# Beck’s Cognitive Therapy – Example Exercises

## Beck Exercise 1: Dysfunctional thought diaries

As homework, clients are asked to keep a diary of thoughts and feelings associated with any negative events. They have to pay particular attention to any **automatic negative thoughts.**

For each negative thought they must rate how much they believe this (from 0%-100%).

They then give a rational response to this thought and rate their belief in that. Finally, they rerate their belief in the automatic thought.

**E.g.**

**Automatic negative thought:** My boss hates me because I am a bad person (belief: 60%)

**Rational response:** My boss does not hate me. He is rude to everyone and has had a very stressful day. Therefore, it’s nothing really to do with me. (belief: 80%)

**Rerated belief:** My boss hates me because I am a bad person (belief: 20%)

### Trying it out

1. Put yourself into the shoes of a client (patient) with depression, linked to failing a driving test.
2. Think of (from your own experience, imagination or knowledge) a dysfunctional thought that the client is having.
3. If you struggle, here are a few: I’m a failure, I’m not pretty/handsome enough, I’m rubbish at my job
4. Fill out columns 1-4 of the table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** |
| **Situation** *What was the*  *context?*  *What was happening*  *at the time and*  *prior to the thought?* | **Automatic**  **Thought**  *Describe the thought.*  *Rate how much*  *you believed it out*  *of 100%* | **Emotion**  *What feelings came*  *to you at the time? How intense were they out of 100%* | **Cognitive**  **Distortion**  *E.g. filtering, personalisation, catastrophising* | **Alternative**  **Thought**  *What is a more*  *adaptive alternative?*  *Is there another*  *potential solution?* | **Outcome**  *Now re-rate how*  *much you believe*  *the original thought,*  *and your emotions,*  *out of 100%.* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. Come up with an alternative thought – and then re-rate the imaginary outcome! (Cols 5-6)
2. Repeat with a second client with depression, linked to not being successful in a job application.

## Beck Exercise 2: Challenging dysfunctional thoughts to reduce discomfort

Below is a completed example using a slightly different form. Note that while the layout is different, the structure and methods are the same.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Trigger** (Internal or External): **External – had a bad appraisal at work** | **Automatic Thoughts** (Things that I Assume are true %):  **I’m rubbish at my job – everyone thinks I’m useless (80%)** | **Discomfort (/10):**  **9** |
| **Behaviour** (Things I Did; Things Observable to Others): **Called in sick the next day** | **Dispute the Automatic Thoughts** (Possible Alternative Viewpoints):  **Last project went badly, but previous 4 went really well.** | **Discomfort (/10):**  **7** |
| **New Behaviour or Plan of Action:** (i.e. Fight Maladaptive Thoughts &/or Engage in Pro-Active Behaviour):  **Talk to colleagues to plan next project more carefully** | | **Discomfort (/10):**  **6** |

### Try it yourself – complete for the trigger below

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Trigger** (Internal or External): **Internal – worried about going to a friend’s party** | **Automatic Thoughts** (Things that I Assume are true %): | **Discomfort (/10):** |
| **Behaviour** (Things I Did; Things Observable to Others): | **Dispute the Automatic Thoughts** (Possible Alternative Viewpoints): | **Discomfort (/10):** |
| **New Behaviour or Plan of Action:** (i.e. Fight Maladaptive Thoughts &/or Engage in Pro-Active Behaviour): | | **Discomfort (/10):** |

## Beck Exercise 3: Challenging dysfunctional thoughts

**Challenging dysfunctional thoughts:** The client is taught how to challenge dysfunctional automatic thoughts outside of therapy by asking themselves questions such as “Where is the evidence for *X*?” and “What is the worst that can happen if *X* was true.” By answering these questions, the negative thought can be replaced by more positive constructive ones.

**E.g.,** **Automatic negative thought:** I am going to fail A Level Knitting, and my life will be over!

**Question 1:** Where is the evidence that I am going to fail? I have done quite well in the last few tests the teacher has set. I should be ok if I revise.

**Question 2:** What would be the worst thing that could happen if I fail? I would have to retake the exam, which isn’t so bad. I would still be able to get a good grade.

### Try it yourself – come up with the two challenge questions and possible responses.

Your client has the automatic negative thought: I am going to let my friends down as I can’t afford to go on their holiday.

**Question 1:**

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………**

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………**

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………**

**Question 2:**

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………**

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………**

**……………………………………………………………………………………………………………………**

# REBT Exercise

Use one of the scenarios from the Beck approach or come up with one of your own.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activating Event | Beliefs | Consequences |
| Write down the event or situation that triggered your thoughts and feelings. | Write down the thoughts that went through your head when the activating event occurred (or after it) | **Actions:** How did you act then?  **Emotions:** What did you feel then? |
| **Event** | **Thoughts** | **Actions**  **Emotions** |
| **Dispute** | **Effects** | |
| **Evidence**  What’s the evidence for your beliefs? Are they logical or irrational?  **Logical alternatives**  What logical alternative beliefs could you have about the activating event? | **Emotions**  Having challenged your beliefs, and established your new logical ones, how do you now feel?  **Behaviours**  How will you behave next time you meet the activating event?  If you’ve put yourself in that situation already, how did you behave? How was it different from your previous Consequences (Actions/Emotions? | |
| **Evidence**  **Logical alternative** | **Emotions**  **Behaviours** | |