

CBT foundations

Notice the pattern, choose a direction and learn from daily life.



IN THIS SET

- 01 **Understanding the CBT cycle**
- 02 **Goals that guide the work**
- 03 **Mood and activity monitoring**

This first set helps you slow a difficult experience down and see how the parts connect. You can then choose a practical therapy goal and use a brief activity record to notice what genuinely affects your mood and energy.

HOW TO USE IT

Begin with the topic that feels most relevant. Each topic includes a short guide and a fillable worksheet. Download the PDF before typing so your notes can be saved.

Understanding the CBT cycle

CBT looks at the links between a situation, the meaning your mind gives it, what you feel in your body, and what you do next. The aim is not to blame your thinking. It is to find the parts of a pattern that can be changed.



START WITH ONE MOMENT

Choose a specific event rather than trying to explain a long period all at once.

- What happened, where were you, and who was involved?
- What would a camera or microphone have recorded?
- What changed first?

NOTICE THE MEANING

Our reaction is shaped by what the situation seems to mean.

- What words, images, memories or predictions appeared?
- Which thought felt most believable?
- Did the thought say something about you, others or the future?

MAP FEELINGS AND ACTIONS

Emotions, body sensations and behaviour often move together.

- Name the emotions and rate them from 0 to 100.
- Notice urges, tension, fatigue, heat, nausea or numbness.
- Record what you did, avoided, checked or sought reassurance about.

FIND THE MAINTAINING LOOP

Ask what helped briefly and what kept the problem going later.

- Did the action reduce distress in the short term?
- What did it cost or reinforce over time?
- Where is one small, realistic place to interrupt the cycle?

TRY THIS AT YOUR OWN PACE

Use one recent moment. You are looking for a pattern, not a perfect explanation. You do not need to complete every prompt. If this becomes upsetting or starts to feel like repeated checking, pause and speak with your psychologist or another health professional.

Understanding the CBT cycle



NAME (OPTIONAL)

DATE

1 SITUATION

What happened? Keep it specific and observable.

2 THOUGHTS and MEANING

What did your mind say, show or predict?

3 EMOTIONS and BODY

Name and rate emotions 0-100. Add body sensations.

4 ACTIONS and URGES

What did you do, avoid, check or feel pulled to do?

5 SHORT-TERM EFFECT

What changed immediately? What relief or cost followed?

6 LONGER-TERM LOOP

What did this reinforce? Where could you try a different response?

Use brief notes. There is no right way to complete this page. Download the PDF before typing so your entries can be saved.

Goals that guide the work

Useful CBT goals describe changes you could notice in daily life. They do not have to sound impressive. A workable goal gives therapy a direction and can be adjusted as you learn more.



BEGIN WITH WHAT MATTERS

A goal is easier to sustain when it connects with something meaningful.

- What would you be doing more or less of?
- Who or what would benefit?
- Why does this matter now?

MAKE IT OBSERVABLE

Turn a broad hope into signs you could actually notice.

- Replace 'feel better' with a concrete change in behaviour.
- Include frequency, duration or a situation where useful.
- Keep the wording flexible enough to remain human.

START SMALLER THAN YOU THINK

A first step should be possible on a difficult day, not only a good one.

- What is the smallest useful action?
- When and where could it happen?
- What preparation would reduce friction?

REVIEW WITHOUT GRADING YOURSELF

Progress data are information, not a verdict.

- What improved, even slightly?
- What got in the way?
- Should the step be repeated, simplified or changed?

TRY THIS AT YOUR OWN PACE

Choose a direction that would be visible in ordinary life, then make the first step small. You do not need to complete every prompt. If this becomes upsetting or starts to feel like repeated checking, pause and speak with your psychologist or another health professional.

Goals that guide the work



NAME (OPTIONAL)

DATE

1 WHAT MATTERS

What would be different, and why does it matter?

2 WORKABLE GOAL

Describe an observable change in daily life.

3 STARTING POINT

What is happening now? Add a simple measure if useful.

4 FIRST STEPS

List one to three small actions, with when and where.

5 OBSTACLES and SUPPORT

What may get in the way? What could make it easier?

6 REVIEW

When will you review it? What would count as useful progress?

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Mood and activity monitoring

Memory tends to smooth several days into one overall impression. A brief activity record can show how mood shifts across situations and which activities bring pleasure, achievement, connection or strain.



RECORD, DO NOT PERFECT

A few words at two or three points in the day are usually enough.

- Write the main activity or context.
- Rate mood from 0 to 10.
- Add one word for the strongest emotion if useful.

LOOK FOR PATTERNS

The value is in the pattern across days, not a single score.

- When does mood lift or fall?
- What happens before a difficult patch?
- Which activities change energy afterwards?

USE THREE HELPFUL MARKERS

Pleasure, mastery and connection often tell us different things.

- Pleasure: enjoyment, relief or interest.
- Mastery: effort, competence or completion.
- Connection: contact, belonging or contribution.

TURN DATA INTO ONE EXPERIMENT

Choose one realistic change for the near future.

- Repeat something that helped.
- Reduce or break up something draining where possible.
- Avoid treating low mood as proof that an activity was pointless.

TRY THIS AT YOUR OWN PACE

A few brief notes can reveal more than trying to remember several days at once. You do not need to complete every prompt. If this becomes upsetting or starts to feel like repeated checking, pause and speak with your psychologist or another health professional.

Mood and activity monitoring



NAME (OPTIONAL)

DATE

MONDAY

Main activities; mood 0-10;
pleasure, mastery or
connection.

TUESDAY

Main activities; mood 0-10;
pleasure, mastery or
connection.

WEDNESDAY

Main activities; mood 0-10;
pleasure, mastery or
connection.

THURSDAY

Main activities; mood 0-10;
pleasure, mastery or
connection.

FRIDAY

Main activities; mood 0-10;
pleasure, mastery or
connection.

SATURDAY

Main activities; mood 0-10;
pleasure, mastery or
connection.

SUNDAY

Main activities; mood 0-10;
pleasure, mastery or
connection.

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