

Worksheet

Professional Version | US English

Dysfunctional Thought Record



Description

Thought records are cognitive restructuring techniques which encourage balanced thinking. The *Dysfunctional Thought Record* is a style of thought record which encourages identification of any cognitive biases / cognitive errors which are operating.

It can be useful to use this form in combination with the *Unhelpful Thinking Styles* information sheet – clients are encouraged to identify in which ways their specific cognitions are distorted. This thought record can also be used to identify characteristic ways in which an individual's cognitive styles are distorted.

Instructions

1. Start by cueing the client's memory for the dysfunctional thought by directing them to think about where & when it occurred. Record this in the first and second columns ('date & time' and 'situation').
2. The cue for completing a thought record is usually a sudden change in emotion. In the fourth column record the emotion felt and its subjective intensity.
3. In the third column record the automatic thought. Helpful prompts are "what were you thinking about when you started to feel that way?" or "what was going through your mind as you started to feel that way?". Automatic thoughts can be images as well as thoughts. In the case of an image ask the client to reflect on what the image meant (e.g. if the client has an image of themselves frozen to the spot it may have idiosyncratic meanings ranging such as "I'm weak").
4. If there are multiple NATs then select one to work on.
5. In the fifth column identify whether a cognitive bias was in operation. It may be helpful to train the client in the use of the *Unhelpful Thinking Styles* worksheet.
6. In the sixth column write an alternative to the original automatic thought which is not subject to the original bias. For example, if the original thought bias was personalization (e.g. "I'm pathetic") the client might be encouraged to use less pejorative language. The new thought may be considerably longer than the original thoughts. It may not necessarily be positive, the aim is to counter bias in the original thought.
7. In the final column record the outcome. This might be a change in emotional state, or a resolution to act in a different way.

References

Beck, A.T., Rush, A.J., Shaw, B.F., & Emery, G. (1979). *Cognitive therapy of depression*. New York: Guilford.

Dysfunctional Thought Record

| Date & Time | Situation | Automatic thought | Emotion(s) | Distortion | Alternative thoughts | Outcome |
|-------------|---|--|--|---|----------------------|---------|
| | <p>Describe: event leading to unpleasant emotion, or stream of thoughts, daydreams, or recollections leading to an unpleasant emotion, or distressing physical sensations</p> | <p>Write automatic thoughts that preceded emotion</p> <p>Rate belief in automatic thought 0-100%</p> | <p>Specify sad, angry, anxious, etc</p> <p>Rate degree of emotion 0-100%</p> | <p>All-or-nothing thinking Overgeneralization Mental filter Disqualifying the positive Jumping to conclusions Magnification or minimization Emotional reasoning "Should" statements Labeling and misleading Personalization</p> | | |

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