

Session 3: 'What do I want - setting goals, chunking and scheduling?'

In today's session we talked about how difficult it can be to tackle tasks that feel too big for us. Sometimes we don't get started because we worry so much about how we will ever get the whole job done.

To help you to break down tasks and goals into manageable chunks we have given you a handout with a staircase on it. We'd like you to think about how you might take one step at a time to reach your goal.

First of all we'd like you to identify a goal that is personally meaningful to you as part of your recovery. Think about what you're avoiding or what's left undone that might make a real difference. Then ask yourself 'How will I know that I have reached my goal?' or 'How will I know I have completed my task?' then write it in at step 10.

The goal or task can be anything you like. In our last handout we introduced you to Tess who was battling depression. Tess said that the thing she would most like to achieve right now was to deal with the pile of unopened post that she saw every day and that made her feel useless and miserable. She decided that she would be at step 10 when she had thrown away the things she didn't need (e.g. junk mail), filed the things she needed to keep (e.g. bank statements) and answered or attended to anything that needed some kind of response (e.g. paying a utility bill).

Once you've decided what your goal is and specified what the completed goal would look like, ask yourself, 'Where am I right now with this task?' At first Tess thought she was at step 1 but when she thought about it a bit more she realised that things could be worse – she could be climbing over a pile of unopened mail, but at least she had piled it all up neatly on the table in her hall.

She decided she was at step 2, which she labelled on the diagram. But when she thought about all the post she would have to open her heart sank and she didn't feel like doing anything. She also realised she was terrified that she would open a bank statement and find she was in debt, or get a letter from a friend that would make her sad and guilty. On

the other hand she also realised that the more she avoided the job the more it hung over her and the bigger the pile of post grew.

Tess decided that she could start by sorting the post into obvious piles and scheduled 15 minutes on Thursday evening straight after dinner to do it. She told herself she couldn't watch her favourite TV programme until she'd done it. She thought that the next step would be throwing away the obvious junk mail and that as a result the pile might look a bit less daunting. She labelled that step 4 and again she scheduled 15 minutes on Saturday morning before going out shopping. Although she didn't have a lot of money Tess thought that she could reward herself with a new pair of earrings.

Tess thought that it would help if she didn't think too hard about the next steps at that point in case it made her feel overwhelmed and discouraged so she just focused on getting steps 3 and 4 done.

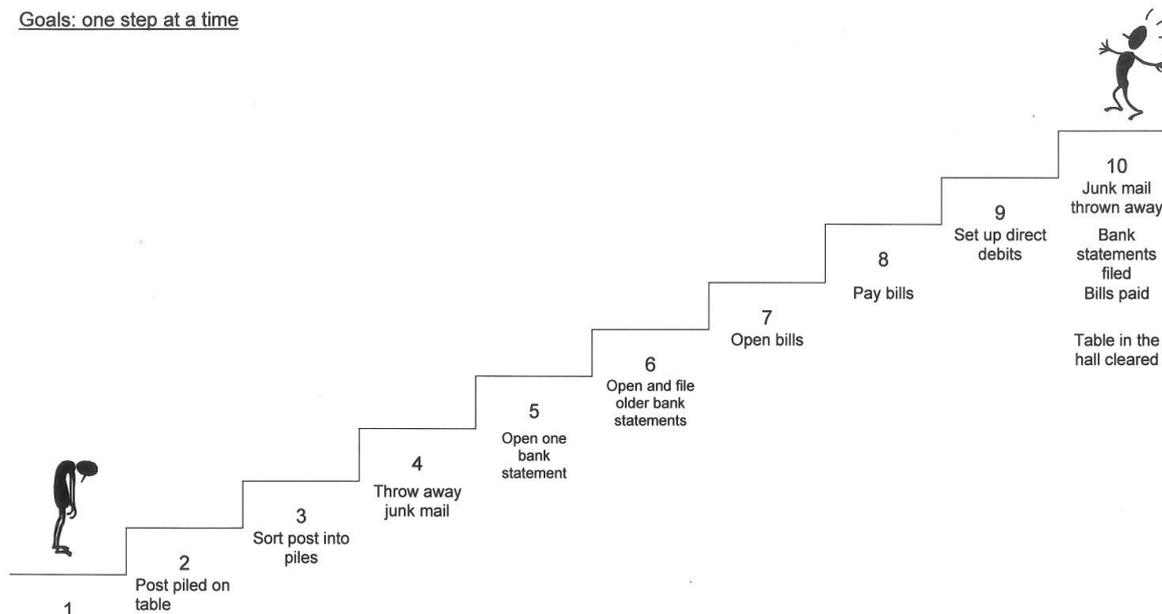
When Tess thought about completing her first two steps she felt a real sense of achievement in starting to tackle the problem so it wasn't until the next week that she thought about step 5. At that point she thought that she could just about face opening her most recent bank statement – she thought through what she feared she might find inside the envelope and made a plan to deal it if it happened.

She knew that it would take some courage so she asked a friend to come round for moral support while she tackled it. She rang her good friend Helen who said that she would take Tess out for a coffee afterwards.

Once Tess had managed step 5 she filled in the remaining steps and found that it got easier and easier to deal with the post until three weeks after she started she finally had the hall table clear. Tess said that it felt a real relief to have tackled it and said that she learned that she had been letting her fear of the worst stop her from taking the first steps to overcoming avoidance.

Tess's 'one step at a time' diagram

Goals: one step at a time



You'll have noticed that Tess employed quite a few strategies to help her to overcome the reluctance and anxiety that often accompany avoidance. Tess used goal-setting, chunking and scheduling.

