

CBT Workbook

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Introduction – About This Workbook

This workbook provides a structured diary and primer to support the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) process. It is designed to be used in conjunction with an approved CBT programme or as a self-help guide. The workbook provides a number of practical CBT exercises and a record of key learning points throughout the CBT process.

Section 1 – About Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a highly structured, time focused and practical approach to overcoming a wide range of psychological, emotional and behavioural problems. CBT involves understanding and working on the links between our Cognitions; thinking patterns and processes, our Behaviours; the things we do and avoid doing, our Emotions; feelings such as anxiety, anger or depression and Physiological Reactions; including tension, dizziness or pain.

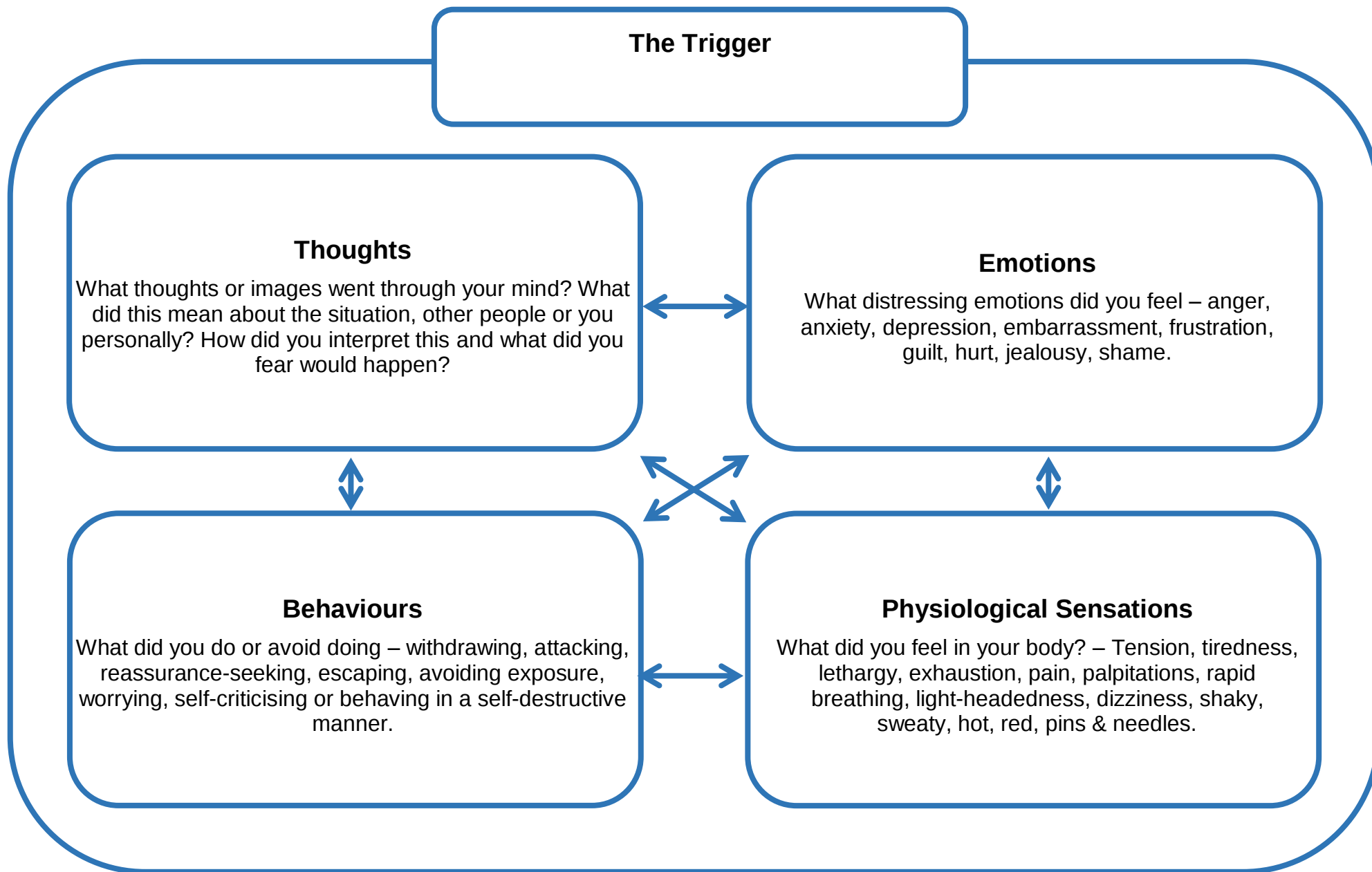
CBT has been found to be the most effective approach for a wide range of problems including anxiety, depression, eating disorders, insomnia, OCD, panic attacks, phobias, relationship problems, social anxiety, trauma and low self-esteem.

How Does CBT Work?

CBT works by identifying and altering the links between negative thinking patterns, unhelpful behaviours, distressing emotions and physiological symptoms. This involves focusing on two main areas:

- Cognitive approaches; learning how to identify, change or let go of negative or unhelpful thinking patterns.
- Behavioural approaches; learning how to change or improve unhelpful and engrained patterns of behaviour and avoidance.

