

Cognitive Behavioural Techniques (Self-Help) — Workbook

This workbook is your hands-on companion to the CBT Self-Help course. Each section maps directly to a course module and contains exercises, worksheets, and checklists to help you apply thought records, cognitive restructuring, behavioural activation, and exposure practice in your own life. Note: this workbook is for general educational use and personal development — it is not a substitute for professional mental health assessment or therapy. If you are experiencing significant distress, suicidal thoughts, or symptoms of a clinical disorder, please consult a qualified mental health professional.

The CBT Map: Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours

Build your personal CBT foundation by mapping your own thought-feeling-behaviour patterns and learning to spot cognitive distortions in real time.

Exercise: My Personal ABC Analysis

Choose a recent situation that triggered a strong negative emotion — something that happened in the past week. Work through the ABC model step by step. Be as specific and factual as possible in column A; avoid interpretation there.

- A (Activating event) — Describe the situation factually in one or two sentences: who, what, where, when.

- B (Beliefs / automatic thoughts) — What thoughts went through your mind? Write at least three, then circle the one that felt most intense or believable.

- C (Consequence) — What emotions followed (name each one) and what did you do or avoid doing as a result?

- Looking at the triangle: how did the behaviour in C feed back and reinforce the thought in B?

Worksheet: Distortion Spotter — Daily Log

For one week, each evening note any moment during the day when you caught yourself in a cognitive distortion. Use the seven distortions from Module 1 as your reference list. Aim for at least one entry per day.

Triggering situation (1-2 sentences)

Automatic thought (exact words)

Distortion type (e.g. catastrophising, all-or-nothing)

Intensity of emotion (0–100)

Did you challenge it? (Yes / No / Partially)

Checklist: Module 1 Foundation Skills — Weekly Review

- I can describe the ABC model in my own words without referring to notes
- I have mapped at least one personal situation through the full ABC framework
- I can name all seven core cognitive distortions from memory
- I have logged at least three distortion catches this week
- I understand why feelings are not the same as facts
- I have identified which two or three distortions appear most frequently in my own thinking

Thought Records: Writing Your Way to Clarity

Practice completing seven-column thought records, gathering genuine evidence against hot thoughts, and writing balanced alternatives that actually shift mood.

Exercise: My First Complete Thought Record

Select a situation from the past week where your mood dropped noticeably (at least 40/100 distress). Complete all seven columns in writing — do not skip columns 4 and 5 even if they feel uncomfortable. Spend at least 15 minutes on this exercise.

- Column 1 — Situation: Describe the event factually. What would a camera have recorded? No interpretations here.
- Columns 2 & 3 — Moods and Automatic Thoughts: List each emotion with a 0–100 rating, then list every thought. Circle your hot thought — the one generating the most distress.
- Columns 4 & 5 — Evidence FOR and AGAINST the hot thought: For column 5, use at least three of the fourteen evidence questions from Lesson 2.2 and write the answers here.
- Columns 6 & 7 — Balanced thought and mood re-rating: Write your balanced thought (must pass the accuracy, compassion, and specificity tests). Re-rate your moods. Did any shift? If not, what might you have missed in column 5?

Worksheet: Evidence Mining Practice Sheet

Use this sheet when you get stuck on column 5 of a thought record. Work through each evidence-question prompt and record any genuine counter-evidence you find. Aim to complete this for at least two different hot thoughts this week.

Hot thought being examined

What would a trusted friend say about this thought?

Past evidence: have I been in similar situations? What actually happened?

Am I applying a harsher standard to myself than I would to a friend? (describe the double standard)

What is the most realistic outcome — not worst or best?

Which cognitive distortion is operating here?

What am I ignoring or minimising?

Best balanced thought based on this evidence

Checklist: Thought Record Competency Checklist

- I have completed at least two full seven-column thought records this week
- I kept column 1 factual — no interpretations slipped in
- I identified the single hottest thought (not just the first one) in column 3
- I wrote at least three genuine pieces of evidence in column 4 (supporting the hot thought)
- I answered at least three evidence-mining questions for column 5
- My balanced thought in column 6 passes the accuracy, compassion, and specificity tests
- I re-rated my moods in column 7 and recorded any shift

Exercise: Balanced-Thought Believability Test

After writing a balanced thought, test whether it is genuinely credible — not just a positive platitude. Answer the four questions below before accepting it as your column 6 entry.

- Read your balanced thought aloud. On a scale of 0–100, how much do you believe it right now? If under 40, it needs revision — return to column 5.

- Does the balanced thought acknowledge what is genuinely difficult about the situation, or does it minimise it? Revise if it dismisses the difficulty.

- Is the balanced thought specific to this situation, or is it a generic affirmation? (Generic = less believable.) Make it situationally specific.

- Compare the distortion type you identified to the balanced-thought template in Lesson 2.3. Does your thought match the pattern for that distortion? Revise if not.

Behavioural Activation: Acting Your Way to Better Mood

Build and execute a personalised behavioural activation schedule grounded in your values, track the predicted-vs-actual mood gap, and use the data to challenge depressive automatic thoughts.

Exercise: Values Clarification and Activity Brainstorm

Complete the values clarification exercise from Lesson 3.3 before building your activity schedule. This ensures your activation choices are meaningful, not just effortful.

- For each of the eight life domains (relationships, health/body, work/career, learning/growth, leisure, community, spirituality/meaning, creativity), complete this sentence: 'At my best in this domain I would be...'

