Evidence diary

Write one small, specific experience. Ordinary moments count.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Which belief or harsh conclusion am I exploring?

What happened? Describe the observable details.

What effort, choice or support helped?

How might I normally dismiss this?

What would be a fair meaning to take from it?

What will I remember or try next?

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Evidence diary - guide

Use alongside the worksheet on page 1. Adapt it to your needs and any therapy plan.

What this helps with

When a harsh belief is familiar, the mind may notice what supports it and dismiss everything else. This diary helps you collect concrete experiences it overlooks. The aim is a fuller view, not a list of achievements or proof that every day went well.

How to use it

1. Choose one belief you want to examine, rather than monitor everything about yourself.

2. Record a specific event close to when it happens. Include kindness, persistence, learning, asking for help or resting when needed.

3. Notice any automatic dismissal. Ask whether you would dismiss the same event for somebody else.

4. Write a fair meaning. Review a few entries together at an agreed time rather than repeatedly checking the diary.

A fictional example

Maya believes, 'I let everyone down.' She records telling a friend honestly that she could not meet that evening and suggesting another day. Her first response is, 'That is nothing.' A fuller view is that she communicated clearly and cared about the friendship while respecting her limits. The entry is useful information, not a demand to become a perfect friend.

Keep in mind

Include support from others; needing help does not cancel your contribution. Do not turn the diary into a daily performance target or repeatedly read it to feel completely certain about yourself. If no example comes to mind, leave it and revisit with support.

Review your learning

What has this helped me notice that my usual belief leaves out?

Sources informing the approach

Beck, J. S. (2020). Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.

NICE (2022). Depression in adults: treatment and management. NG222.

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