The basic premise behind CBT is that we can change and overcome a wide range of problems by changing how we think and what we do. This has been rigorously tested in numerous research trials and CBT is widely acknowledged as the recommended treatment of choice for anxiety and mood disorders. The causal relationship between thoughts, behaviours, emotions and physiological reactions can be illustrated using the following CBT model.



This simple model demonstrates how thoughts and behaviours are hard-wired to emotional and physiological feelings. The key learning point from this model, is that whilst our thoughts, behaviours, feelings and sensations are all inter-connected, negative or self-defeating cycles can be interrupted and changed by altering our thinking and behavioural patterns.

Tip: Practice noticing your thoughts, feelings and behaviours - the more you practice noticing the links between what you do, think and feel, the more you will be able to make effective changes.

What Does Undertaking CBT Involve?

Undertaking CBT usually involves completing an initial assessment, producing a clear therapy plan and attending weekly sessions where you will learn new techniques to tackle the problem. Your Cognitive Behavioural psychotherapist will help you to set specific goals, develop a clear understanding of the problem, produce a structured therapy plan, teach you how to use CBT techniques and monitor your progress on a weekly basis. In addition to attending your therapy sessions, you will be asked to undertake CBT assignments between appointments. These assignments can involve learning about CBT approaches, thought monitoring / change exercises, planned exposures to difficult or challenging tasks, simple experiments to test out how you think and act in certain situations and exercises to improve emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Through the course of the CBT process, you will gain an insight into the causes and maintenance factors for your problem, you will learn new techniques to change the way you think, act and feel and you will develop an increased level of personal resilience to manage difficult and challenging situations as they arise. Whilst you will explore and learn new approaches using the exercises in this workbook and your structured CBT sessions, the most effective changes will take place through personal dedication and consistent practice in your daily life.

Whilst there is a wealth of self-help CBT material freely available, the research evidence shows that the most effective and long-lasting changes are achieved by working with a professionally accredited Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist. Always ensure that your Therapist is professionally accredited by the British Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (BABCP). The letters BABCP (Accred) mean that you can trust that your Therapist has demonstrated the gold standard in the practice of CBT, is professionally qualified at a post-graduate level and is an independently accredited expert in CBT.

Section 2 – Getting Started

The first step in the CBT process is obtaining a clear understanding of the problem, setting your goals and thinking about how your personal values and strengths can provide a driving force for change. You can work through the following exercises to help with these tasks.

Exercise 1 – Problem List

Use the first column to identify the problems that you want to work on. In the second column identify unhelpful, unworkable or unsustainable coping strategies or patterns of avoidance. In the third column, identify helpful, workable and sustainable coping strategies that are consistent with your goals and personal values.

The Problem	Unhelpful Coping Strategies	Helpful Coping Strategies

Exercise 2 – Personal Goals

Use this exercise to identify 3 goals for therapy. Detail the small steps required to make each goal concrete.

Goal 1:			
Small Steps to Help Achieve This Goal			
Goal 2:			
Small Steps to Help Achieve This Goal			
Goal 3:			
Small Steps to Help Achieve This Goal			

Exercise 3 – Personal Strengths / Resources

Identifying and capitalising on your strengths and personal resources is an important part of achieving change and overcoming problems. Think about your skills, knowledge, experience, abilities and qualities. Think about what you recognise in yourself and what other people recognise in you. Your strengths will play an important part in the development of your CBT plan.

Skills	Knowledge	Experience	Abilities	Personal Qualities

Exercise 4 – Personal Values

Values provide a basis for guiding the way we act to overcome problems and achieve our goals. Use this exercise to first assess and prioritise your personal values. Then decide which six values will be the most instrumental in achieving your CBT goals. You may find that your six “change values” are different to your current priorities. Use the checkboxes to indicate the relative importance of each value. There are no right or wrong answers.

Value Description	Highly Important	Moderately Important	Less Important
Accepting: Open to and accepting of my own value and the value of other people.	☐	☐	☐
Affectionate: Displaying and expressing love or strong feelings for others.	☐	☐	☐
Aspiring: Actively seeking opportunities and striving for success.	☐	☐	☐
Assertive: Respectfully standing up for my rights and balancing my needs with the needs of others.	☐	☐	☐
Authentic: Being genuine, honest and true to myself.	☐	☐	☐
Caring: Helpful and considerate to myself and others.	☐	☐	☐
Challenging: Stretching and continuously learning how to improve myself and encourage change in others.	☐	☐	☐
Compassionate: Recognising and acting to alleviate suffering for myself and others.	☐	☐	☐
Conforming: Respectful and obedient of helpful rules and obligations.	☐	☐	☐
Cooperating: Working collaboratively and harmoniously with others.	☐	☐	☐
Courageous: Brave and persistent in the face of fear, threat or difficulty.	☐	☐	☐
Creative: Imaginative, resourceful and innovative.	☐	☐	☐
Curious: Open-minded, exploratory and interested in new and alternative approaches.	☐	☐	☐
Emotionally aware: Open to and receptive to my own feelings and the feelings of others.	☐	☐	☐
Encouraging: Promoting and rewarding behaviour that I value in myself and others.	☐	☐	☐
Equality: Treating others fairly, consistently and equally.	☐	☐	☐
Fairness: Just, rational and reasonable.	☐	☐	☐
Fitness: Maintaining or improving my physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing.	☐	☐	☐
Flexible: Adjusting and adapting readily to changing circumstances.	☐	☐	☐
Forgiving: Coming to terms with or letting go of negative feelings towards myself and others.	☐	☐	☐
Friendliness: Friendly and companionable towards others.	☐	☐	☐
Generosity: Sharing and offering time, attention and resources to myself and others.	☐	☐	☐