- Rate each domain: how important is it to you (0–10) and how fully are you living it right now (0–10)?

- Identify the two or three domains with the largest gap between importance and enactment — these are your activation targets.

- For each target domain, list three specific activities — small enough to attempt this week — that express that value in a concrete way.

Worksheet: Mood-Activity Baseline Log — 5-Day Tracker

For five consecutive days, record your main activity each hour and rate your mood. Complete this before scheduling — it reveals your personal mood-lifters and patterns. Be honest; there are no right answers.

Date

Time slot (e.g. 7am–8am)

Main activity (brief description)

Alone or with others

Indoors or outdoors

Mood rating 0–10

Notes (anything that felt notable)

Worksheet: Weekly Behavioural Activation Schedule

After completing the baseline log, use this worksheet to plan next week's activation. Schedule at least two activities per day — one mastery, one pleasure. Start modest. For each, predict your mood before and record the actual mood after.

Day and time slot

Activity (specific and concrete)

Type (Mastery / Pleasure / Values-aligned)

Predicted enjoyment (0–10)

Predicted accomplishment (0–10)

Actual mood after (0–10)

Actual enjoyment (0–10)

Actual accomplishment (0–10)

Notes / observations

Checklist: Behavioural Activation Weekly Review

- I completed the 5-day mood-activity baseline log before scheduling
- I identified at least three personal activities that reliably lift my mood from the baseline data
- I completed the values clarification exercise and identified two target domains
- I scheduled at least two activities per day this week (one mastery, one pleasure minimum)
- I recorded predicted and actual mood ratings for each scheduled activity
- I reviewed the predicted-vs-actual gap and noted where I underestimated my mood response
- I used at least one actual mood rating as evidence in a thought record this week

Exposure Ladders: Overcoming Avoidance Step by Step

Design and begin climbing a personalised exposure ladder for one avoidance pattern, using correct technique to maximise new learning and minimise reinforcing fear.

Exercise: Avoidance Mapping Exercise

Before building your ladder, map the full scope of your avoidance — overt, subtle, and cognitive. This prevents safety behaviours from hiding inside your 'coping.' Be honest with yourself; subtle avoidance is the most common reason exposure fails.

- Name one situation or stimulus you currently avoid or approach with significant anxiety. State it as a specific, observable scenario, not a general category.

- List all overt avoidance behaviours: what exactly do you avoid doing, and how often?

- List all subtle avoidance / safety behaviours you use when you do face the situation (e.g., checking your phone, not making eye contact, sitting near the exit, rehearsing scripts in advance).

- State your specific catastrophic prediction: 'If I face this situation without safety behaviours, I believe that _____ will happen.' This is the prediction your exposure will test.

Worksheet: My Exposure Ladder — Hierarchy Builder

List 10–12 situations related to your fear, rated by SUDs (0–100). Arrange them from lowest to highest. Check that no two adjacent rungs are more than 20 SUDs apart. Identify safety behaviours to drop for each rung.

Rung number (1 = lowest, 12 = highest)

Specific situation description (concrete and observable)

SUDs rating (0–100)

Safety behaviours to drop during this exposure

Status (Not started / In progress / Mastered — peak SUDs under 40)

Worksheet: Exposure Session Record

Complete one row for each exposure session. Record before, during, and after data. Use this record as evidence in future thought records and to track your learning over time.

Date

Rung attempted (description)

Catastrophic prediction before (exact words)

Peak SUDs during session

SUDs at end of session

Duration (minutes)

Safety behaviours dropped (list)

What actually happened (factual outcome)

New learning / what I now know that I did not know before

Checklist: Exposure Readiness and Safety Checklist

- I have mapped all overt avoidance and subtle safety behaviours for my target fear
- I have written a specific catastrophic prediction to test — not just a vague discomfort
- My exposure ladder has 10–12 rungs with no gap larger than 20 SUDs between adjacent steps
- I have identified safety behaviours to drop for each rung
- I have read and understood the inhibitory learning model from Lesson 4.3
- I have completed at least one full exposure session (bottom rung) and recorded the outcome
- I have compared my catastrophic prediction to the actual outcome and documented the gap
- I am aware that severe anxiety, PTSD, OCD, or phobias warrant working with a trained CBT therapist rather than self-guided exposure alone

Your Action Plan

1. Week 1: Complete the ABC exercise and distortion spotter log for at least five days — establish your baseline cognitive patterns
2. Week 1-2: Complete your first two full seven-column thought records for situations where distress reached at least 40/100
3. Week 2: Run the 5-day mood-activity baseline log without changing any behaviours — observe only, do not intervene yet
4. Week 3: Complete the values clarification exercise and build your first weekly BA schedule with at least two activities per day
5. Week 3-4: Track predicted vs actual mood ratings for every scheduled activity and review the gap at the end of each week
6. Week 4: Complete the avoidance mapping exercise and build your exposure ladder — write out all 10–12 rungs with SUDs ratings
7. Week 5: Complete your first exposure session (bottom rung), dropping at least two safety behaviours, and record the outcome in the exposure session log
8. Ongoing: Complete one thought record per significant mood event, keep the BA schedule running, and climb one new exposure rung every 5–7 days or when peak SUDs on the current rung falls below 40
9. Monthly: Review all thought records for recurring distortion patterns and use them to update your balanced-thought templates
10. Ongoing: If distress remains high, avoidance is not reducing, or you are experiencing clinical-level symptoms, consult a qualified CBT therapist — self-guided CBT works best for mild-to-moderate everyday difficulties

