

PREPARING FOR INDIVIDUAL THERAPY COURSE WORKBOOK





Welcome to preparing for individual therapy. This workbook will provide you with the tools to help you get the most from therapy. The first thing we would like to do is welcome you on board. Our team of specialists are well skilled in supporting people with varying mental health difficulties.

The next step is to understand Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT):

CBT combines basic theories about how people learn (behaviourism) with theories about the way people think about and interpret events in their lives (cognition or thoughts). CBT is now firmly established as the leading psychological treatment for many mental health conditions. Many research studies have demonstrated its effectiveness. Research shows that the skills people learn through CBT last long after the treatment ends.

In CBT, the therapist and the client work together to identify unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaviour. For example, someone might only notice the negative things that happen to them and not notice the positive things. Or someone might set unrealistic standards for themselves, such as “making mistakes at work is unacceptable.” It’s also important to identify unhelpful behaviours that maintain symptoms, such as avoiding certain situations and withdrawing from others.

The client and therapist also look at how thoughts and behaviours impact emotions. For example, if someone believes that nothing will work out for them in life, they may withdraw from others and avoid new opportunities. This, in turn, can lead to emotions of increased sadness, emptiness and anxiety. This is sometimes called a “vicious circle” of thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Carefully constructed exercises are used to help clients evaluate and change their thoughts and behaviours. Some aspects of treatment focus more on thoughts and some aspects focus more on behaviours. If a client has difficulty identifying and challenging negative thoughts, the therapist might focus on addressing behaviours such as avoidance, withdrawal or poor social skills. On the other hand, if such behaviours are not as noticeable, the therapist may focus on challenging unrealistic thinking.

In a nutshell CBT can help you make sense of overwhelming problems by breaking them down into smaller parts.

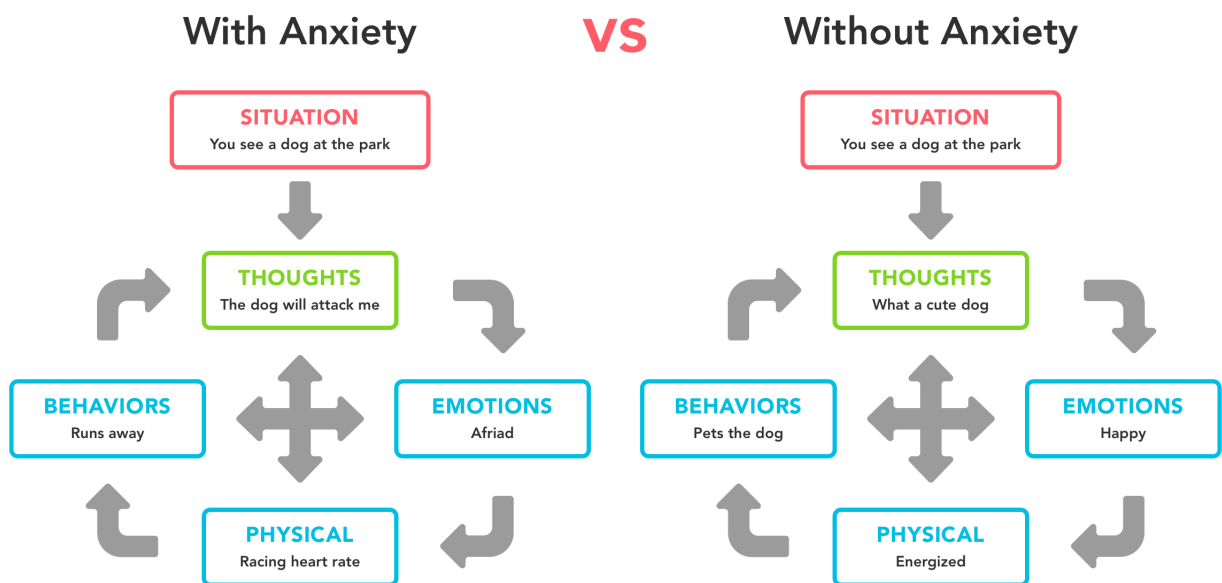
In CBT, problems are broken down into 5 main areas:

- Situations
- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Physical Reactions
- Behaviours

CBT is based on the concept of these 5 areas being interconnected and affecting each other. For example, your thoughts about a certain situation can often affect how you feel both physically and emotionally, as well as how you act in response.