Gratitude: Appreciative and valuing of the things that I have in my life.	☐	☐	☐
Honesty: Truthful and sincere with myself and others.	☐	☐	☐
Humility: Modest about my contributions whilst allowing my achievements to speak for themselves.	☐	☐	☐
Humour: Seeking out and engaging in the humorous side of life.	☐	☐	☐
Independent: Self-directive, contained and able to support myself.	☐	☐	☐
Industrious: Hard-working and productive with my time and resources.	☐	☐	☐
Open-minded: Approaching issues from an objective position, listening to other points of view.	☐	☐	☐
Orderly: Properly prepared and organized in my life.	☐	☐	☐
Patient: Waiting calmly and in line for what I want or need.	☐	☐	☐
Respectful: Polite, considerate and showing positive regard to others.	☐	☐	☐
Responsible: Taking responsibility and ownership of my thoughts, actions and emotions.	☐	☐	☐
Safe: Acting in a secure, protective and stable manner.	☐	☐	☐
Self-aware: Aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions, considering how I come across to others.	☐	☐	☐
Self-disciplined: Acting according to my goals and values, rather than my vulnerabilities or mood.	☐	☐	☐
Tenacious: Persisting despite problems and difficulties and without giving up.	☐	☐	☐
Tolerant: Coming to terms with, acknowledging and respecting things that clash with my own opinions.	☐	☐	☐
Trusted: Discrete, loyal, faithful, sincere and reliable.	☐	☐	☐
Other:	☐	☐	☐

Now choose the six most important change values which will be instrumental in the achievement of your goals. Insert these into the following change values table:

Priority	Change Value
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

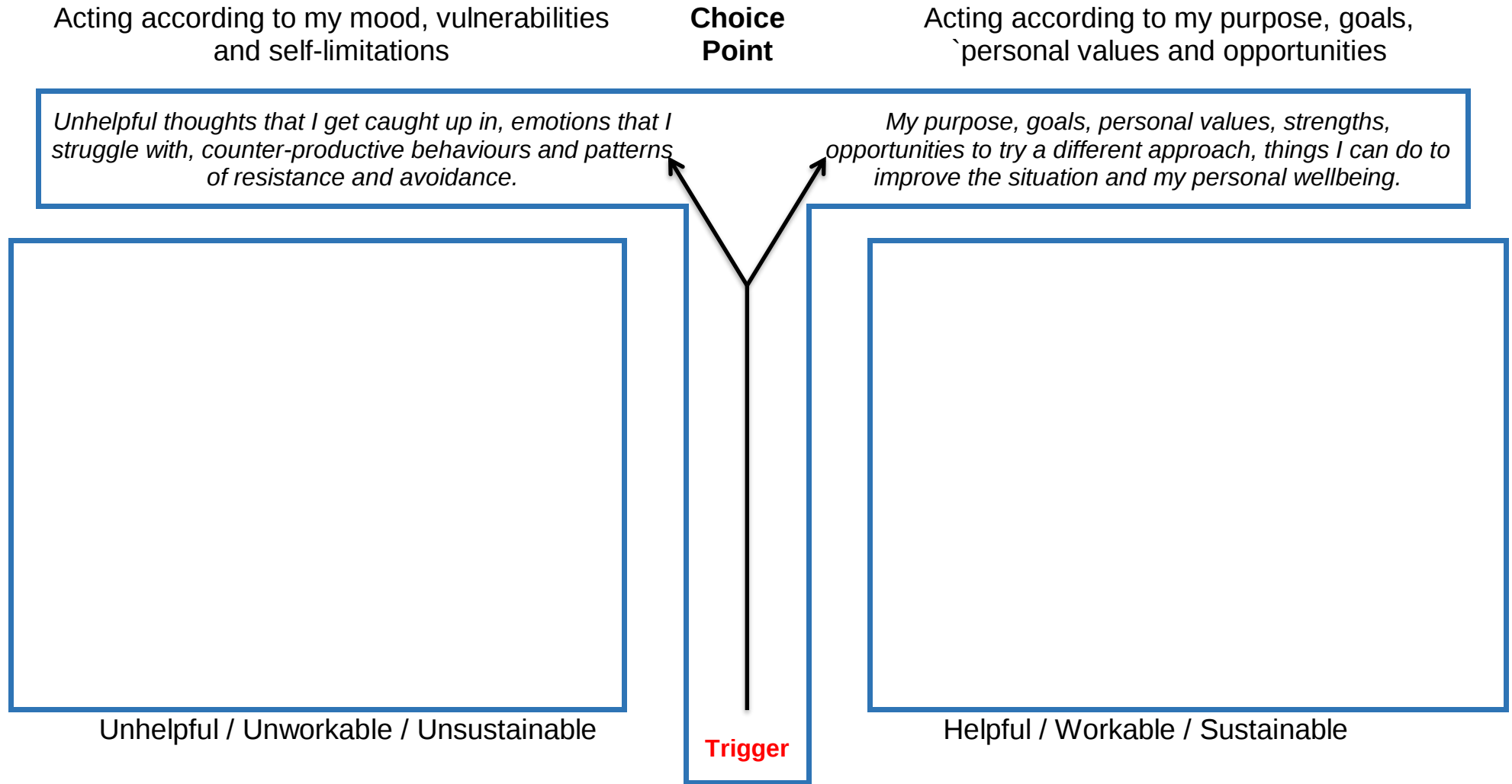
Exercise 5 – Costs / Benefits Balance-Sheet

