CBT Thought Record

Slow down a difficult moment, examine the thought, and choose a more balanced response.

The CBT cycle

Situation	What happened? Stick to observable facts.
Thoughts	What went through your mind? What did the situation seem to mean?
Emotions	Name each feeling and rate its intensity from 0-100.
Actions and body sensations	What did you do, avoid, or notice physically?
Balanced response	What is a fairer, more useful way to understand the situation?

Questions for examining a thought

- What evidence supports this thought? What evidence does not support it?
- Am I treating a possibility as a certainty?
- What would I say to someone I care about in the same situation?
- Is there another explanation that fits the facts?
- What action would move me toward my goals, even if the feeling remains?

Practice worksheet

Situation (who, what, when, and where):

Automatic thought(s) and how strongly I believed them (0-100):

Emotion(s) and intensity (0-100):

Evidence for the thought / evidence that does not fit:

Balanced or alternative thought:

Emotion intensity after reconsidering (0-100) and next helpful step:

Questions to help compose an alternative response

1. What is the evidence that the automatic thought is true? Not true?
2. Is there an alternative explanation?
3. What's the worst that could happen and how could I cope? What's the best that could happen? What's the most realistic outcome?
4. What's the effect of my believing the automatic thought? What could be the effect of changing my thinking?
5. If _____ (friend's name) was in the situation and had this thought, what would I tell him/her? What should I do about it?

This handout is educational and is not a substitute for individualized assessment or treatment. If you are in immediate danger, call 911. In the United States, call or text 988 for crisis support.

Attribution: Based on standard CBT thought-record methods described by Beck, J. S. (2020), *Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond* (3rd ed.), and Greenberger, D., & Padesky, C. A. (2016), *Mind Over Mood* (2nd ed.). ThisLife wording and layout © 2026.