

create finance

Cognitive Restructuring Pack

Cognitive Restructuring

Change Your Mind

Cognitive restructuring is a useful technique for understanding unhappy feelings and moods, and for challenging the sometimes-wrong "automatic beliefs" that can lie behind them. As such, you can use it to reframe the unnecessary negative thinking that we all experience from time to time.

Bad moods are unpleasant, they can reduce the quality of your performance, and they undermine your relationships with others. Cognitive restructuring helps you to change the negative or distorted thinking that often lies behind these moods. As such, it helps you approach situations in a more positive frame of mind. Try the method for yourself:



Calm Yourself

If you're still upset or stressed by the thoughts you want to explore, you may find it hard to concentrate on using the tool.

Use the deep breathing technique to calm yourself down if you feel particularly stressed or upset.

Identify the Situation

Start by describing the situation that triggered your negative mood, and write this down.

Analyse your mood

Next, write down the mood, or moods, that you felt during the situation.

For example,

"He trashed my suggestion in front of my co-workers" would be a thought, while the associated moods might be humiliation, frustration, anger, or insecurity.



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Identify Automatic Thoughts

Now, write down the natural reactions, or "automatic thoughts," you experienced when you felt the mood.

In the example above, your thoughts might be:
"Maybe my analysis skills aren't good enough."
"Have I failed to consider these things?"



Find Objective Supporting Evidence

Identify the evidence that objectively supports your automatic thoughts. In our example, you might write the following:

"The meeting moved on and decisions were made, but my suggestion was ignored."

"He identified a flaw in one of my arguments." Your goal is to look objectively at what happened, and then to write down specific events or comments that led to your automatic thoughts.



Find Objective Contradictory Evidence

Next, identify and write down evidence that contradicts the automatic thought. In our example, this might be:

"The flaw was minor and did not alter the conclusions."

"The analysis was objectively sound, and my suggestion was realistic and well-founded."

As you can see, these statements are fairer and more rational than the reactive thoughts.



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Identify Fair and Balanced Thoughts

By this stage, you've looked at both sides of the situation. You should now have the information you need to take a fair, balanced view of what happened.

If you still feel uncertain, discuss the situation with other people, or test the question in some other way.

When you come to a balanced view, write these thoughts down. The balanced thoughts in this example might now include:

"I am good at this sort of analysis. Other people respect my abilities."

"My analysis was reasonable, but not perfect."



Monitor your Present Mood

You should now have a clearer view of the situation, and you're likely to find that your mood has improved. Write down how you feel.

Next, reflect on what you could do about the situation.

By taking a balanced view, the situation may cease to be important, and you might decide that you don't need to take action.



Cognitive restructuring form

Identify/ Describe the situation

Mood, or moods, felt during the situation

Natural reactions or automatic thoughts

Supporting evidence

Contradictory evidence

Balanced view

Present mood