Use this exercise to identify the costs and benefits of committing to change. On the cost side of this balance sheet, include the short-term difficulties, personal challenges and avoidance behaviours that you will be prepared to let go of or tolerate to achieve your goals. On the benefits side of the balance sheet, identify the advantages and opportunities that committing to change will provide. Complete this worksheet with reference to your goals and personal values.

Costs	Benefits

Exercise 6 – The CBT-Junction Model

Use this exercise to set direction and make choices that are helpful, workable and sustainable. Use the left side of the model to identify unhelpful thoughts, behaviours and avoidance patterns that you get caught up in. Use the right side of the model to identify your purpose, goals, values and opportunities for change.



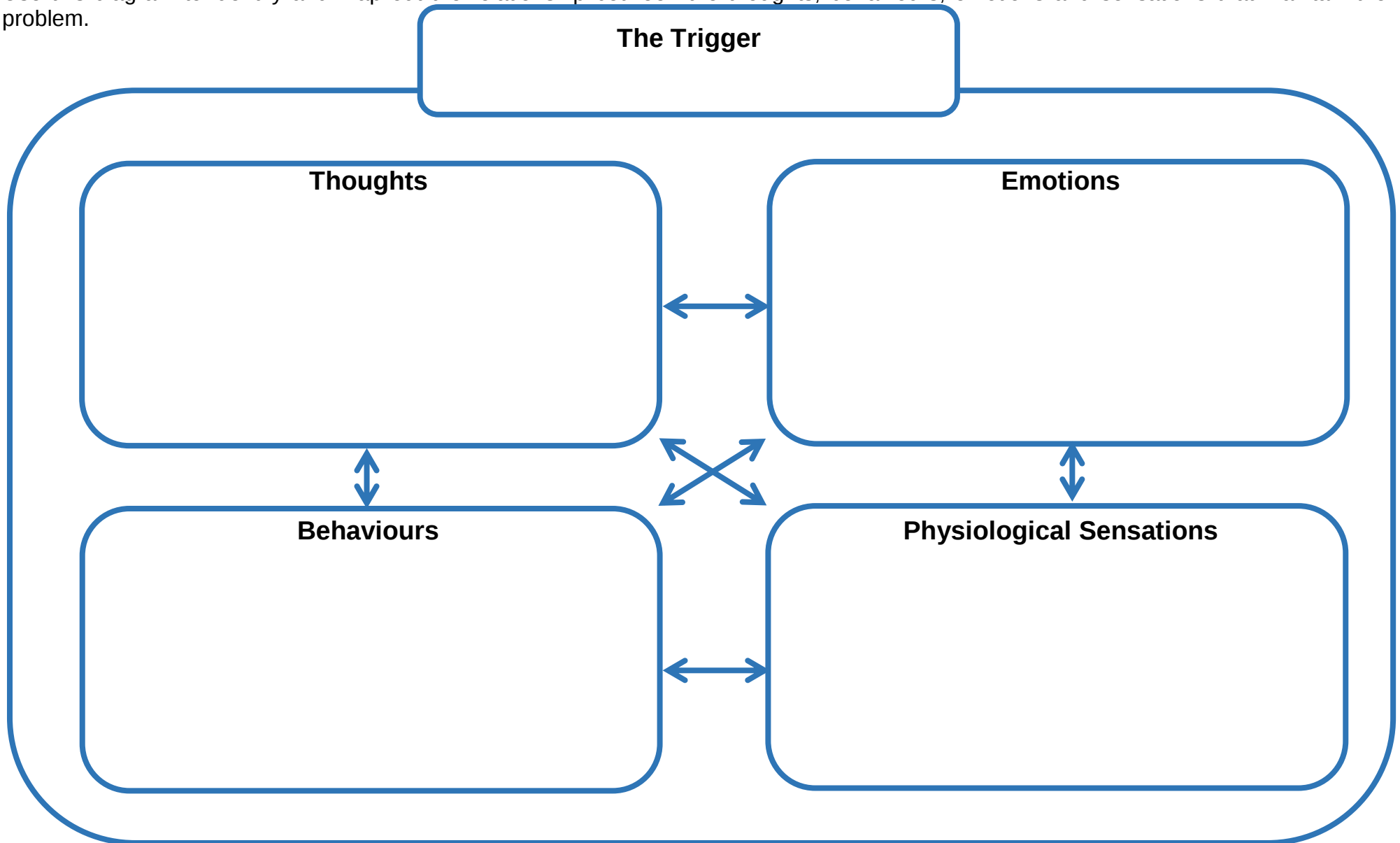
Exercise 7 – CBT Learning Log

Use this table to record the most important learning points from each CBT session or exercise. This will provide a structured record of your learning that you can refer to in future:

Session	What did we cover?	What were the key learning points?	What was the CBT assignment?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

Cross Sectional Assessment

Use this diagram to identify and map out the relationship between the thoughts, behaviours, emotions and sensations that maintain the problem.



CBT Thought Record

Use this template to identify and alter the relationship between difficult situations, negative emotions, unhelpful thoughts, counter-productive behaviours and distressing physical reactions. Practice noticing how identifying and changing negative thinking can alter the way you react in challenging situations.

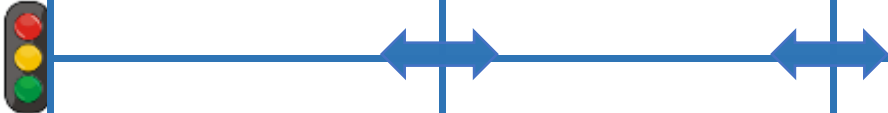
Situation / Trigger	Initial Response	Negative Automatic Thought	Supporting Evidence	Opposing Evidence	Balanced Alternative Thought	Outcome
Describe the trigger or situation – this could also be an initial thought, feeling or image	Identify any negative emotions, reactions or physical sensations Rate 0-100%	Describe negative automatic thoughts, linked to assumptions, memories or beliefs	What evidence supports this thought?	What evidence opposes this thought?	What is a more helpful or realistic way of thinking about this?	Re-rate emotions and reactions 0-100%

What do I notice about my thoughts - step back and just observe what's happening? How does thinking this way help me? What's a more realistic interpretation? Are these just thoughts? Am I really defined by my thoughts? Tolerate the uncertainty and discomfort - make the NATs less relevant. Shift my focus on to helpful and rational things.

Changing TRACKS Exercise