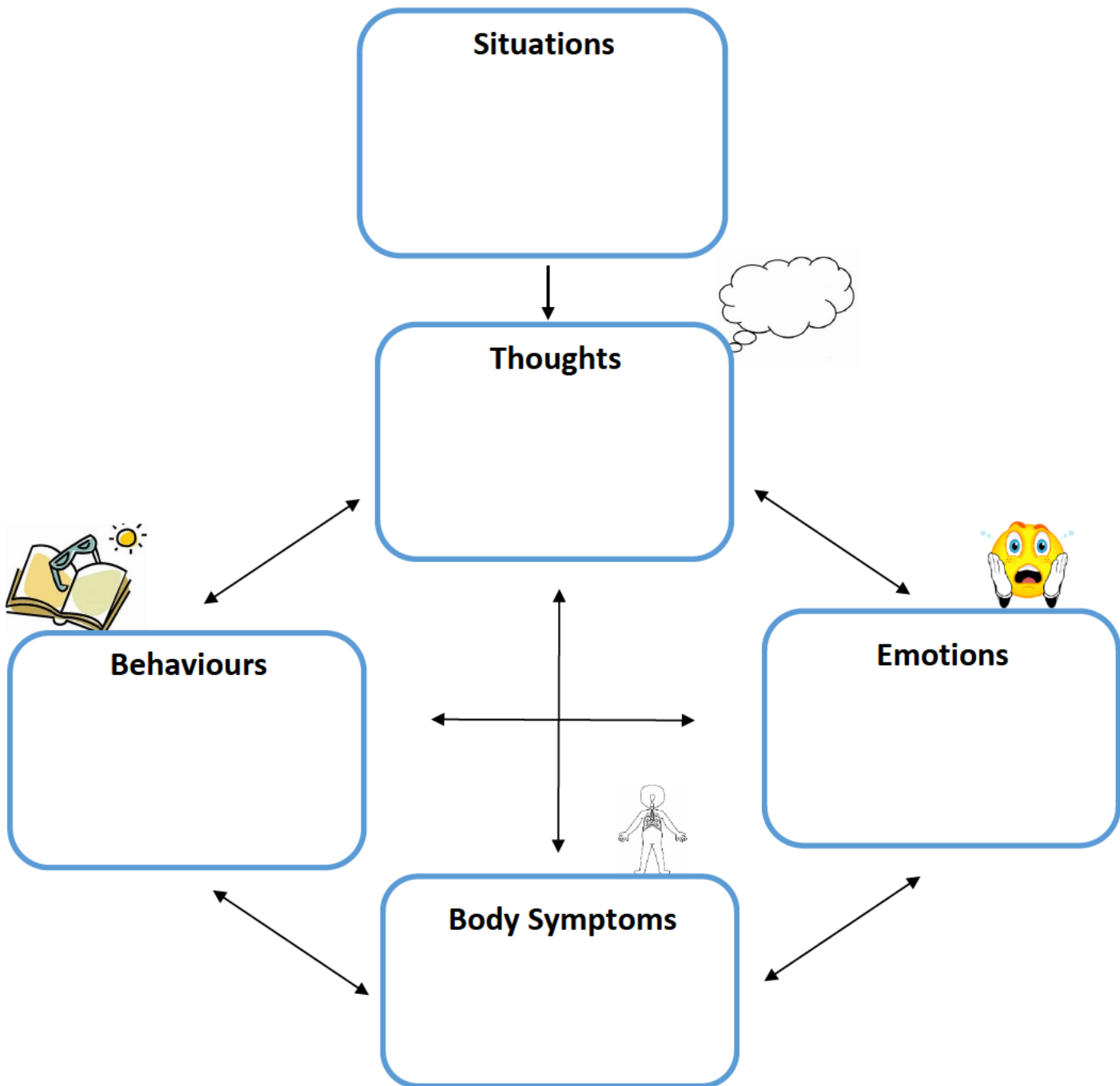
Have a go at exploring the CBT model example below and complete your own 5 areas vicious cycle.

Example



It is not the situation that bothers us, but rather it is the way we interpret the situation!

Vicious Cycle (Five aspects)





Understanding Your Situation & Making Plans

Although CBT focuses on the here and now it can be important to understand your situation better. This will help you to make plans for working towards goal.

Past: What has happened to me?
What I have been through?

Trigger: What sets it off? When do things become difficult?



Current issue: What is going on in my life right now? What is the main problem or concern?

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Perpetuating: What might be keeping the problem going?



Positives: What helps me get through? What is going well at the moment?



My Goal:



Plans:

First step:



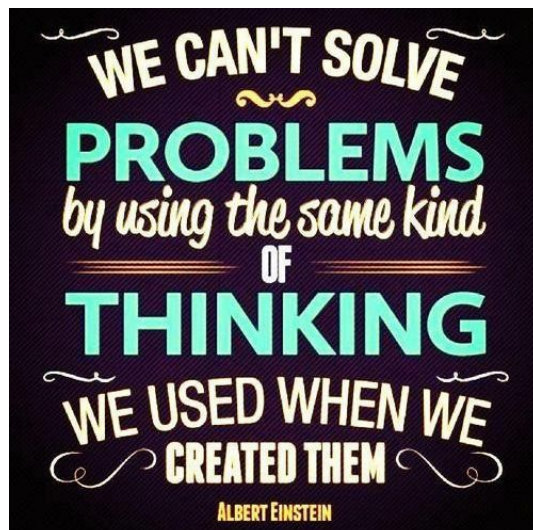
Now think about what you want from therapy:

Are you hoping a therapist can help you through a specific situation or stressful event? Do you want a place where you can vent, or do you want to learn techniques to manage and reduce symptoms?

It's important to think about what you'd like to gain from therapy sessions so you can mention that from the get-go and have an internal timeline for when you feel like therapy's accomplished its purpose. CBT provides a safe space to learn techniques to deal with unhelpful thoughts, get to the reasons why you perhaps have particular patterns of thinking, and what you would like to change.

On the self-help 'What is CBT page" you will find further resources to help you understand more about CBT and how it can help you.

On the next page you will find an exercise called "Therapy Goals". Please complete this in preparation for your first session.





Therapy Goals

At the beginning of therapy, it's important to think about your goals for treatment. Save this sheet so you can refer back to it as you progress. Reviewing your initial goals will help you measure progress and stay on track throughout treatment.

Describe the problem(s) that led to you entering therapy.

Imagine that while you're sleeping, all of your problems are solved. When you wake up, how will you know that things are better? What specific changes do you notice?



What are three broad goals you would like to work on during therapy sessions? (Example: ‘Improve my relationship with my spouse.’)

1.

2.

3.

For each of the goals you listed above, describe specifically how your life will be different once you’ve completed therapy (Example: ‘My spouse and I would communicate about our problems. When we get angry at one another, we would know how to get through it without big fights.’)

1.

2.

3.