CBT

Catching and checking a difficult thought

A CBT thought record

Feelings often follow a thought so fast you barely notice it. “They think I’m useless.” “This will go wrong.” A thought record slows the moment down, so you look at the thought instead of through it.

The idea behind it

In cognitive behavioural therapy, a situation triggers an automatic thought. The thought shapes how you feel, what happens in your body and what you do next.

Thoughts are guesses about the world. Some guesses are accurate. Others are distorted by stress, low mood or old experience. Checking them against the evidence gives you a more balanced view.

Common thinking traps

- Catastrophising. Jumping to the worst outcome.
- Mind reading. Assuming you know what others think.
- All or nothing. Seeing things as total success or total failure.
- Shoulds. Holding rigid rules for yourself or others.
- Discounting the positive. Explaining away what went well.

How to use this sheet

1. Write the situation in a sentence. Where were you, who was there, what happened?
2. Name your feelings and rate each one from 0 to 100.
3. Write the thought which hurt most. This is your hot thought.
4. List the facts which support it. Then list the facts which do not.
5. Write a more balanced thought which fits all the evidence.
6. Rate your feelings again.

Tips

- ✓ Aim for balanced, not positive. The new thought needs to feel believable.
- ✓ Ask: what would I say to a friend who had this thought?
- ✓ Fill one in soon after a difficult moment, while the details are fresh.

Want support with this? Joseph offers online therapy across the UK. **act-cognitive-therapy.com/start-therapy** or call or WhatsApp 0750 001 6004.

Important. This worksheet supports therapy. It does not replace it. If you feel unsafe or at risk, contact your GP, call NHS 111 and choose the mental health option, call Samaritans free on 116 123, or call 999 in an emergency.

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My thought record

One row per difficult moment.

Situation	Feelings 0–100	Hot thought	Evidence for	Evidence against	Balanced thought	Feelings now

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