If you're setting a goal it helps to make it SMART:

- **Specific** - not vague
- **Measurable** - you'll have a way of knowing when it's been achieved
- **Achievable** - it will achieve what you hope it will
- **Realistic** - it's within your power to do it
- **Time-limited** - you know what time and day you'll do it

'Being happier' is too vague to be a SMART goal and therefore it is hard to achieve. Getting fit by exercising three times a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at your local gym until you are able to walk to town without getting out of breath is SMART.

One of the most important strategies is scheduling. We've given you an activity chart to help you plan the tasks that make up the steps towards your goal. Here's an example of one column that Tess completed to help her to schedule one of her steps:

	<i>Day: Thursday</i>
Planned activity	<i>Sort post into piles</i>
Time of day to do activity	<i>6-30pm</i>
Consequences of doing the activity – what changed: thoughts, actions, feelings, impact on others etc?	<i>Felt a bit of relief but also a bit daft for building it up in my mind, it wasn't as bad as I'd imagined - I know I've got to move on to the next step and get rid of the junk mail next</i>

Assignment

Set yourself one personally meaningful goal to achieve in the next week:

Goal: _____

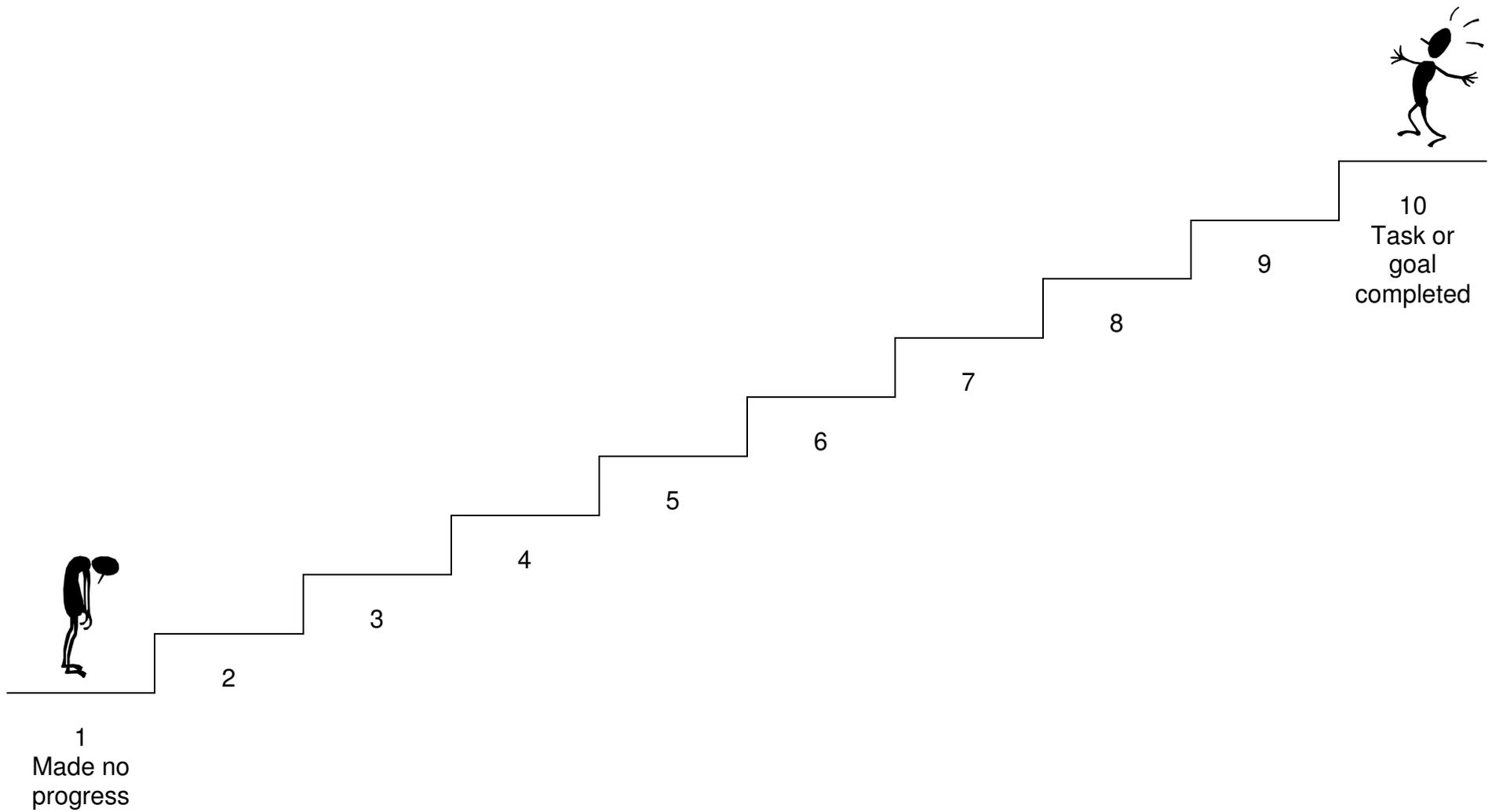
Using the 'One Step at a Time' handout place yourself on the staircase. Write underneath what tells you that you are on that step. Write what would be happening when you have achieved your goal at step 10. Break down the remaining steps.

Using the activity schedule on the following page schedule activities over the following week that will help you to achieve your goal. Each time you complete a step write down in your activity schedule what you achieved and how you felt.

Come and let us know how you get on.

Until we see you 'Good Luck'

Goals: one step at a time



Activity Schedule

	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:	Day:
Planned activity					
Time of day to do activity					
Consequences of doing the activity – what changed: thoughts, actions, feelings, impact on others etc?					