

CBT Homework Activity: The Thought Record

Objective: Help patients identify and challenge unhelpful thoughts that lead to emotional eating or hinder lifestyle changes.

Instructions for PCPs

- 1. Explain the concept of thinking errors:**
 - Briefly describe common thinking errors (e.g., all-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing, emotional reasoning) and how they can lead to emotional eating or resistance to change.
 - Example: "Sometimes, our thoughts can trick us into believing things that aren't true, like 'I've already messed up, so I might as well keep eating.'"
 - 2. Introduce the Thought Record:**
 - Provide the patient with a simple table (see below) to track their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.
 - Explain that the goal is to identify unhelpful thoughts and replace them with more balanced, realistic ones.
 - 3. Assign the homework:**
 - Ask the patient to complete the Thought Record over the next week whenever they notice emotional eating or resistance to healthy behaviors.
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Thought Record Table

Situation	Thought	Emotion	Behavior	Balanced Thought
Example: Felt stressed at work	"I can't handle this without a snack."	Anxiety, overwhelm	Ate a bag of chips	"I can take a deep breath and try a healthier way to cope, like a short walk."

Steps for Patients

- 1. Situation:** Write down what was happening when the thought occurred (e.g., "I was stressed at work").
- 2. Thought:** Record the automatic thought that came to mind (e.g., "I need chocolate to feel better").
- 3. Emotion:** Note the emotion tied to the thought (e.g., anxiety, sadness).

4. **Behavior:** Describe what you did (e.g., ate a candy bar).
 5. **Balanced Thought:** Challenge the thought and replace it with a more balanced one (e.g., "I can handle stress without food by taking a break or talking to a friend").
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Example Scenarios

Scenario 1: Emotional Eating

- **Situation:** Felt lonely after a fight with a friend.
- **Thought:** "No one cares about me, so I might as well eat this whole pizza."
- **Emotion:** Sadness, loneliness.
- **Behavior:** Ate an entire pizza.
- **Balanced Thought:** "I'm feeling lonely right now, but eating won't solve the problem. I can call another friend or do something I enjoy instead."

Scenario 2: Resistance to Exercise

- **Situation:** Thought about going for a walk after work.
 - **Thought:** "I'm too tired, and it won't make a difference anyway."
 - **Emotion:** Fatigue, hopelessness.
 - **Behavior:** Sat on the couch instead of walking.
 - **Balanced Thought:** "Even a short walk can help me feel better. I'll start with 10 minutes and see how I feel."
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Why This Works

- Helps patients **identify triggers** for emotional eating or resistance to change.
- Teaches patients to **challenge unhelpful thoughts** and replace them with more balanced ones.
- Encourages **self-reflection** and **problem-solving** skills.