

# Evaluating Your Thoughts (9-column) Thought Diary Worksheet

Once you have captured your unhelpful thoughts, it is essential to challenge and, where possible, replace them with something more worthwhile.

Steps include:

**1. Review your (4 column) thought diary and choose an event that caused you distress.**

If this is the first time you have tried this exercise, start with a straightforward event.

- Review the emotion and its intensity.
- Review the thoughts and the extent to which you believed them.

**These can be completed on a separate sheet of paper or in the nine-column extended thought diary in the later section.**

**2. Consider the 'evidence for the most upsetting thought':**

- Ask yourself, what is the evidence for your upsetting thought?
- How did you draw the conclusion?
- What % represents the strength of that belief and why?

**3. Consider the 'evidence against your most upsetting thought':**

- If your score in the last column was under 100%, you must have some doubt: What is it?
- What happened last time you were in this situation?
- Is there a different way of understanding the context and the event?
- If the upsetting thought comes true, will it matter in years to come?

**4. What alternative thoughts might you have?**

- What alternative thoughts might you have about the event to replace your original one? For example, a friend didn't show up for lunch. Rather than think it is because they no longer like you, consider that they may have been delayed by work.
- This does not require overly positive thinking but being realistic.

**5. Has your thinking changed?**

- Having weighed up the upsetting and alternative thoughts, it is worth re-rating the emotion and the belief in the original thought.
- Has it changed?

## 6. What's next?

- If your thinking has changed, what would you now do if the situation re-occurred. Such as, *I'll phone my friend, or their office, to see if everything is ok.*

Try and perform the evaluation as close to the event as possible.

Working through and challenging your thoughts (your own or your client's) is vital to CBT and reducing distressing emotions. Writing down your thoughts and the answers to the questions maximize its effect.

Dr. Jeremy Sutton

