

Dysfunctional Thought Record

Date:

When you notice a change in your mood or feelings, ask yourself, "What's going through my mind right now?" and as soon as possible jot down the thought or image in the table below.

Date/time	Situation / Activity	Automatic Thought(s)	Emotion(s)	Other possible responses	Outcome
	1. What actual event or stream of thoughts or daydreams or memories led to the unpleasant emotion? 2. Did you have any physical sensations with it?	1. What thought(s) or image(s) flashed through your mind? 2. How much did you believe each one at the time?	1. What emotion (sad, anxious, angry, etc.) did you feel at the time? 2. How intense was this emotion? (0-100%)	1. (optional) What errors of thinking might you have made? (See back of page for examples.) 2. Use the questions on the back to work out a response to the automatic thought(s). 3. How much do you actually believe each response? (0-100%)	1. How much do you believe each automatic thought now? 2. What emotions do you feel now, and how intense are they? (0-100%)
<i>Example: Tues 3 Mar 8pm</i>	<i>talking on the phone to friend</i>	<i>He isn't really interested in what I'm saying. (90%)</i>	<i>Sad (80%)</i>		

Common errors of thinking: “cognitive distortions”

- **All or nothing thinking:** You look at things in absolute, black and white categories.
- **Overgeneralization:** You view a negative event as extending to all areas of your life for all time.
- **Mental Filter:** You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
- **Discounting the positives:** You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities “don’t count”.
- **Jumping to conclusions:**
 - (A) **Mind reading** — you assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there’s no definite evidence for this.
 - (B) **Fortune Telling** — you arbitrarily predict things will turn out badly.
- **Magnification or Minimization:** You blow things out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately.
- **Emotional Reasoning:** You reason from how you feel: “I feel like an idiot, so I must be an idiot.” Or “I don’t feel like doing this, so I’ll put it off.”
- **“Should Statements”:** You criticize yourself or other people with “Shoulds” or “Shouldn’ts.” “Musts,” “Oughts,” “I-lave tos” are similar offenders.
- **Labelling:** You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying, “I made a mistake,” you tell yourself, “I’m a jerk,” or “a fool,” or “a loser.”
- **Personalization and Blame:** You blame yourself for something you weren’t entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behaviour might contribute to a problem.

taken from David D. Burns, *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy* (1980)

Questions to help compose an alternative response:

1. What is the *evidence* that the automatic thought is true? (List everything you can think of.)
Evidence that it is not true?
2. Is there an *alternative* explanation?
3. What’s the *worst* that could happen?
Could I live through it?
What’s the *best* that could happen?
What is a *realistic* outcome?
4. What is the *effect* of my believing this automatic thought?
What could be the effect if I changed my thinking?
5. Is there anything which I could do about it practically?
6. If a friend was in this situation and told me this thought, what would I tell them?

taken from Judith S. Beck, *Cognitive Therapy: Basics and Beyond* (1995)