Five areas model

Choose one situation. The two-way arrows show how thoughts, feelings, body and actions can interact.

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

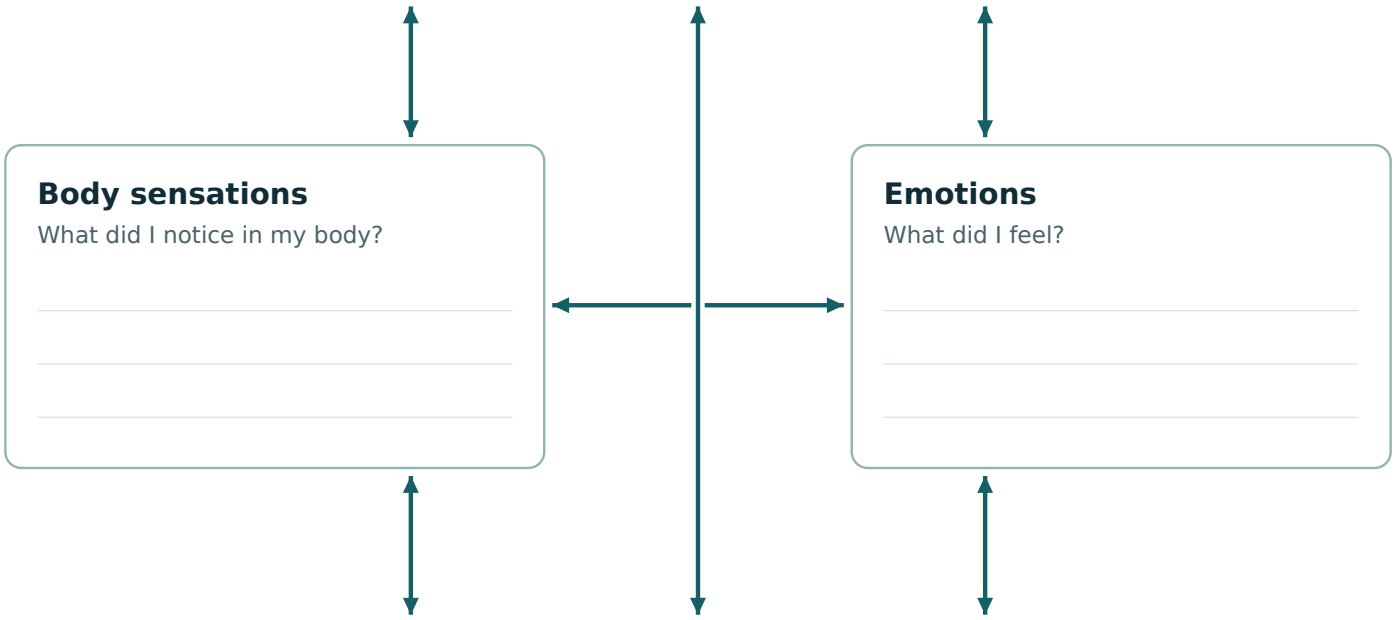
Situation
What happened, where and with whom?

Thoughts and images
What went through my mind?

Body sensations
What did I notice in my body?

Emotions
What did I feel?

Actions
What did I do, avoid or seek?



The situation is the context. There is no single starting point within the four connected responses.

Five-part CBT framework; informed by Padesky & Mooney (1990).

Copyright Calm Breathing Therapies

Using this resource

Five areas model

What this helps with

A five-part CBT map separates a situation from thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations and actions. The four personal responses can influence one another in both directions. This original map draws on the interacting cognitive model described by Padesky and Mooney (1990). It is a starting point for exploring one example together, not a complete explanation of a person's difficulties.

How to use it

1. Choose one recent moment. Describe what happened in the situation box.
2. Add thoughts or images, emotions, body sensations and actions in whichever order is easiest.
3. Follow the two-way arrows. How did one response affect another? The lines cross in the middle; this is not an extra box or step.
4. Notice which link may help explain what kept the difficulty going. Discuss a useful change with your therapist or use the separate behavioural experiment sheet.

A fictional worked example

Leena receives an email asking for a meeting. Situation: a brief message with no agenda. Thought: 'I must have made a serious mistake.' Emotion: anxiety, 75/100. Body: tight shoulders and a churning stomach. Action: rereads old emails and delays her lunch. Checking gives a few seconds of relief, then she finds another detail to question. Her tiredness makes the meeting feel more threatening. A possible change is to ask once what she needs to prepare, eat lunch and return to her planned task. She has not proved the meeting will go well; she has noticed a pattern she can explore.

Keep in mind

Choose an everyday example first. You do not need to describe a traumatic event or disclose private details. Real danger and practical problems need appropriate action. If mapping becomes distressing or confusing, pause and work through it with a therapist.

Sources and attribution

Padesky, C. A., & Mooney, K. A. (1990). Presenting the cognitive model to clients. International Cognitive Therapy Newsletter, 6, 13-14.

Roth, A. D., & Pilling, S. (2007). The competences required to deliver effective CBT for people with depression and anxiety disorders. UCL competence framework.

NHS. Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

Copyright Calm Breathing Therapies