

Thought Record/ Thinking Traps/ Cognitive Distortions (see instruction below)

1. What happened to cause the unpleasant emotions (Who? What? When? Where? How?)

2. What thoughts went thru your mind when this happened?

I could have done more!

3. how much do I believe this?

4. What emotions did you feel when you had the unhelpful thought?

5. Rate the-intensity of your emotions.

6. What is the evidence for the unhelpful thought?

7. What is the evidence against the unhelpful thought?

8. What is the cognitive distortion you are engaging in? (See list below)

9. Alternate thought ... What is another way to think about this situation? How else can you interpret the event instead of using the unhelpful thought?

10. RE-RATE the belief in your initial automatic thought.

11. New emotions – When you told yourself the old unhelpful thought, you felt emotions. Now, when you tell yourself the alternat thought, what emotions do you feel? RE-RATE the intensity of your emotions.

THOUGHT RECORD INSTRUCTIONS

1. Identify the situation, be objective. How would it read in a dictionary? E.g., break up with girlfriend. Think about a topic or a situation. E.g., lying in bed thinking about my marital problems, or driving and worrying about my job.
2. Identify the automatic thought. One thought per record. This may mean you need to do multiple thought records. Examples of thoughts you may be thinking are: "I'm going to be alone all weekend" or "It's impossible for me to make friends."

To find a HOT COGNITION, use the DOWNWARD ARROW TECHNIQUE. Ask yourself of the thought you've identified, "What would this mean about A. me, B. my control over the situation, C. my future?" With depression, these are the areas about which you need to think more realistically. Using the example above ("I'm going to be alone all weekend"); if I ask myself "what does that mean about me?" my answer might be "I'm a loser." This would be the thought to use on your thought record.

For anxiety, we are looking for CATASTROPHIC THOUGHTS. Ask yourself, "What am I perceiving as danger? And what am I saying to myself about my control over this danger? :

For anger, we are looking for EXAGGERATED UNFAIRNESS. Ask yourself, "What am I saying to myself about this situation: that makes it a violation, injustice, unfairness, or deliberate provocation?"

3. Ask yourself "how much do I believe this thought I've identified?" and assign a percentage of believability 0-100% to your identified thought. (100 = I completely believe this thought to be true, 0 = I don't believe this thought to be true).

4. Identify the emotions you are feeling. Keep it simple (i.e., depression, anxiety, anger.)

5. Rate the-intensity of your emotions on a scale of 0-100%, based on-previous experiences with the emotion (100 = most extreme, 0 = complete absence of the emotion).

6. Consider all FACTS that support your automatic thought. When listing facts, remember that they are not thoughts, judgments, opinions, or feelings, but concrete situations, events, and/or experiences that occur. Ask yourself if this evidence proves your thought to be true.

7. Dispute the thought. Testing of the evidence is the most powerful method of challenging a thought. Come up with any FACTS which dispute or argue the thought. One way of accessing this data is to assign your automatic thought to an "invented person". For example, if my thought is "I'm unlovable" imagine creating a 100% undeniably unlovable person. What characteristics would they have? This exercise often enables you to discover aspects of you and your situation, which argue such black and white automatic thoughts. You can dispute thoughts with simple questions as well:

- a. Is this thought 100% true? (100 % true means there is absolutely no facts about you or the situation that contradict it, even a little). If not, how true is it? 75%? 60%? Change the thought so it is less absolute or black and white, and incorporates the missing data.
- b. What would _____ say? (Here, "blank" is someone you admire, who seems to be able to think

rationally most of the time.)

- c. What would I say to _____? (Here, "blank" is someone you know that you care about a great deal that is perhaps a bit vulnerable).
- d. What would I be thinking if my mood was only half the rating I gave it (e.g., Depression 80% VS 40%)

8. What is the cognitive distortion in which you are engaging? See list below

9. Now develop a **BALANCED REPLACEMENT THOUGHT**. For example, if you are completing a thought record on, "I'm unlovable", when considering that my long-term friends have voiced my worth might read, "I have trouble finding intimacy, but I do have some qualities that other find attractive."

10. After you have developed your **BALANCED REPLACEMENT THOUGHT**, **RE-RATE** the belief in your initial automatic thought you are experiencing. Do you notice a change?

11. Now ask yourself, "has the intensity of my emotions decreased since I initially rated them?" **RE-RATE** the intensity of your emotions. Do I have new emotions?

Cognitive Distortions

1. Mind reading: You assume that you know what people think without having sufficient evidence of their thoughts. "He thinks I'm a loser."

2. Fortunetelling: You predict the future negatively: Things will get worse, or there is danger ahead. "I'll fail that exam," or "I won't get the job."

3. Catastrophizing: You believe that what has happened or will happen will be so awful and unbearable that you won't be able to stand it. "It would be terrible if I failed."

4. Labeling: You assign global negative traits to yourself and others. "I'm undesirable," or "He's a rotten person."

5. Discounting positives: You claim that the positive things you or others do are trivial. "That's what wives are supposed to do—so it doesn't count when she's nice to me," or "Those successes were easy, so they don't matter."

6. Negative filtering: You focus almost exclusively on the negatives and seldom notice the positives. "Look at all of the people who don't like me."

7. Overgeneralizing: You perceive a global pattern of negatives on the basis of a single incident. "This generally happens to me. I seem to fail at a lot of things."

8. Dichotomous thinking: You view events or people in all-or-nothing terms. "I get rejected by everyone," or "It was a complete waste of time."

9. Shoulds: You interpret events in terms of how things should be, rather than simply focusing on what is. "I should do well. If I don't, then I'm a failure."

10. Personalizing: You attribute a disproportionate amount of the blame to yourself for negative events, and you fail to see that certain events are also caused by others. "The marriage ended because I failed."

11. Blaming: You focus on the other person as the source of your negative feelings, and you refuse to take responsibility for changing yourself. “She’s to blame for the way I feel now,” or “My parents caused all my problems.”
12. Unfair comparisons: You interpret events in terms of standards that are unrealistic—for example, you focus primarily on others who do better than you and find yourself inferior in the comparison. “She’s more successful than I am,” or “Others did better than I did on the test.”
13. Regret orientation: You focus on the idea that you could have done better in the past, rather on what you can do better now. “I could have had a better job if I had tried,” or “I shouldn’t have said that.”
14. What if?: You keep asking a series of questions about “what if” something happens, and you fail to be satisfied with any of the answers. “Yeah, but what if I get anxious?” or “What if I can’t catch my breath?”
15. Emotional reasoning: You let your feelings guide your interpretation of reality. “I feel depressed; therefore, my marriage is not working out.”
16. Inability to disconfirm: You reject any evidence or arguments that might contradict your negative thoughts. For example, when you have the thought “I’m unlovable,” you reject as irrelevant any evidence that people like you. Consequently, your thought cannot be refuted. “That’s not the real issue. There are deeper problems. There are other factors.”
17. Judgment focus: You view yourself, others, and events in terms of evaluations as good–bad or superior– inferior, rather than simply describing, accepting, or understanding. You are continually measuring yourself and others according to arbitrary standards and finding that you and others fall short. You are focused on the judgments of others as well as your own judgments of yourself. “I didn’t perform well in college,” or “If I take up tennis, I won’t do well,” or “Look how successful she is. I’m not successful.”

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