

## Handout: Cognitive Restructuring and Thought Record

A thought record is a cognitive behavior tool designed to identify and challenge negative thoughts. It provides a structured way to examine situations that are triggering for you. After identifying the situation, evaluate the supporting or contradictory evidence and reframe your perspective with a more balanced outlook.

1. **Identify the triggering situation:** Start by writing down the specific event or interaction that triggered a negative thought. The more specific the situation, the easier it becomes to recognize patterns in thinking. Examples include:
  - Seeing a post on social media
  - Receiving constructive feedback at work
  - Experiencing a disagreement with a partner
2. **Capture the automatic thought:** Note the immediate, automatic thought in response to the situation. These thoughts are often negative and shaped by past experiences, beliefs, or fears. Common examples include the following:
  - *I'm not good enough.*
  - *They're ignoring me.*
  - *I'll never succeed.*
3. **Examine the evidence for and against:** Evaluate the validity of the automatic thought by considering the facts rather than emotions or assumptions. Questions to explore include:
  - What evidence supports this thought?
  - What evidence contradicts it?
  - What would I tell a friend in this situation?

For example, if the thought is *No one cares about me*, consider past experiences where friends or family showed care and support.

4. **Develop a balanced thought:** After assessing the evidence, replace the automatic thought with a more balanced, realistic one. This should acknowledge both the challenge and the positive aspects of the situation. Examples include:
  - Instead of *I'm terrible at my job*, reframe it as *I made a mistake, but I've also accomplished a lot in my role, and I can learn from this experience.*
  - Instead of *They don't like me*, shift to *They might be busy, and I can check in with them later.*

5. **Reflect on the emotional impact:** Finally, observe how emotions change after reframing thoughts. A balanced perspective can reduce anxiety, sadness, and frustration for a more constructive and resilient mindset.

The following table shows how you can challenge thoughts into more balanced, constructive perspectives for a healthier relationship with content on social media.

Situation	Automatic Thought	Evidence For/Against	Balanced Thought
You look at an ex's post.	"They're happier without me."	"I don't know their full story."	"My happiness is my own."
You post a photo online that gets only a few likes.	"No one cares about what I share."	"I've received positive feedback before."	"My worth isn't measured by social media likes."
Your partner didn't text you back immediately.	"They're losing interest in me."	"They might be busy or have other priorities."	"I have trust in our relationship."
You compare yourself to an influencer.	"I'm not as successful as them."	"I've achieved my own goals and have unique strengths."	"Success looks different for everyone."
You see photos of your friends hanging out without you.	"They're excluding me on purpose."	"There could be many reasons they didn't invite me."	"I'm valued in my friendships."
You see a friend's vacation photos.	"My life isn't as exciting."	"I have experiences that make me happy."	"I appreciate my own journey and joys."
You receive negative feedback from another user online.	"I'm not good enough."	"One negative comment doesn't define me."	"I am proud of who I am and what I share."
You do not hear back after messaging someone.	"I'm being ignored."	"People have busy lives and may respond later."	"I'm confident in my relationships."
You compare your partnership to photos of others' relationships.	"We're not as happy as other couples."	"Every relationship has ups and downs."	"Our relationship is unique and valuable."