Use this exercise to identify how you respond when triggered by a difficult or challenging situation. Rather than attempting to change the trigger, focus on how you can alter your appraisal of the situation to achieve a more helpful initial response and outcome.

Unhelpful – Getting caught up in distressing thoughts and emotions - Acting against my goals or personal values

Trigger	Response	Appraisal	Consequence	Knock-on Effects
What happens or what do I first notice?	How do I feel emotionally and physically; what do I do?	What do I think, assume or believe?	What happens as a result of this – what is the outcome?	What are the wider or longer term implications of this?
				

Helpful – Changing or disentangling from distressing thoughts and emotions - Acting according to my goals or personal values

Identifying Common Thinking Traps

The purpose of this exercise is to identify the thinking traps; perception errors, attributions and distortions that contribute to unhelpful or negative interpretations. You can use the following list to catch, check and change the automatic thinking traps that you fall into:

- ☐ Catastrophizing – Making mountains out of mole hills; automatically assuming the worst possible outcome.
- ☐ Polarised Thinking – Viewing things in absolute or black-and-white terms.
- ☐ Over-Generalising – Making sweeping inferences based on a single negative event.
- ☐ Negative Filter – Focusing on the negatives and ignoring or discounting the positives.
- ☐ Jumping to Conclusions – Drawing conclusions without checking the facts.
- ☐ Mind-Reading – Deciding what people are thinking and feeling without any real evidence.
- ☐ Emotional Reasoning – Using feelings to make judgments; “I feel like an idiot, so I must be an idiot.”
- ☐ Musts / Shoulds – Translating preferences or wishes into rigid and dogmatic demands.
- ☐ Labelling – Using global labels to describe a person based on a single characteristic or situation.
- ☐ Blaming – Attributing personal blame or responsibility to self or others for every negative event.
- ☐ Change Fallacy – Assuming that things should always change to make us happy or suit our needs.
- ☐ Control Fallacy – Assuming we are powerless / victimised if we are not in control.
- ☐ Fairness Fallacy – Expecting everything to be measures in fairness and showing resentment when it doesn't work out.
- ☐ Reward Fallacy – Expecting sacrifice and self-denial to pay off and feeling bitterness when the reward doesn't happen.

Worry - Thinking Time

Research into worry shows that 85% of the things we continuously worry about don't happen. Of the remaining 15%, only 4% turn out to be as challenging as predicted. Most importantly, the process of continuous worry doesn't change the outcome and can make the situation more difficult to handle. Shifting from worry to problem solving helps to improve the outcome of the things we can influence and reduces unnecessary personal distress.

