The CBT Clinical Worksheet & Thought Record Toolkit

Ready-to-Use Thought Records, Cognitive Restructuring Tools, and Evidence-Based CBT Worksheets



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Understanding CBT

The cognitive model and evidence base

Thought Records

Multiple variations from basic to advanced

Cognitive Restructuring Tools

Distortion identification and challenging techniques

Behavioral Interventions

Activity scheduling and behavioral experiments

Session Tools

Case conceptualization and progress monitoring

References

Evidence-based research citations

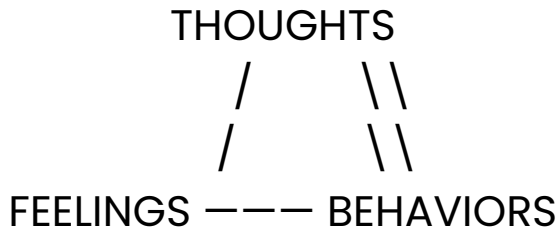


Understanding CBT

The Cognitive Model

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is based on the principle that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interconnected. By identifying and modifying maladaptive thought patterns, clients can reduce emotional distress and change problematic behaviors (Beck, 2011).

The CBT Triangle:



Evidence: CBT is the most extensively researched psychotherapy, with over 2,000 studies demonstrating effectiveness for depression, anxiety, PTSD, OCD, eating disorders, insomnia, and chronic pain (Hofmann et al., 2012; David et al., 2018).

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Effect sizes:

- Depression: d = 0.75-1.0 (large effect)
- Anxiety disorders: d = 0.63-1.0 (medium to large effect)
- Effects maintain at 12-month follow-up (Butler et al., 2006)

Core CBT Principles

1. Psychological problems are based partly on faulty thinking patterns

- Cognitive distortions lead to inaccurate interpretations
- Negative automatic thoughts maintain distress

2. Psychological problems are based partly on learned patterns of unhelpful behavior

- Avoidance maintains anxiety
- Behavioral withdrawal maintains depression

3. People can learn better ways of coping

- Cognitive restructuring reduces distress
- Behavioral activation increases engagement

4. CBT is:

- **Structured** - Follows agenda, assigns homework
- **Time-limited** - Typically 12-20 sessions
- **Problem-focused** - Targets current difficulties
- **Collaborative** - Therapist and client work as team
- **Evidence-based** - Empirically supported techniques

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The 10 Most Common Cognitive Distortions

1. All-or-Nothing Thinking - Seeing things in black and white categories; *"If I'm not perfect, I'm a total failure."*

2. Overgeneralization - Viewing single negative event as never-ending pattern; *"I didn't get the job. I'll never be employed."*

3. Mental Filter - Focusing exclusively on negatives, filtering out positives; "*Sure, I got 9 compliments, but one person criticized me."*

4. Discounting the Positive - Insisting positive experiences "don't count"; *"Anyone could have done that. It wasn't special."*

5. Jumping to Conclusions

- Mind reading: *"They think I'm stupid."*
- Fortune telling: *"This will definitely go badly."*

6. Magnification/Minimization - Exaggerating negatives, minimizing positives; *"This mistake is catastrophic." "My achievements are trivial."*

7. Emotional Reasoning - Assuming feelings reflect reality; *"I feel anxious, so there must be real danger."*

8. Should Statements - Rigid rules about how things "should" be; *"I should never make mistakes." "People should always be fair."*

9. Labeling - Attaching global label based on specific behavior; *"I made a mistake, therefore I'm an idiot."*

10. Personalization - Taking responsibility for things outside your control; *"My friend is upset. It must be my fault."*

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Thought Records

Basic Thought Record (3-Column)

For beginners or simple situations

Situation What happened? Where? When? Who was there?	**Automatic Thought** What went through my mind?	**Feeling** What emotion(s) did I feel? (Rate 0-100%)

Example:

Situation	**Automatic Thought**	**Feeling**
Sent email to boss, no response after 2 days	"She's angry at me. I'm going to get fired."	Anxious (85%), Worried (70%)

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5-Column Thought Record

Client: _____ **Date:** _____

Situation	**Automatic Thought**	**Feeling**	**Evidence For** What supports this thought?	**Evidence Against** What contradicts this thought?

