



Thought Record -

Rationale –

Language is reality. The basic premise of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy argues that how you think effects how you feel. Yes, very basic. But, very true. CBT fundamentally promotes thinking about thinking. It assumes that ***how someone reacts to a situation or event is less about the situation itself and more about the language that he or she used to interpret that situation.*** Thought Records (TRs) serve to enhance how we interpret situations and relationships. Fundamentally, TRs enhance self-reflection – as the ability to step back and observe thoughts.

Instruction -

Fill out a thought record any time that you:

- Avoid someone or a situation,
- Might be obsessing over an event,
- Recognize that your mind is racing,
- Notice a spike in body agitation or anger,
- Gauge that your anxiety level is up
- Observe – or other observe – behaviors from the list of reactions below

There is a variety of options, in terms of formatting a thought record. The ABC-D model below represents one of many that you can find online. The basics of a thought record: **A-B-C → D**

- Activating event – *the situation or incident that triggered your reaction**
- Belief – *how did you interpret the situation or incident? What were the automatic thoughts that paralleled your reaction(s)? What do those thoughts imply about you?*
- Consequence – *the outcome of your reaction and accompanying behavior*
- Disputing thoughts – *challenge the automatic thoughts & beliefs that fueled your reaction*

***REACTIONS:** anger, avoidance, panic, tensing up, eye roll, sighing, disconnecting, snide comments, pacing, yelling, rudeness, hiding, lying, surge of guilt with or without an impulsive confession, etc.



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Example –

- A- Your roommate Mike leaves his plates and cups on the counter yet again
- B- Auto thoughts: 'He always forgets ... he never listens to me.. he doesn't respect me.'
Behavior: Internalize anger and hide out in your bedroom, avoiding roommate



**What is the overarching conclusion to your automatic thoughts?*

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| • There is something wrong with me | • I'm incompetent |
| • No one will ever love me | • I have no talents |
| • People don't respect me | • I'm not safe |
| • Relationships are never/ rarely satisfying | • You can't trust anyone |
| • Other are never/ rarely supportive | • I'm stupid |
| • Things will never get better | • I am defective |
| • If I didn't have bad luck I'd have no luck at all | • _____ |

- C- The internalized anger triggers tension and distance in relationship to roommate
- D- 'Mike is a little ADHD... if I remind him again, he will probably clean his stuff ... he has listened to me before... he's really not a passive aggressive person.'

Remember -

Be unfiltered and embarrassingly honest in how you fill out "B". The value of the TR is two-fold. One, TRs help to uncover the basic beliefs that greatly color our thinking, but operate on a preconscious level. The more TRs you do, the more clearly that you will define your basic beliefs as they relate to 1) who you are, 2) relationships, and 3) how the world operates. Often, distorted beliefs about one's self and/or the world at large perpetuate anxiety and depression.

Two, TRs help to highlight the type of absolute statements and modifying language that can fuel (over)reactions. A TR encourages people to tweak their language and interpretations so that they are less black & white, and more integrated. TRs balance out blame, reassess level of risk or probability, and can debunk fears and/or catastrophic conclusions. Any time you hear yourself use an extreme verb or modifier like "should...always.... never...every... etc." and feel a bit stressed or activated, pause and jot down a quick ABC.