To undertake this exercise, you first need to set a regular daily time aside as a dedicated worry-thinking time. E.g. 4:30pm (not just before going to bed). Once you have identified your daily worry-thinking time, use the following two-part exercise to capture, suspend and manage worrying thoughts:

Part 1 – Identifying and Suspending My Worry

What is the specific worry?	
What consequences am I predicting?	
What distressing feelings am I experiencing (Rate 0-10)	
What time am I suspending this worry for later consideration? (00:00:00)	

Part 2 – Thinking– Problem Solving Time

What is the hard evidence supporting my predicted worry?	
What is the hard evidence against my predicted worry?	
What is the worst that could happen?	
What is the best that could happen?	
What is the most likely / realistic outcome?	
What are the consequences of worrying about this?	
What is a helpful way of thinking about this; what would I say to a friend?	
Can I trust myself to let go of this worry now?	Yes – Re-rate worry 0-10 No – Continue to next questions
What practical problem solving options are open to me?	
What is the most helpful / effective course of action?	
What, where, who and when?	
How have my thoughts about the initial worry changed?	
How distressing is this issue now? (Re-rate 0-10)	

Hierarchy of Behavioural Experiments

If we want to change how we feel, we need to change what we do or avoid. Use this exercise to identify eight situations or activities that are anxiety provoking in the first two columns. In the third column identify your predictions or assumptions about the situation. In the fourth column, rate your predicted level of distress; from 0 (no distress) to 10 (maximum distress). In the fourth column identify what happened and how this changes your assumption. In the final column rate your actual level of distress when completing the task.

Difficulty Level	Feared Situation / Activity	Predictions / Assumptions About Undertaking the Activity	Predicted Distress 0–10	Actual Experience; What happened? How does this change my assumptions?	Actual Distress 0–10
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					

Behavioural Scheduling

Complete this log to plan regular activities and tasks that are consistent with your personal goals and values. Record the date in the first column. Use the middle three columns to plan out purposeful, rewarding and compassionate activities in advance. Record your mood at the end of each day in the final column.

Date	Purposeful Activities Promoting Responsibility, Achievement and Satisfaction	Rewarding Activities Promoting Pleasure, Interest and Enjoyment	Compassionate Activities Promoting Kindness, Bonding and Connection	Mood (0-100%)

Cost of Avoidance and Control Exercise

Use this exercise to assess the costs of attempting to avoid or control difficult or distressing thoughts and emotions.

1. Describe a thought or emotion that you have been attempting to avoid or control? This could be a feeling like anxiety, a sensation like back-pain or thoughts and images about a distressing or traumatic event.
2. List everything that you have attempted to do to avoid or control this problem.
3. What has this level of avoidance and control cost you in terms of the things that are important to you, e.g. confidence, health, relationships, missed opportunities, career, personal values etc.?
4. If this approach has not resolved the underlying problem in the long-run, which avoidance and control strategies are you willing to let go of?
5. What uncomfortable thoughts and emotions will you need to make room for if you let go of the avoidance and control?
6. What will you achieve in the longer-term if you focus on what you want, rather than what you feel you must avoid or attempt to control?
7. How will this help you to move closer to your goals and personal values?

Letting Go Exercise

Use this exercise to assess the costs of holding onto difficult or distressing thoughts.

1. Identify a distressing thought that you are having difficulty letting go of.
2. How do you feel emotionally and physically when you get caught up in this thought?
3. How does your behaviour change when you get caught up in this thought?
4. What are the costs or limitations of getting caught up in this thought?
5. How does this take you away from your goals and personal values?
6. What would be a more helpful way to respond to this thought?
7. What uncomfortable feelings will you need to make room for in order to let go of this thought?
8. If you choose to do this, how will this help you to live a healthier, more enriched and fulfilling life?

Facing Your Fears Exercise

Use this exercise to assess the limitations of avoiding fearful or anxiety provoking thoughts and activities.

1. Identify a fear that limits your ability to pursue your goals or live in accordance with your personal values.
2. How would you act differently and what effect would it have on your life, if you were to gradually overcome this fear and focus on what matters?
3. Describe your thoughts and feelings when faced with this fear.
4. What small steps could you take to overcome this fear, whilst making room for some discomfort or anxiety.
5. Make an ascending list of six small things that you could do to meaningfully face up to this fear from easiest to hardest.
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
6. Once you have achieved these six small steps, what will this mean about your ability to manage this fear in future?

Not Good Enough Exercise

Use this exercise to identify and respond to some of the most common self-criticisms or doubt that cause distress and limit your potential.

1. Identify the most common “not good enough” criticisms that your mind continuously returns to.
2. Which of these criticisms makes you feel most upset or unhappy?
3. How do you feel emotionally and physically when your mind uses these criticisms about you?
4. How does your behaviour change when your mind uses these criticisms about you?
5. How could you open up to these criticisms in a way that would make them less relevant and easier to let go of?
6. What can you focus on right now to add value in your life whilst first noticing and then letting go of these criticisms?
7. How will you feel on balance if you do this right now?

