WORKSHEET 8 – HOW TO MAKE A GRAPH FROM A DETAILED ACTIVITY DIARY

In the following, a method for making a graph from a detailed activity diary is described. The method is a combination of two different techniques. The groups of activities shown in Figure 1 are taken from the American ME specialist Dr. David Bell's checklist for school nurses. The method for transforming the activity diary into numbers comes from the book *Somebody Help ME* by Jill Moss.

FIGURE 1: DOCTOR BELL'S RATING SCALE FOR ACTIVITIES

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	GRADE	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITY
Sleep	0	
Rest	0	Relaxation also counts as rest, except for very ill patients.
Light activity	1	Light reading, watching TV, etc.
Moderate activity indoors	2	Homework, home tuition, meals, dishwashing, etc.
Moderate activity outdoors	3	School, walking, shopping, etc.
Strenuous activities	4	Sport, exercise, cleaning, etc.

In order to turn the activities into numbers to plot on the graph, you find out which of the groups in the table the activity belongs to. You then multiply the length of the activity in minutes by the grade of the activity.

For instance, an hour of watching TV while lying on the sofa will be 60 minutes x 1 = 60 points, while a half hour shopping trip will be 30 minutes x 3 = 90 points. You then add up all the numbers to get a total sum for the day. Do not despair if you have difficulties with the calculations. Use a calculator or ask somebody to help you if necessary. An example of how to calculate the total sum for the day is shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2: EXAMPLE OF POINT CALCULATION

Washing and dressing	15 minutes	x 2	= 30 points
Breakfast	15 minutes	x 2	= 30 points
Rest	1 hour		
Read newspaper in bed	15 minutes	x 1	= 15 points
Rest	1 hour		
Lunch	20 minutes	x 2	= 40 points
Rest	1 hour		
Walk	5 minutes	x 3	= 15 points
Rest	1 hour		
Craft activity	10 minutes	x 2	= 20 points
Rest	1 hour		
Dinner	30 minutes	x 2	= 60 points
Rest	1 hour		
Watching TV	30 minutes	x 1	= 30 points
Rest	1 hour		
Snack	15 minutes	x 2	= 30 points
Teeth brushing and undressing	10 minutes	x 2	= 20 points
Total sum for the day			= 290 points

This example was deliberately made very simple. Most people probably have a higher activity level. A total sum like the one in Figure 2 does not say anything about whether the activities were spread out sensibly throughout the day. The sum only says something about the total energy expenditure that day. The energy expenditure is also shown in a relatively imprecise way. Bell's way of splitting activities into six groups is a very rough measure, and there will be differences in how exerting one finds the activities within the same group. A precise grouping does not exist, and if it had existed, it would probably have been too complicated to be of practical use. It does not, however, matter all that much that the total sum is not precise. The small differences become apparent when one analyses the diary on a micro and middle level. What we need on the macro level is to see the difference between an evening on the sofa and an evening at a family party. Large differences are clearly visible in Bell's scale.

When one has kept a diary for a few days, one can draw a graph. One can use Worksheet 9: Graph sheet for detailed activity diary. It is also possible to draw a graph on regular squared paper or on squared paper which fits in the time manager you use. The graph itself is made by marking one point for the activity level and another point for the symptom level each day. When you have marked the points for the next day, you can draw a line between the points for symptom level and a separate one between the points for activity level. After a while you get two lines and can see that there is a connection between the activity level and the symptom level. An example of such a connection is that the symptom level goes up if one does more than one normally does. The purpose of the graph is to see how the activity level develops from day to day and week to week. How to interpret the graph is described in Chapter 16.