

Thought diary

Situation:	Feeling/emotion:
Thoughts (circle the hot thought):	
Evidence for	Evidence against
Fair and realistic alternative thought:	
How do I feel now?	What have I learned?

## Thought diary help sheet

A way to help you take a step back from thoughts that make you feel worse

- 1) Situation: record anything relevant about the situation that acted as a trigger for you to feel bad (or worse) – describe the event as factually and neutrally as you can e.g. 1030am, Saturday morning, seeing my friend cross the road and not stop to talk to me.
- 2) Emotion: write down how you felt at that moment. It's easy to get thoughts and feelings mixed up so remember, feelings are usually described in one word: e.g. sad, nervous, angry, frustrated, ashamed, jealous, glad, surprised, disappointed, miserable etc.
- 3) Thoughts:
  - a) Try to remember all the thoughts and images that went through your mind at the time – try not to spill over into more general thoughts about yourself or your life but stick to what **that event** seemed to mean to you at **that moment**: e.g. “she doesn't want to talk to me, she doesn't think I have anything to say, she'd rather avoid me, she can't be bothered with me anymore, she must think I'm really boring” (rather than, for example, “I'm a failure, I'm useless”)
  - b) Pick out the most upsetting or painful thought you had about that specific situation that made you feel particularly bad. Circle it – we call this the “hot thought”
- 4) Evidence for: concentrating only on the hot thought make a list of all the **hard facts** (not opinions) about the situation that you think make the hot thought likely to be true
- 5) Evidence against: make a list of all the **hard facts** that you might have been overlooking that contradict the hot thought. For example, ask yourself:
  - whether your conclusion is fair, logical and realistic,
  - whether it necessarily means what you think it means,
  - whether it is always true (for example whether there have ever been exceptions) and
  - whether you'd have come to the same conclusion if a friend were describing the same situation if it had happened to them.
- 6) Fair and realistic alternative: weighing up the evidence for and against the hot thought, just as a jury has to weigh up the evidence from the prosecution and defence lawyers, write down a fair and realistic way of thinking about the situation you described that takes account of all the evidence.
- 7) Re-evaluate how you feel now. Ask yourself: what have I learned?