Example:

Situation	**Automatic Thought**	**Feeling**	**Evidence For** What supports this thought?	**Evidence Against** What contradicts this thought?
Friend didn't respond to text	"She doesn't like me anymore."	Sad (75%)	She usually responds quickly.	She mentioned being busy this week. Has responded to other texts. We had lunch last week and it was great.

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7-Column Thought Record (Complete)

The gold standard CBT thought record

Date: _____ **Time:** _____

1. Situation

What happened? Where? When? Who was there?

_____

2. Automatic Thought(s)

What went through my mind?

_____

Rate belief (0-100%): _____ **%**

3. Emotion(s)

What did I feel?

_____

Rate intensity (0-100%): _____ **%**

4. Evidence That Supports the Thought

_____

_____

5. Evidence That Does NOT Support the Thought

_____

_____

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6. Alternative/Balanced Thought

What's a more realistic way to think about this?

_____

_____

Rate belief in alternative (0-100%): _____ %

7. Re-rate Emotion

How do I feel now?

_____

Rate intensity now (0-100%): _____ %

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Quick Thought Challenge Worksheet

For use in session or between sessions

The thought: _____

Cognitive distortion present:

□ All-or-nothing □ Overgeneralization □ Mental filter

□ Discounting positive □ Jumping to conclusions □ Magnification

□ Emotional reasoning □ Should statements □ Labeling □ Personalization

Three questions to challenge it:

1. What's the evidence?

_____

2. Is there another way to look at this?

_____

3. What would I tell a friend in this situation?

_____

Alternative thought:

_____

_____

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Cognitive Restructuring Tools

Downward Arrow Technique

Purpose: Identify core beliefs underlying automatic thoughts

Instructions: Keep asking "What does that mean about me?" or "What would be so bad about that?"

Automatic thought: _____

↓

If that were true, what would it mean?

_____

↓

And if that were true, what would that mean about me?

_____

↓

And what would be so bad about that?

_____

↓

Core belief identified:

_____

_____

Example:
Automatic thought: "I made a mistake in the meeting."
↓
If true, what would it mean? → "People will think I'm incompetent."
↓
And if that were true? → "They won't respect me."
↓
What would be so bad about that? → "I'd be rejected and alone."
↓
Core belief: "I'm unlovable if I'm not perfect."

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Examining the Evidence Worksheet

Thought to examine: _____

Rate belief (0-100%): _____ **%**

Evidence FOR this thought:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Evidence AGAINST this thought:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Quality of evidence check:

- Is this fact or opinion?
- Am I confusing a thought with a fact?
- Am I using emotional reasoning?
- Would this evidence hold up in court?

_____

Conclusion based on ALL the evidence:

_____

_____

Re-rate belief (0-100%): _____ **%**

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Pie Chart Technique

Purpose: Challenge personalization and see all contributing factors

Situation: _____

My automatic thought (what I'm blaming myself for):

_____

_____

List ALL possible factors that contributed (not just my role):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Now draw a pie chart showing the relative contribution of each factor (including yourself):

[Draw circle and divide into slices proportional to each factor's contribution]

What I notice:

_____

My actual role/responsibility:

_____

_____

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Cost-Benefit Analysis

Belief/behavior to examine: _____

Advantages of keeping this belief/behavior:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Disadvantages of keeping this belief/behavior:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Advantages of changing this belief/behavior:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Disadvantages of changing this belief/behavior:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Weighing it all, what makes most sense?

_____

What am I willing to try?

_____

_____

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Behavioral Interventions

Activity Monitoring & Scheduling

Evidence: Behavioral activation as effective as cognitive therapy for depression; effects mediated by increased engagement in rewarding activities (Dimidjian et al., 2006).

Activity Monitoring Log

Instructions: Track activities and rate Mastery (sense of accomplishment) and Pleasure (enjoyment) for each, 0-10.

