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Information Sheet

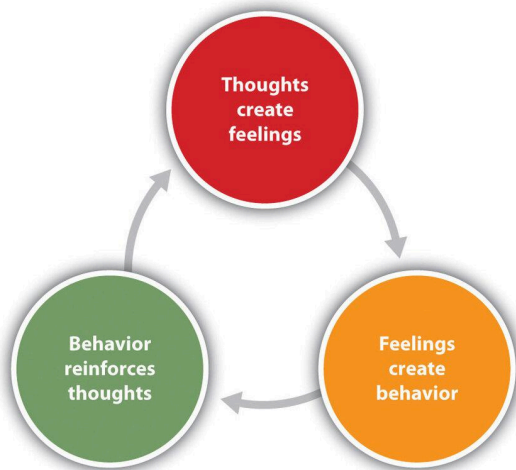
Supporting mental health, resilience, and wellbeing

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CBT Thought Diary:

A structured way to notice thoughts, feelings, & alternative perspectives

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What This Is

A CBT Thought Diary is a reflective tool used in cognitive behavioural therapy to help you notice how thoughts, emotions, and behaviours interact. It supports awareness of habitual thinking patterns and explores whether alternative, more balanced perspectives might also be possible.

This is an exploration, not a debate with yourself—and not about forcing positive thinking.

Why This Matters

Our brains are efficient pattern-makers. Under stress, they can rely on shortcuts that increase distress (for example, catastrophising or all-or-nothing thinking). A thought diary may help slow things down and create space for choice.

Using this tool may help:

- Reduce emotional intensity
 - Improve clarity and perspective
 - Identify unhelpful thinking habits
 - Support more flexible responses
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How This Can Help

People often notice that a thought diary:

- Makes reactions feel more understandable
- Reduces the sense that thoughts are “facts”
- Improves emotional regulation over time
- Supports problem-solving and communication

It works best when used selectively, not constantly.

How to Use the CBT Thought Diary

You might complete this when you notice a strong emotional reaction, a recurring worry, or a situation that didn't go as you hoped.

1. Situation

Briefly describe what happened.

- Where were you?
- What was going on?
- Who was involved?

Keep it factual and short.

2. Emotions

Name the emotions you noticed.

- You may choose to rate their intensity (e.g., 0–10)
- Multiple emotions can coexist

Example: anxiety (7/10), frustration (5/10)

3. Automatic Thoughts

Write down the first thoughts that came to mind.

- These are often quick, believable, and emotionally charged
- Don't censor or judge them

Example: "I'm going to mess this up."

4. Evidence For and Against

Gently explore:

- What supports this thought?
- What doesn't support it?

This is about balance, not winning an argument.

5. Alternative or Balanced Thought

Consider a more realistic or compassionate perspective that:

- Acknowledges difficulty
- Avoids extremes

- Feels believable (not forced)

Example: "This is hard, and I've handled similar situations before."

6. Re-rate Emotions (Optional)

Notice whether the intensity of emotions has shifted—even slightly.

Small changes count.

Important Notes

- Thoughts are not facts, even when they feel convincing
 - Some thoughts reflect habits, not reality
 - This tool is not meant for every situation
 - Overuse can increase rumination—less is often more
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Gentle Reminder

A thought diary is a practice, not a performance. The aim is curiosity and understanding, not perfect thinking.

Safety & Support

If this exercise increases distress or self-criticism, it's okay to pause. Thought diaries are often most helpful when introduced and reviewed with your treating psychologist, who can help adapt the tool to your needs and timing.
