The 7-Column Thought Record

Catching, checking and changing unhelpful thoughts

A thought record is a core CBT tool. When your mood shifts, it helps you slow down, notice the thought behind the feeling, weigh up the evidence like a fair judge, and find a more balanced view. Work through the seven steps from left to right — the worked example below shows how.

WORKED EXAMPLE

STEP 1 **Situation** *Where? When? Who with? What happened?*	STEP 2 **Feelings** *What did I feel? Rate each 0–100%*	STEP 3 **Automatic thoughts** *What went through my mind? Circle the 'hot' thought*	STEP 4 **Evidence for** *Facts that support the hot thought*	STEP 5 **Evidence against** *Facts that don't fit the hot thought*	STEP 6 **Balanced thought** *A fairer view, taking all the evidence into account. Rate belief 0–100%*	STEP 7 **Re-rate feelings** *How do I feel now? Re-rate 0–100%. What will I do?*
Monday team meeting. My manager asked me to update everyone on my project.	Anxious 85% Embarrassed 60%	"I'll go red and stumble." "Everyone will think I'm not good enough." (hot)	I did stumble over my words in last month's meeting.	My manager thanked me afterwards. Colleagues ask for my help. Nobody mentioned it.	"I may feel nervous, but people value my work. One stumble doesn't define me." 70%	Anxious 40% Embarrassed 20% I'll prepare 3 key points.

Tools and coping strategies that help me challenge my thoughts

e.g. "What would I say to a friend?", spotting thinking traps, grounding before I start, talking it through

Tips: write the thought word for word, as it sounded in your head. Stick to facts in steps 4 and 5 — not feelings or guesses. A balanced thought doesn't need to be positive, just fairer. Don't worry if the feeling only shifts a little — that still counts.

My thought record

Date: _____

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