WORKSHEET 61 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The thought record

Examining an automatic thought and finding a more balanced one

AIM

Learn to spot the automatic thoughts linked to an emotion, examine them against the facts and come up with a more balanced alternative thought.

WHO IT IS FOR

Anxiety, sadness, anger, self-criticism. A core CBT tool. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

15 min in session; then after difficult situations

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Start from a recent, specific situation and the emotion felt (intensity 0-100).
2. Identify the “hottest” automatic thought (the one that best explains the emotion).
3. Look for the facts that support it and those that don’t, without interpreting.
4. Come up with a realistic alternative thought, then rate the emotion again.

POINTS TO WATCH

> The aim is not to think positively but more accurately. If the person doesn’t “believe” the alternative thought, work on it further rather than imposing it.

REFERENCES

Beck, J. S. (2020). Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond (3rd ed.). Guilford.

Clark, D. A. & Beck, A. T. (2010). Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice. Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 61 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

My thought record

Our emotions often depend on how we interpret a situation. This record helps you spot your thought, examine it against the facts and find a more balanced way of seeing things.

1. The situation: where, when, with whom.
2. My emotion and its intensity (0 to 100).
3. The thought that came to me, and the facts for and against.
4. A more balanced thought, and the intensity of the emotion afterwards.

Situation	Emotion /100	Automatic thought	Facts for / against	More balanced thought	Emotion afterwards /100

What do I notice about the way I interpret situations?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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