Date: _____

Time	Activity	Mastery (0-10)	Pleasure (0-10)	Mood (0-10)
6-7am				
7-8am				
8-9am				
9-10am				
10-11am				
11-12pm				
12-1pm				
1-2pm				
2-3pm				
3-4pm				
4-5pm				
5-6pm				
6-7pm				
7-8pm				
8-9pm				
9-10pm				

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Patterns I notice:

Activities with highest mastery/pleasure:

Activities to increase:

Activity Scheduling Worksheet

Goal: Schedule activities that provide mastery and/or pleasure

This week I will schedule:

Day	Activity	Time	Mastery or Pleasure?	Anticipated obstacles	How I'll overcome
Mon			□ M □ P		
Tue			□ M □ P		
Wed			□ M □ P		
Thu			□ M □ P		
Fri			□ M □ P		
Sat			□ M □ P		
Sun			□ M □ P		

Support I need:

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Behavioral Experiment Worksheet

Evidence: Behavioral experiments more effective than verbal discussion for modifying beliefs (Bennett-Levy et al., 2004).

Belief to test: _____

Rate belief (0-100%): _____%

Prediction (what I think will happen):

_____

Anxiety about experiment (0-100%): _____%

Experiment (what I'll do):

_____

When: _____

Where: _____

Safety behaviors to DROP:

_____

_____

What actually happened:

_____

_____

Did my prediction come true? □ Yes □ Partially □ No

What I learned:

_____

Re-rate belief (0-100%): _____%

Re-rate anxiety (0-100%): _____%

Next experiment to try:

_____

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Graded Exposure Hierarchy

Fear/situation to address: _____

Rate current avoidance (0-10): _____

List situations from least to most anxiety-provoking:

Step	Situation	Anticipated Anxiety (0-100)	Actual Anxiety	Date Completed
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Start with Step 1. Move to next step when anxiety reduces by 50% for that step.

Support person: _____

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Session Tools

CBT Case Conceptualization Diagram

Cient: _____ **Date:** _____

Early experiences (childhood, family, formative events):

_____

↓

Core beliefs (about self, others, world):

_____

↓

Intermediate beliefs/assumptions/rules:

"If... then..." "I must..." "People should..."

_____

↓

Compensatory strategies/coping:

_____

↓

CURRENT SITUATION (trigger/activating event):

_____

↙ ↓ ↘

Automatic Thoughts Emotions Behaviors

_____

↘ ↓ ↙

Consequences/maintaining factors:

_____

_____

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Treatment targets:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

CBT Session Structure Template

Session #: _____ **Date:** _____ **Cient:** _____

1. Mood check & brief update (5 min)

Current mood (0-10): _____

PHQ-9: _____ GAD-7: _____

2. Bridge from last session (2 min)

What stood out from last session?

_____

3. Homework review (10 min)

What was assigned: _____

Completion: □ Full □ Partial □ None

Barriers: _____

Learning: _____

4. Set agenda (3 min)

Today's focus:

_____

5. Main work (30 min)

Intervention used: □ Thought record □ Behavioral experiment □ Exposure □ Activity scheduling □ Other: _____

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6. Homework assignment (5 min)

7. Session summary & feedback (5 min)

Client's takeaway:

Therapist's summary:

Next session plan:

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Progress Monitoring Tools

Session-by-Session Symptom Tracking

Cient: _____

Track every session

Session #	Date	PHQ-9	GAD-7	Target Symptom (0-10)	Notes
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					

Reliable change: PHQ-9 decrease ≥ 6 points; GAD-7 decrease ≥ 4 points

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Between-Session Homework Log

Week of: _____

Assigned homework:

Day	Did I complete it?	Time spent	Difficulty (0-10)	What I learned
Mon	□ Yes □ Partial □ No			
Tue	□ Yes □ Partial □ No			
Wed	□ Yes □ Partial □ No			
Thu	□ Yes □ Partial □ No			
Fri	□ Yes □ Partial □ No			
Sat	□ Yes □ Partial □ No			
Sun	□ Yes □ Partial □ No			

Barriers encountered:

_____

Questions for next session:

_____

_____

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