

CBT Thought Record

A way to slow down a thought that's been knocking about, and check whether it's actually true.

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HOW TO USE IT

Take one thought and work down the column. There's room for three, so you can come back to it. Start with what actually happened, just the facts, before you get to what you made of it. Then write the thought down in the words your head actually used. Steps 5 and 6 are where the real work is, and you're collecting what's true on both sides rather than talking yourself out of anything. Ratings run from 0 to 100 percent. Worth saying that the belief doesn't always drop, and when that happens it still tells you something useful. The last page is for looking back once you've done a few.

STEP	THOUGHT 1	THOUGHT 2	THOUGHT 3
1. Situation What happened? Where were you? Who was there? What set it off?			
2. Emotions What did you feel? Where did you feel it in your body? Rate each one from 0 to 100%.	- ▼	- ▼	- ▼
3. Automatic thoughts What went through your mind? What did you say to yourself? What did you think was going to happen? What did it seem to say about you, about someone else, or about how things are going to go?			
4. Beliefs How strongly did you believe that thought at the time?	- ▼	- ▼	- ▼
5. Evidence supporting the thought What facts back it up? What makes it seem true?			
6. Evidence against the thought What doesn't fit? Has there been a time it wasn't true? What might you be missing? What would someone else notice about this?			
7. Alternative perspective Is there another explanation? What would you say to a mate in the same spot? What's the most realistic way to look at it? Could more than one thing be true here?			
8. Outcome Now it's all written down, rate these again.	Original thought - ▼ Alternative - ▼ Emotion now - ▼	Original thought - ▼ Alternative - ▼ Emotion now - ▼	Original thought - ▼ Alternative - ▼ Emotion now - ▼
9. Next step What, if anything, would you like to do differently?			

DOUBLE STANDARDS

You've completed your thought record. Now take a look at the standards you're holding yourself to.

Ask yourself whether you'd expect a friend to meet those same standards. If a friend, your brother, your son, or someone you respected had experienced exactly what you have, would you judge him in the same way? Would you call him weak, useless, or a failure? Would you expect him to get everything right first time or cope without support?

If your answer is no, you've probably found a double standard.

Many men are far tougher on themselves than they are on anyone else. They give others the benefit of the doubt while assuming the worst about themselves. Over time, this can fuel shame, self-criticism and unrealistic expectations.

Your aim isn't to make excuses or avoid responsibility. It's to apply the same fairness to yourself that you already offer other people.

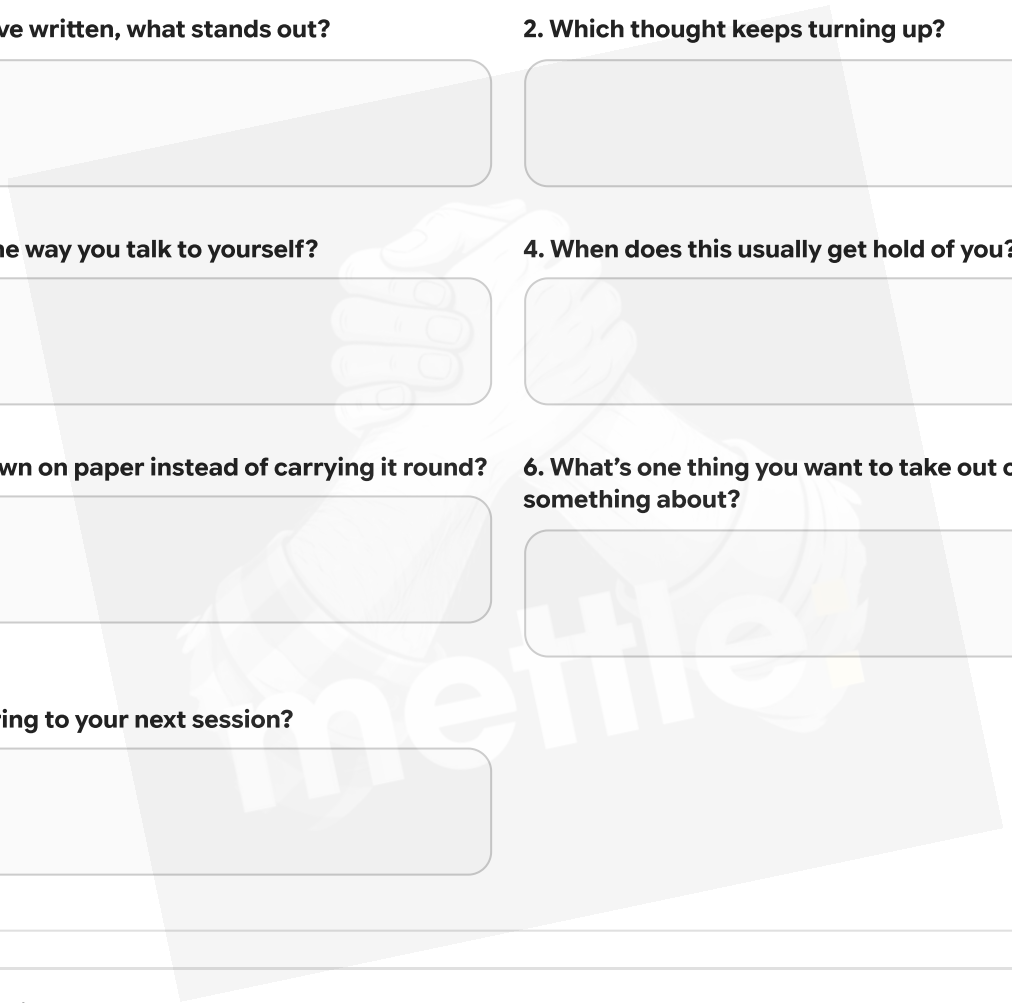
Before you move on, ask yourself

- Would I say these words to a friend I cared about?
- Am I judging myself more harshly than I would judge someone else?
- What would a fair, balanced response sound like?
- If I held everyone to this standard, would it be realistic?
- What would change if I spoke to myself with the same respect I'd show another person?

LOOKING BACK ON IT

Come back to this once you've worked through a thought or two. One on its own tells you about a bad afternoon. A few of them start to show you the pattern.

1. Looking back over what you've written, what stands out?



2. Which thought keeps turning up?

3. What did you notice about the way you talk to yourself?

4. When does this usually get hold of you? Tired, on your own, at work?

5. What was it like getting it down on paper instead of carrying it round?

6. What's one thing you want to take out of this and actually do something about?

7. Anything here you want to bring to your next session?