



# THOUGHTS & BEHAVIORS

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a technique to identify unproductive ways of thinking, to catch ourselves thinking those thoughts, to actively stop the thoughts and reject them, and to replace them with new, more productive ways of thinking. Here are 5 steps for practicing a CBT technique.

## Step One – Make A List

In your journal, make a two-column table. On the left-hand column, you're going to title "Old Thoughts" or "Unproductive Thoughts" and the right-hand column will be "Replacement Thoughts."

Old or Unproductive Thoughts	Replacement Thoughts
Ex. "I must be liked by my coworkers"  Ex. "Other people should see things from my point of view."	Ex. "I would prefer to be liked by my coworkers, but they don't have to like me, and I can't demand that they do."  Ex. "I would like it if people agreed with me, but differences of opinion are a good thing. They often lead to discussion and progress."

## Step Two – Record Unproductive Thoughts

In the left-hand column, start writing out unproductive thoughts that you find yourself thinking on a regular basis. These could be anxious or worried thoughts, highly negative or self-critical thoughts, thoughts that display a lack of self-confidence or are self-deprecating, or any other thoughts that hold you back or make you unhappy. Write out these thoughts in the first person – the way they sound when you speak them to yourself.

### Step Three – Create Replacement Thoughts

Now, in the right-hand column, you're going to create a replacement thought for each unproductive thought you wrote down. When crafting your replacement thoughts there's a few different ways to approach the process. First, you can try just writing the opposite of your negative thought – though this alone is almost always too simplistic. Another way to approach it is to ask yourself, "If my unproductive thought is a lie or is untrue in some way, then what is the truth?" Or, in less dichotomous language, if my unproductive thought is only partly true or incomplete, then "what could I tell myself that would be more accurate or convey a more complete and realistic picture of my situation?" The replacement thought should be more productive, constructive, and self-affirming than the original thought. Be sure that your replacement thoughts don't consist of you lying to yourself and telling yourself that everything will be okay if that's not necessarily true. This isn't about self-deception. This is about coaching yourself through a difficult situation or emotional reaction in a way that focuses on the positive and affirms your ability to affect change within yourself and in your environment around you.

### Step Four – Read Your List Often

Start reading through your list of replacement thoughts at least twice a day. I usually recommend that clients read their lists first thing in the morning upon getting out of bed and last thing at night before jumping into bed. Over time, you will start memorizing the wording and content of your replacement thoughts, so that you can use them throughout each day.

### Step Five – Notice And Replace

As you go through your day, notice when you think of one of your unproductive thoughts and stop yourself. Take a moment to reject that old way of thinking – try envisioning yourself throwing that thought away in the trash or burning it. Then, speak the corresponding replacement thought to yourself and let it sink in. Don't worry if thinking that new thought didn't change how you feel; that will come with time. The trick to CBT is consistency and perseverance. In the beginning, you may have to reject and replace thoughts many, many times a day. But, at some point, instead of thinking the old thoughts you will find yourself automatically thinking the replacement thoughts – and this is when you'll know your hard work is paying off!



# THOUGHT AWARENESS

Observe your stream of consciousness as you think about a stressful situation. Do not suppress any thoughts. Let them run their course while you watch them, and write them down as they occur.

Negative  
Thoughts

The next step is to rationally challenge the negative thoughts. Look at every thought you wrote down and ask yourself whether the thought is reasonable.

Rational  
Thoughts

Use rational, positive thoughts and affirmations to counter negative thinking. See if there are any opportunities that are offered by it.

Positive  
Thoughts

# Understanding YOUR PROBLEMS



Try to fill in something of your own experience. You may begin to understand your difficulties a little better. Particularly what patterns may exist and how things interact.

Situation

Feelings

Thoughts

Physical Symptoms

Behaviours