Thought record

An Everyday Insight tool
mythoughtrecord.com

One upsetting moment, worked through from left to right. Rate feelings and beliefs from 0 to 10. There's an example and more help on the back.

Name _____ Date _____

1 Situation

One moment. Where you were, who was there, what happened. Just the facts.

2 Feelings

One word each, rated for how strong it was. For example: anxious 7.

3 Thoughts and images

What went through your mind, just as it came. Write each one as a statement.

4 Hot thought

The one most tied to your strongest feeling. Check any thinking styles below.

Belief

5 Evidence for

Facts that support the hot thought. Things anyone there could confirm.

6 Evidence against

Facts that don't, or another explanation. What would you tell a friend?

7 Balanced thought

Takes both lists into account. Not a slogan. Something you can believe.

Belief

8 Feelings now

Rate the same feelings again. Even a small drop counts.

Hot thought now

Thinking styles

For step 4. Check any that fit the hot thought. They're common patterns, not proof it's wrong.

- ☐ All-or-nothing thinking
- ☐ Discounting the positive
- ☐ Catastrophizing
- ☐ Should and must statements
- ☐ Overgeneralizing
- ☐ Mind reading
- ☐ Magnifying and shrinking
- ☐ Labeling
- ☐ Mental filter
- ☐ Fortune telling
- ☐ Emotional reasoning
- ☐ Personalizing and blaming

9 What I learned

Look back across the row. Did the feelings or the belief in the hot thought shift, even a little? What stands out about the thought, the feelings, or the link between them? If the hot thought still seems true, that's worth knowing too. It may point to something to work on rather than argue with.

Next step, if there is one _____

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Thought record

An example

One moment, worked from left to right. Notice that the evidence for the hot thought is taken seriously, and that the feelings drop without disappearing.

1 Situation

Tuesday, about 2 p.m., at my desk. I asked in the group chat if anyone wanted dinner Friday. An hour later nobody had answered, and it showed that two people had read it.

2 Feelings

Lonely 8
Embarrassed 6
Anxious 4

3 Thoughts and images

They don't want to hang out with me.
I'm always the one who reaches out.
I pictured them making plans without me.

4 Hot thought

Nobody really wants me around.

Belief 8 · Mind reading, overgeneralizing

5 Evidence for

Two people read the message and didn't answer for an hour.
I organized the last two dinners.

6 Evidence against

It's a Tuesday afternoon. Sam and Priya are at work until six.
Priya answered within minutes last time.
Sam invited me to his birthday two weeks ago.
I read messages at work and forget to answer all the time.

7 Balanced thought

Nobody has answered yet, and that stings. It's also a workday afternoon, and Sam invited me to his birthday two weeks ago. A slow reply is more likely about their afternoon than about me.

Belief 7

8 Feelings now

Lonely 5
Embarrassed 3
Anxious 2

Hot thought now 4

9 What I learned *When I'm lonely I read silence as rejection. Writing down what I actually knew took some of the sting out.*

Next step *Wait until the evening. If there's still nothing, text Priya on her own.*

Thinking styles, described

Patterns that show up in hot thoughts. Naming one is a way to step back from a thought, not proof that it's wrong. A thought can fit more than one, or none.

All-or-nothing thinking

Only two options, with nothing in between. Anything short of perfect counts as failure.

"If the presentation isn't perfect, I've blown it."

Discounting the positive

Good things get explained away so they don't count.

"They only said it went well because they had to."

Catastrophizing

Jumping to the worst case and treating it as likely or unbearable.

"If I lose this client, I'll lose the business."

Should and must statements

Rigid rules for yourself or others, followed by guilt or anger when they're broken.

"I should be able to handle this without help."

Overgeneralizing

One event becomes a rule, often with "always" or "never."

"I didn't get the job. Nothing ever works out for me."

Mind reading

Assuming you know what someone else is thinking, usually something bad, without checking.

"He hasn't texted back, so he's annoyed with me."

Magnifying and shrinking

Blowing up your mistakes or other people's strengths, and shrinking your own.

"My typo was humiliating. Her promotion shows how far behind I am."

Labeling

Summing up a whole person, often yourself, with one word after one event.

"I forgot her birthday. I'm a terrible friend."

Mental filter

One bad detail colors everything else.

"The review was good apart from one comment, so it was a bad review."

Fortune telling

Treating a bad outcome as already decided.

"I'll freeze in the interview."

Emotional reasoning

Taking a feeling as proof. I feel it, so it must be true.

"I feel guilty, so I must have done something wrong."

Personalizing and blaming

Taking all the blame for something with many causes, or putting all of it on someone else.

"My son is struggling in school because I'm a bad parent."

Questions that help

Feeling or thought?

- Feelings are usually one word, like sad, anxious, or angry. If it needs a sentence, like "I feel like a failure," it's a thought. Put it in column 3.

Finding the hot thought

- If that were true, what would it say about me? About my future?
- What's the worst part about that?

Evidence against

- Would a camera have recorded this, or is it my reading of what happened?
- What else could explain it? Try for two or three possibilities.
- Has this happened before? How did it actually turn out?
- If a friend told me this, what would I say to them?
- Am I leaving anything out because it doesn't fit the thought?

Balanced thought

- Looking at both lists, what seems most accurate to say?
- What part of the hot thought holds up, and what does it leave out?
- Is there a way to say this that I can believe at least a little?
- Try starting with "Even though," "It's true that," or "A more likely explanation is."

If not much changes

- That's common, especially at first. Some feeling usually stays. If the hot thought is a prediction, testing it in real life, with a behavioral experiment, often helps more than another list.

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