

# Mindful Cognitive-Emotional Processing

## Worksheet Packet

### **PART I: Awareness**

*Describe the present situation objectively, then for each of the following steps, pause and close your eyes, take your time to observe (preferably at least one minute each). Observe mindfully: without judging what you notice, without trying to change anything....listen with interest and curiosity. If the mind wanders, just notice where it went and invite it back to the present focus. Write down whatever you observed after each step.*

<b>Situation</b> <i>Briefly describe what is happening or has just happened. Use objective language, not interpretations.</i>	
<b>Sounds</b> <i>Listen mindfully to the sounds around you. Pay attention to subtleties.</i>	
<b>Breathing</b> <i>Witness the sensations of your breathing. Allow the breath to flow naturally without judging or trying to control it.</i>	
<b>Body Sensations</b> <i>Scan through your body to notice physical sensations: discomfort, tightness, relaxation, pressure, warmth, etc.</i>	
<b>Emotions</b> <i>Notice emotions (one-word descriptions of feeling states). Notice if emotions are connected to physical sensations. Note the intensity of each emotion (0-100).</i>	
<b>Thoughts</b> <i>Notice the general state of your mind (e.g., active/calm/foggy/distracted). Observe the specific thoughts running through your mind.</i>	

## Part II: Acceptance/Validation

Review what you've written above. Take a breath as you repeat each of these statements to yourself:

- *At least for this moment, I can tolerate this experience.*
- *At least for this moment, I can accept that this is happening and let go of struggling against this experience....It is what it is.*
- *I have valid reasons for reacting this way, even if I don't completely understand them right now.*
- *My reactions are part of my humanness, and I deserve a compassionate reaction from myself.*
- Add your own accepting, validating, compassionate thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

Notice if you have resistance to acceptance and validation. Usually you will feel a sense of release in the body and the breath when you shift into a mode of acceptance. If you feel constriction in your body or a sense of urgency and impatience to move on to the next step, you probably have not yet completed this phase. If so, be curious about what might be stopping you from letting go and accepting. Note any reactions to this inquiry: \_\_\_\_\_

Continue returning to the acceptance and validation statements to see if you can allow them in. If you are having difficulty, just acknowledge that (check a box below) and continue to the next step.

- I can accept and validate my present experience.
- I am having difficulty accepting and validating my experience at this moment.

Now inquire within as to what might be a useful direction from here. Simply close your eyes, take a breath, and ask yourself, "What would be helpful right now?" Perhaps you feel resolved and nothing more is needed, or maybe there is an active measure that would be helpful. Notice any response that occurs to you: \_\_\_\_\_

### **PART III: Action**

- A. Cognitive Restructuring
  - 1. Working with automatic thoughts
  - 2. Working with core negative beliefs
  - 3. Working with rigid assumptions
  - 4. Establishing new, adaptive beliefs
- B. Somatic/Emotional Processing
- C. Other options
  - 1. Connect with positive experiences and emotions (gratitude, positive memories, positive future possibilities)
  - 2. Identify your strengths and successes
  - 3. Listen to music that triggers a helpful mood
  - 4. Practice relaxation, meditation, or breathing exercises
  - 5. Do something fun
  - 6. Distract yourself with something non-harmful
  - 7. Change your location, activity, or your physical state (e.g., take a shower)
  - 8. Connect with a friend
  - 9. Move your body, get exercise
  - 10. Rest/sleep
  - 11. Eat nourishing food
  - 12. Journaling, creative expression
  - 13. Read, watch a movie
  - 14. Take active steps toward improving a situation
  - 15. Practice assertive communication

Options A & B are described in detail on the following pages.

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#### *Common cognitive distortions (used in Cognitive Restructuring)*

- 1. Probability overestimations – overestimating the likelihood of a negative event
- 2. Mind reading – assuming what others will think about you
- 3. Personalization – taking too much responsibility for a negative situation
- 4. Should statements – incorrect/exaggerated statements about how things should be
- 5. Catastrophic thinking – assuming that a negative event would be catastrophic
- 6. All-or-nothing thinking (Black & White Thinking)
- 7. Selective attention and memory – attend to negative information, discount positive
- 8. Overgeneralization – a single event is taken as a sign of a global pattern
- 9. Fortune telling – predicting the future with absolute certainty
- 10. Negative core beliefs – negative assumptions about oneself. Taking an event and turning it into a core characteristic. (“I made a mistake” vs. “I am a loser”)
- 11. Emotional reasoning – believing that if you feel as if something is true, that makes it true

## A. Cognitive Restructuring

### A1. Working with Automatic Thoughts

<b>Identify Automatic Thoughts</b> Copy over the main upsetting thoughts from page 1. What's the most upsetting thought? What's the worst thing thing about this? Add relevant additional thoughts. Star (*) the most upsetting. This is the "Hot Thought."	
<b>Evidence that supports the Hot Thought</b> State only concrete facts.	
<b>Evidence against Hot Thought</b> Concrete facts.	
<b>Distortions in Hot Thought</b> Identify any kinds of cognitive distortions that were involved in your Hot Thought.	
<b>Evaluate the Hot Thought</b> How true does this appear, <i>based on the evidence</i> ?	
<b>Balanced Thought</b> What's an accurate, balanced thought to replace the Hot Thought?	
<b>Check In</b> Take a breath as you allow in the balanced thought. Scan through your body, check in with your emotions. List your current emotions and their intensity (0-100).	

