

CBT Thought Record

Use this when a situation triggers a strong emotion or automatic thought. Aim for a response that is more accurate and useful - not simply more positive.

1 Notice -> 2 Examine -> 3 Respond

COMPLETED EXAMPLE

Situation

What happened? Stick to observable details where possible.

My manager asked me to rewrite the opening slides 30 minutes before a client review.

Emotion(s)

Name the emotion and rate intensity from 0-100.

Anxiety 78/100; embarrassment 60/100.

Automatic thought

What went through your mind? Which thought felt most emotionally charged?

She thinks I am incompetent and cannot trust my work.

Evidence that supports the thought

Facts only. What genuinely points in this direction?

She said the opening was unclear and asked me to change it before the meeting.

Evidence that does not support it

What facts, context, or alternative explanations are easy to overlook?

She said the analysis was strong, asked two other people for edits, and has not raised performance concerns with me.

Balanced response

Write a response that fits the evidence. It can still acknowledge risk, uncertainty, or difficulty.

She wants this section clearer before the client sees it. That does not tell me what she thinks of my overall competence. I can make the requested change and judge the feedback on its actual content.

Next useful step

Reframe, plan, accept, test, ask, wait - or do nothing for now.

Rewrite the first two slides, then ask whether the revised opening works.

Re-rate the emotion

What is the intensity now (0-100)? What changed, if anything?

Anxiety 46/100. Still pressured, but less ashamed.