

## Nourishing and Depleting Activities

When pain makes it harder to do things, the activities that have to be done, (or that we feel we have to do) can end up being prioritised, draining our resources for engaging in activities that we enjoy, or that can help us to feel better. This can have an adverse effect on mood and contribute to wind-up of the central neural system (CNS). We can categorise activities into different types:

### Nourishing activities may...

- Improve mood – make you feel a bit better.
- Bring about feelings of calm or relaxation and activate the ‘soothing system’.
- Avoid further wind-up of the CNS and discourage ‘the brakes coming on’ (and may help ease them off, if they are already on).
- Increase energy levels.
- Increase your resources to cope with pain and stressors.

### Depleting activities may...

- Contribute to CNS wind-up.
- Are associated with the ‘threat system’.
- Lower mood – make you feel worse.
- Increase tension and stress.
- Drain energy levels.

Some activities are neither nourishing nor depleting, but just ‘something that you do’ which we can term **‘neutral’**. Acknowledging that there may be aspects of life which are out of our control, we can aim to strike a greater balance between these activities in the following ways:

- **Adding in more nourishing activity**
  - What would this look like for you?

- **Reducing the number of depleting activities.**
  - Is there something you can stop doing? e.g. watching the 10pm news before bed.
- **Doing less of the depleting activity .**
  - e.g. limit time scrolling through social media.
- **Finding ways to make depleting activities neutral.**
  - E.g. combining a tedious commute with listening to a podcast or audiobook.
  - ... ironing whilst watching a favourite TV programme.
  - ... bringing a friend along to chat, so the dog-walk feels less of a chore.
  - ... combining food shopping with a treat, like having coffee out.

Try making a list of your typical daily activities on the sheet attached. You may wish to consider a week and weekend day, if these tend to differ. Working through your day, write down every activity you do e.g. getting up, getting dressed, showering, making breakfast etc.

Now look at you list and think about which activities are nourishing and which are depleting, marking these with an ‘N’ and a ‘D’ next to them. If activities are neutral, you do not need to put anything next to them.

Example:

Activity	Nourishing (N), depleting (D) or neutral
Getting up	
Breakfast	
Shower and getting dressed	
Walking the dog	
Coffee and chat with friends	

