

Thought Record

1. **The situation.** Briefly describe the situation that led to unpleasant feelings, including the date/time it occurred. This is a fact, not an opinion or judgment.
2. **Initial thought.** What thought first crossed your mind? This was probably a subconscious or automatic thought that you have had before.
3. **Cognitive distortion.** Identify the cognitive distortion (unhelpful thinking pattern) behind your initial thought. Choose one or more from the list of common types using the Cognitive Distortions handout.
4. **Source of negative belief.** Can you trace your distortion to the intermediate belief (rules/assumption/guideline/attitude)? What core belief is being activated? What do the automatic thoughts mean/say about you? What is the deep-seated belief about self, others, the world, etc.?
5. **Challenge your approach.** What is functional about your thoughts and beliefs? What is unhealthy about this cognitive distortion and potential behavior? How are your own thoughts and beliefs working for you and working against you? Look at the evidence. Look at past experiences.
6. **Consider the consequences.** What are the short-term and long-term consequences if you continue to think like this? Consider physical, psychological, professional, and emotional consequences.
7. **Alternative approach.** Identify a counterstatement/counterthought. The previous steps helped you understand your unhealthy thinking or behavior. Now write down a better approach. What could you do differently? How can you think more openly about the situation?
8. **Positive belief and affirmation.** Write down a statement that reflects your healthier beliefs. Choose something that you can repeat to yourself.
9. **Improvement.** How are you feeling? Better, conflicted, or worse? As you continue to identify and take these steps, noticing the change in your emotions and thoughts after changing will help you see growth.



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