

Thought Record

DATE	SITUATION (Event, memory, attempt to do something, etc.)	BEHAVIOR(S)	EMOTIONS	THOUGHTS	RESPONSES

THINKING ERRORS

Overgeneralization. The error of concluding the general from the specific. E.g., "My wife didn't smile and say hello when she came home last night. She must be unhappy." Or, "He was really nice to me today. This means he's a wonderful person and I can trust him completely."

Focus on the negative ("doom and gloom"). The distortion of selectively attending to negative information; this is the "glass-half-empty" view of the world. For example, Jane focuses on the 5 problems she missed on a 100-item exam and feels like a total failure.

Disqualifying the positive. The fallacy of ignoring or devaluing positive evidence, positive events, and positive information. Jane, who agonizes about the 5 problems she missed and ignores the 95 she got right is disqualifying the positive. Another example: the woman who, when evaluating her performance as a mother, refuses to include the fact that she gets her kids to school on time every day as evidence that she's a good mother because "I'm supposed to do that."

Predicting the future. The error of predicting the future based on the present. This is often a problem because the view of the present is distorted and the view of the future then becomes distorted as well. E.g., "That date didn't go well. I'll never find a life partner."

Emotional reasoning. The fallacy of drawing logical conclusions from emotional experiences. E.g., the person who is afraid of elevators concludes, based on his fear reaction when he gets in an elevator, that elevators are dangerous. Another example: the depressed patient who concludes from his feelings of hopelessness about recovery from his illness that he is hopeless and will never get better.

All-or-nothing thinking. Also termed "dichotomous thinking." The error of viewing things in "black and white" terms, ignoring the "greys." E.g., "Joe didn't return my call promptly. He's a totally unreliable person." Or, "I got a mediocre grade on my first project write-up. I fail at everything I try."

Personalization. The mistake of drawing a conclusion about oneself from an event or situation that might well have other meanings. "Jack didn't return my call. This means he doesn't like me." Or, "The fact that Susan turned me down for a date means I'm a loser."

"Should" statements. The error of translating one's wishes and preferences into moral imperatives for oneself and others. E.g., "She should be on time for meetings with me. If she's not, she's not a responsible professional person." Or, "People should drive courteously and if they don't they shouldn't be allowed to drive." Or, "I should always be on time."

Catastrophizing. The error of drawing conclusions, usually about the future, that involve exaggerated horrendous outcomes. "I overdrew my checking account. This means my credit rating will be ruined." Or, "I failed that exam. That means I'll fail out of graduate school."

Labeling. The fallacy of drawing general conclusions about a person or situation, often using a negative or inflammatory term, based on one or two specifics about that person or situation. For example, "My supervisor was curt with me today. This means he's a jerk."

Mind reading. The error of making inferences about another person's thoughts or feelings without collecting direct information from the person in question. For example, "My boss frowned at me in the hall today. This means he's thinking of firing me."

EXAMINE THE EVIDENCE

Instructions: On the **Automatic thought** line, write your automatic thought. Then in the **Evidence supporting my automatic thought** column, write all the concrete and specific evidence you can think of that supports or confirms the automatic thought. Avoid describing the evidence in terms of how you "feel" or what you perceive. Stick to cold hard facts. For example, don't write down things like, "I looked in the mirror this morning and I felt ugly." Now, in the **Evidence not supporting my automatic thought** column, write all the evidence you can think of that does not support or disconfirms the automatic thought.

Automatic thought: _____

Evidence supporting my automatic thought	Evidence <u>not</u> supporting my automatic thought