Sleep Well Assessment

To feel good and ready for the day we need to sleep well. For some people that's a solid 7 or 8 hours every night. For others, 5 hours is sufficient to feel ready for whatever the day might bring. Do you sleep well? Take this quick test to find out:

- ☐ I get to sleep within 30 minutes of going to bed.
- ☐ I spend 85% of my time in bed asleep.
- ☐ I only wake once in the night for over 5 minutes.
- ☐ If I wake in the night I'm back to sleep within 20 minutes.

If you can answer “Yes” to these four questions, and you feel rested when you wake, you are probably sleeping well. If you answered “No” to any or all of these questions then the next exercise may help you.

Sleep Hygiene Factors

To sleep well we need to get the basics right. “Sleep Hygiene” is the basics of a good night's sleep and means the things we do in the day and at bedtime to prepare ourselves for a restful night's sleep.

The exercise on the next page looks at “lifestyle factors”, the things we do in the day to put our bodies and minds in the right position to sleep well. The factors that have the most marked impact on our ability to sleep well include caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, exposure to daylight, the amount of exercise we take, relaxation time, bed comfort; noise, light and temperature. The following exercise can help to identify and record what you are doing now and anything you may need to change to improve your pattern of consistent and restful sleep.



Sleep Hygiene Factor	What I Do Now	What I Want to Change
How do you wind down for bed? A good wind-down routine includes relaxing activities and avoids caffeine, alcohol and nicotine.		
Screens can keep us awake – do you avoid staring at screen before bedtime?		
Do you get exercise during the day? Exercise just before bedtime should be avoided but, exercise during the day can help us feel rested and ready for sleep.		
Do you get daylight in the morning and have the lights dimmed in the evening? This can help set our body clock to know when it should be getting ready to sleep.		
Do you only go to sleep when tired? This will maximise the chance of your going to sleep and staying asleep.		
Bed is best kept for sleep and intimacy – are there things that happen in the bedroom that could happen elsewhere?		
Do you clock-watch? Paying too much attention to what time it is can make you worry and can keep you awake.		
Are you comfortable in bed? A comfortable bed and a quiet, tidy, dark, cool bedroom can help us sleep well.		
Do you lay in bed awake at night? If you are struggling to get to sleep or back to sleep try getting out of bed until you are feeling sleepy again so that your mind connects your bed with sleep.		

Mindfulness Micro Exercises

Mindfulness is a way of paying open attention to the present moment, on purpose and without external interference, judgement or criticism. It involves bringing one's complete attention to the present experience on a moment to moment basis. Research has consistently demonstrated that Mindfulness can contribute to enhanced emotional resilience, lower levels of depression and anxiety, improved working memory and concentration skills, reduced worry and rumination, increased focus of attention and reduced physiological arousal.

You can practice mindfulness by simply paying close attention to daily tasks such as feeling the temperature of the water on your hands when washing up, by walking with a physical awareness of your legs and posture, or just using your five senses to tune into what you can see, smell, hear, feel and taste in the situation.

Abdominal Breathing

Abdominal breathing, sometimes called “Belly Breathing” is one of the first steps in beginning to relax the mind and body. This works by tuning into the natural rhythm of the breath. The immediate benefits of this breathing are that it quiets the mind, reduces distress and relaxes the body by balancing the nervous system. The long-term benefits are improved emotional control, enhanced perceptual sensitivity and increased mental clarity. Practice this exercise twice daily:

- Sit quietly and comfortably in a chair, settle in, and feel the sense of gravity running down your spine and into your pelvic bones.
- Lengthen your spine. Lift, release, and relax your shoulders.
- Feel your feet flat on the floor.
- Place your hands on your belly.
- Tune into the natural rhythm of the breath.
- Follow the gentle rise and fall of the breath.
- Let the belly rise on the in breath and fall on the out breath.
- Allow the sides of your rib cage to gently expand and contract with each breath.
- Allow the breath to flow in and out by itself.
- Let go of any tension on the out breath.
- Remember that every out breath is an opportunity to let go and relax.
- Enjoy the feeling of emotional release and physical calmness.

Aware Breathing

Breath-awareness improves the ability to reduce stress and improve emotional resilience. When we are centred during breath-awareness, we are open and receptive to our feelings. Practice the following steps:

- Begin by bringing attention to the feeling of the breath.
- Feel the breath as it flows in and out of the nostrils.
- Notice there is a slight sensation of coolness on the inhalation.
- Notice a slight sensation of warmth on the exhalation.
- Allow your breathing to be even and relaxed; maintaining an even breath.
- As your mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breath.
- Breathe comfortably in and out through the nostrils.
- Throughout the practice of breathing, become aware of sensations in your body.
- Stay with these observations with openness and curiosity.
- Notice when your thoughts wander and come back to your breath.
- Enjoy the sensation of breathing with awareness.

