Why or why not?

Did using a weekly schedule help you avoid a full-blown manic episode? Explain.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this activity?
