

# Self-Monitoring Worksheet

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** believes our thoughts directly affect our emotions, which in turn influences our behaviors.

Thoughts can be either neutral, positive or negative. The reality is we cannot control the thoughts that come into our minds because thoughts pop up automatically. However, we can choose how we respond to or interpret them.

***For example:*** If a thought comes to your mind when you make a mistake at work and it tells you “*You’ll get fired for making this mistake*”.

We can choose to either respond negatively by becoming afraid, worried and guilty which could lead to us dreading work or not performing well.

Ultimately if we continue to engage in these unproductive behaviors fueled by the negative thoughts and emotions, it can lead to us getting fired which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But if we choose to respond positively, we can see the mistake as an opportunity for learning, growth and this can cause us to improve ourselves and take steps to not make the same mistake again. Overall, this leads to a more productive outcome which is often what we want.

Negative thoughts are often triggered by events that happen to us, cognitive distortions, or our core beliefs about ourselves we’ve adopted overtime.

Some trigger events could be: failing at something, making a mistake and feeling embarrassed about it, having an outcome that didn’t meet our expectations.

“*Cognitive distortions*” are exaggerated or irrational thought patterns that cause us to perceive reality in an inaccurate and negatively biased way. It’s often a habitual way of thinking that we sometimes don’t notice, and it impacts how we see ourselves, others and what’s going on in our lives.

The most common ***cognitive distortions*** can be found below:

1. **Catastrophizing:** when we imagine the worst-case scenario in any given situation and start feeding off the fear. For example, imagining we’ll get fired because we came late to work one day a month ago and start worrying.
2. **All-or-nothing thinking:** you view everything as entirely good or entirely bad: If you don’t do something perfectly, you’ve failed.
3. **Comparative thinking:** you compare yourself to others and feel inferior, even though the comparison may be unrealistic.

4. **Overgeneralization:** you see a single negative event as part of a pattern: For example, you always watch TV when you're sad.
5. **Mental filtering:** You see only the negative aspects of any experience and ignore the positives.
6. **Fortune telling:** You predict that things will turn out badly.
7. **Minimization and magnification:** You downplay your achievements, while exaggerating the significance of minor problems.
8. **“Should” statements:** You focus on how things should be, leading to severe self-criticism as well as feelings of resentment toward others. For example, you think thoughts like “I should have been in a higher level of my career” “I should have been in a serious relationship by now”.
9. **Mind reading:** You think you know what people think about you or something you’ve done — and it’s always bad.
10. **Personalization:** You blame yourself for negative events and ignore the responsibility of others.
11. **Assuming:** You assume that your negative feelings reflect reality: Feeling bad about your eating habits could mean “I’ll get overweight and die from a heart attack”

Cognitive distortions hold us back from reaching our potential or taking action, when we believe them as fact, internalize the fear and give them life like a self-fulfilling prophesy.

**To overcome or invalidate cognitive distortions** which drives negative thinking, we must restructure our thinking and beliefs about them. Practicing this thought restructuring takes away their power and helps us regain control and motivation to take action towards more productive outcomes. Find below the worksheet to help self-monitor your thoughts.

The goal of this worksheet is to first develop self-awareness which often leads to better self-management. Subsequently it is to help you train your mind to reframe negative thoughts thereby diminishing their power over you. This worksheet can be especially useful when dealing with anxiety, intrusive thoughts, overthinking, negative self-talk and tackling unproductive outcomes.

Practice makes better and consistency is key.

**Definitions:**

“*Automatic thought(s)*” is that little voice in your head telling you all the negative things that could happen, criticizes you and reminds you of all the mistakes you’ve ever made.

*“Cognitive distortions”* are exaggerated or irrational thought patterns that cause us to perceive reality in an inaccurate and negatively biased way. It’s often a habitual way of thinking that we sometimes don’t notice, and it impacts how we see ourselves, others and what’s going on in our lives.

*“Emotions”* A strong feeling deriving from one’s circumstances, mood or relationship with others. For example - anger, fear, guilt, love, happiness etc.

*“Behavior/Action”* Is an action, activity or process often initiated in response to stimuli. It is also the way in which one acts or conducts oneself, especially towards others.

### **How to complete the worksheet**

1. The worksheet is a page with three columns; Automatic thoughts, Cognitive Distortion, Emotions and Behavior/Action.
2. Whenever you notice you’re beating yourself up or feeling especially anxious or overthinking – become self-aware and complete the worksheet.
3. Write down your “automatic thought(s)” aka triggers in the first column.
4. Consider the Cognitive distortion category the automatic thought might fall under and write it down
5. Check the emotions that follow the automatic thought and write down as many as you feel
6. Observe your behavior influenced by the emotions from the automatic thought and write them down.

Data from this self-monitoring worksheet will be analyzed together with your therapist in order to:

- Discuss the information you’ve provided and get to the source of the problem.
- Identify the best resolve which could be learning healthy coping mechanisms, eliminating or replacing triggers, thought restructuring and learning skills to help you overcome the problem overtime.

Find the self-monitoring worksheet below. (Feel free to **print it out** and complete it as required).

# Self-Monitoring Worksheet

Automatic Thought(s)	Cognitive Distortion	Emotions	Behavior/Action
<b>Example:</b> "You're a failure" "You're not good enough"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindreading</li> <li>• Fortune telling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sad</li> <li>• Ashamed</li> <li>• Guilty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending too much time scrolling on social media instead of working on a project to meet a deadline</li> <li>• Mindlessly bingeing a TV show to pacify</li> </ul>

Automatic Thought(s)	Cognitive Distortion	Emotions	Behavior/Action