The Five-Minute Daily Recharge Practice

Find a place of quiet and silence and then lie down and get comfortable:

- Start with yawn breathing; open your jaw and make some fake yawns.
- Allow the mind to wander and relax.
- Let your eyes close and soften.
- Relax and do some soft belly breathing; notice the rise and fall of the belly as you relax.
- Let go of any tension in the body and worries in the mind with each out-breath.
- Shift your focus onto your senses, feeling your body move as you breathe.
- Shift or stretch your body.
- Shift from actively thinking to noticing thoughts, feelings or sensations.
- Notice the wave or rhythm of the breath.
- Allow gravity to hold you as you relax deeply.

Untangling from Unhelpful Thoughts Exercise

Use this exercise to capture any “unhelpful” thoughts or emotions that persistently interfere with your ability to pursue your goals and values. Just noticing these thoughts and emotions without judgement or resistance can help you to defuse from them:



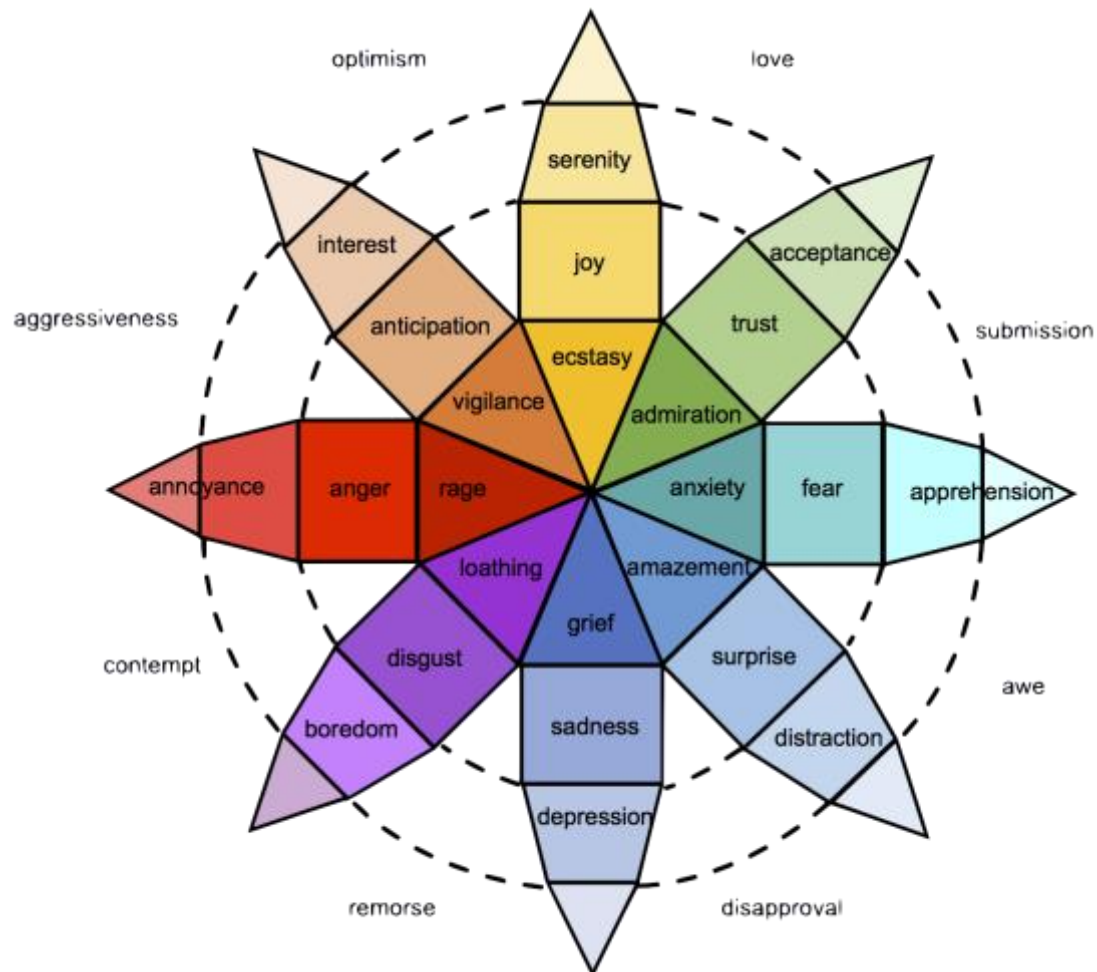
The Self Perception Continuum - Where Are You on This Scale?

Use this exercise to help establish a balanced and compassionate self-perspective. Place a percentage marker on each scale:

Totally Worthless	Totally Worthwhile
0%	100%
Disrespectful	Respectful
Selfish	Helps Others
Lazy	Works Hard
Ruthless	Kind
Cold (Emotionless)	Warm
Taking	Giving
Unfair	Fair
Pitiless	Compassionate
Abusive	Caring
Offensive	Empathic
Insensitive	Sensitive
Selfish	Considerate
Unfaithful / Disloyal	Faithful / Loyal
Indifferent	Determined

Wheel of Emotions

This model can be helpful in identifying different emotional responses and finding the language to express how you feel. Try to link the feeling to your thoughts and actions:

[illegible]

