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My Cognitive Distortions Worksheet

Catch one thought, check it against ten thinking traps and the evidence, and write a fairer sentence. A self-help version of an idea used in CBT, not therapy. If the thought is about harming yourself, stop and see selfgrowth.org/help.

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01 Before I start

Check in first. This sheet is for everyday thoughts. If anything below is true, set it aside and look at the support section at the end.

Tick any that are true right now:

- [ ] The thought is about harming myself or not wanting to be here
- [ ] The thought is about something painful that happened to me, and I don't feel ready to look at it
- [ ] I'm afraid of someone, or I'm not safe where I am. A worried thought may be accurate. See selfgrowth.org/help
- [ ] I feel much worse when I write my thoughts down
- [ ] None of these. I'm ready to look at an everyday thought

If I ticked any of the first four, the person or line I'll turn to first (a friend, my GP, Samaritans 116 123, 988 in the US) is:

_____

02 Catch the thought

Write one thought, in the words it uses in your head. It can help to say what was happening when it showed up.

What was happening (where, who, what):

The thought, as it sounds in my head:

How much do I believe it right now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all — Completely

How I feel (a word or two):

03 Is it one of the ten thinking traps?

These ten are the ones measured by one cognitive distortions scale. Lists differ, and the descriptions are ours. A thought can fit more than one trap, or none. If you are afraid of someone or not safe, skip the traps: a worried thought can be accurate.

- [ ] Mind reading: I'm sure I know what someone thinks, without checking
- [ ] Catastrophising: I'm jumping to the worst possible outcome
- [ ] All-or-nothing thinking: it's either perfect or a failure, with no middle
- [ ] Emotional reasoning: I feel it, so it must be true
- [ ] Labelling: I'm pinning a fixed label on myself or someone else
- [ ] Mental filter: I'm stuck on one negative detail and missing the rest
- [ ] Overgeneralising: one event has become 'always' or 'never'
- [ ] Personalising: I'm taking the blame for something that isn't only down to me
- [ ] Should statements: I'm using a rigid rule about how I or others must act
- [ ] Minimising the positive: I'm waving away something good
- [ ] None of these. The thought may be accurate

The trap that fits best (or 'none'), and why:

04 Test it against the evidence

Stick to facts you could point to, not guesses or feelings. If you can't think of any evidence on one side, leave it blank.

Evidence that supports the thought

Facts, not guesses

Evidence that doesn't fit

Including anything I'm brushing aside

If a friend told me this thought, what would I say to them?

05 A fairer sentence

You're not looking for a cheerful thought, just a fairer one that you could actually believe. It can include the hard parts.

A fairer way to say it:

How much do I believe the original thought now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all — Completely

Did anything shift, even slightly? (It's fine if nothing did.)

One small thing I could do next (or 'nothing, that's fine'):

06 A short log, if you want one

Over a week or two, jot down thoughts you tested. It's for noticing, not scoring. There's no number that means anything.

The thought	Trap(s), or none	A fairer sentence

07 If this is bringing things up

A worksheet is a small tool. Some thoughts need a person. Tick anything that fits and decide who you'll tell.

- [ ] My thoughts feel constant, or too heavy to look at alone
- [ ] They affect my sleep, work or relationships
- [ ] Feeling low or hopeless is getting in the way of my life, or I'm worried about how long it has lasted
- [ ] I'll talk to my GP, or refer myself to a talking therapy (NHS Talking Therapies in England)
- [ ] I'll tell someone I trust this week
- [ ] If I think about harming myself: Samaritans 116 123 (UK and Ireland), call or text 988 (US), findahelpline.com elsewhere

When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Which thoughts were easiest to test, and which felt too close to test?
- Was there a thought I wanted to write a 'fairer' version of but couldn't believe it? What would a smaller step look like?
- Did any thought turn out to be accurate? What would I want to do about it?
- What would I say to a friend who had this thought?

Free worksheet from selfgrowth.org. Free self-growth worksheets for real life. Fill it in online and it saves as you go: selfgrowth.org/worksheets/cognitive-distortions-worksheet

If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at **findahelpline.com**. If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.