Thinking patterns worksheet

Use one recent moment. Notice the thought, then widen the picture.

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

What happened?

e.g. My colleague did not reply to a message.

What went through my mind?

e.g. They are annoyed with me. I have done something wrong.

Which thinking habit might be involved?

e.g. Mind-reading: assuming I know what they think.

What do I know, and what am I assuming?

e.g. I know there is no reply yet. I do not know why.

What would be a fairer way to see this?

e.g. They may be busy. I can check the practical issue later.

What will I do, and what do I notice?

e.g. Return to my task instead of rereading the message.

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Thinking patterns worksheet - guide

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

What this helps with

When we are upset, the mind can jump to a conclusion before we have the whole picture. This sheet helps you notice a thinking habit and respond more fairly. A pattern is a description of a thought, not a label for you.

How to use it

1. Write one situation and the thought or image that upset you.
2. Use the brief guide below if a thinking habit fits. You can leave this box blank.
3. Separate observations from assumptions. Include facts that do not fit your first conclusion.
4. Write a believable response and a useful next action. Notice what happens; you do not have to feel better immediately.

A brief thinking-patterns guide

Mind-reading: Assuming I know another person's view. What have they actually said or done?

Worst-case thinking: Treating a feared outcome as inevitable. What else is possible? How could I respond?

All-or-nothing thinking: Seeing only complete success or failure. What lies between the two extremes?

Discounting information: Dismissing something that does not fit. Would I count this if it happened to a friend?

Feeling equals fact: Using a feeling as proof. What other information matters here?

Keep in mind

Do not use this sheet to explain away real mistreatment, discrimination or practical danger. Sometimes the useful response is a boundary, problem-solving or support. Repeatedly analysing the same thought can become another worry loop; one brief pass may be enough.

Review your learning

Did this help me act with a wider view, rather than find a perfectly reassuring answer?

Sources informing the approach

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

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