

# CBT Basics for Stress: Use a Thought Record

A thought record is a structured method for identifying and analyzing distressing thoughts to reduce their impact on stress. It helps you spot cognitive distortions and develop more balanced, realistic perspectives.

## Situation

What happened?



## Automatic Thoughts

What was I telling myself when the event was happening?

## Emotion

How did it make me feel?

## Supportive evidence

Why is my thought true?

## Non-supportive evidence

Why might my thought not be true?

## Balanced Thought

What is a more logical balanced thought?

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# CBT Basics for Anxiety: Practice Gradual Exposure

Gradual exposure is a step-by-step method of facing fears in a controlled and systematic way, helping to reduce avoidance and anxiety over time.

## How it works

You create a hierarchy of feared situations, starting from the least anxiety-provoking to the most challenging. You then work through the list, staying in each situation until your anxiety decreases.



## Example

**Fear:** Public speaking

### Hierarchy:

- a. Talk in a small group of friends (low anxiety).
- b. Ask a question during a meeting (medium anxiety).
- c. Give a short presentation to coworkers (high anxiety).
- d. Process: Begin with Step 1 and gradually move up the hierarchy, using relaxation techniques and self-reassurance.

## Example

**Fear:** Fear of Flying

### Hierarchy:

- a. Look at pictures of airplanes (low anxiety).
- b. Watch videos of airplanes taking off and landing (low to medium anxiety).
- c. Visit an airport without boarding a plane (medium anxiety).
- d. Sit in a parked airplane during a tour or simulation (medium to high anxiety).
- e. Book and take a short, 1-hour flight with a supportive friend (high anxiety).

## How it works

Each step is practiced repeatedly until the anxiety significantly decreases, which can take days, weeks, or months depending on the individual's comfort and progress.

The focus is on gradual exposure to the fear **while using calming strategies** such as deep breathing, mindfulness, or visualization techniques.



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## Now you try

**Fear:**

**Hierarchy:**



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