## A2. Working with Core Negative Beliefs

<p><b>Identify Core Negative Belief*</b> Examine Hot Thought and consider, “What’s so bad about this?” “What does this mean about me?” Use downward arrow until you find a basic statement, “I am _____” or “I will be _____.”</p>	
<p><b>Evidence that supports the Core Belief</b> State only concrete facts.</p>	
<p><b>Evidence against Core Belief</b> Concrete facts.</p>	
<p><b>Distortions in Core Belief</b> Identify any kinds of cognitive distortions that were involved in your Core Belief.</p>	
<p><b>Evaluate the Core Belief</b> How true does this seem, <i>based on the evidence?</i></p>	
<p><b>Revised Core Belief</b> What’s a more accurate and useful Core Belief?</p>	
<p><b>Check In</b> Take a breath as you allow in the balanced thought. Scan through your body, check in with your emotions. List your current emotions and their intensity (0-100).</p>	

\*Common core negative beliefs: I am \_\_\_\_\_, people are \_\_\_\_\_, the world is \_\_\_\_\_

- a. Unworthiness/defectiveness (I’m unlovable/ defective/bad/ incompetent); Shame/Guilt (I did something bad... therefore I’m a bad person)
- b. Control (I am powerless, I can’t handle this...)
- c. Safety/vulnerability (I am unsafe, the world is unsafe)

### A3. Working with Rigid Assumptions

<b>Identify Rigid Assumptions</b> Rigid beliefs that are connected to your feelings of upset, often in the form of should/must statements.	
<b>Revise should/must statements</b> “I would prefer...” “It would be nice if...”	

Common rigid assumptions:

- a. Failure/Perfection: I must be perfect.
- b. Rejection/Affirmation: I must be liked/loved by all.
- c. Injustice/Justice: Things should be fair in life.
- d. Frustration/Entitlement: My needs should be met without my having to struggle.
- e. Control/Allowing: I must be in control of all aspects of my life and my future.

### A4. Establishing new, adaptive core beliefs

List unhelpful recurring thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs in the left column. List corresponding revised, adaptive beliefs in the right column.

Old Assumptions/Core Beliefs	New Assumptions/Core Beliefs

Develop strategies for reinforcing new beliefs:

1. Cognitive: observe evidence that supports the adaptive belief. Test it out logically.
2. Behavioral: do things to demonstrate to oneself whether the new belief is true
3. Heal old wounds: give nurturing attention to emotional injuries from the past
4. Rehearse new beliefs often, in many different ways
5. Use strategies that work on the deeper layers of consciousness: Guided imagery, hypnosis, re-scripting techniques, EMDR, somatic processing
6. Address any deficiencies in fulfilling your basic needs

## B. Processing Emotions & Body Sensations

1. **Identify emotions** that are present and notice any related sensations in the body. (It may be helpful to choose one emotion at a time.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. **Acknowledge** the feelings and listen to them. Just notice. Allow the breath to flow.
3. **Accept** that these emotions/sensations are present; let go of struggling against them, at least for this moment. Breathe into the sensations and allow this experience to be as it is.  
Note your reactions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **Validation** – recognize that these emotions are present for a valid reason. It is understandable that you are feeling this way, even if you're not sure why. Maybe the reaction is related to prior experiences, the current situation, or your physiological response. It's not necessary to understand "why" you are having these feelings in order to assume that your reaction has a valid reason for being here. While there may be more helpful ways to feel, but that doesn't change the fact that your present reaction is *understandable*.  
Describe reasons you might be feelings this way: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. **Breathe into the experience** of this emotion and these sensations. Breathe into a sense of your humanness, with compassion toward yourself for your sensitivities and vulnerabilities.  
Describe your reactions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Soothe hurt emotions by **placing a hand over your body** where you feel the experience. Breathe softly into this area. Envision warm, compassionate energy flowing from your heart, through your hand, into the area you are touching with your hand. Allow yourself to receive this nurturing energy.  
Describe your reactions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Inquire within as to whether there may be something you can do to address this feeling, without any expectation that something needs to be done. Just be curious and notice if any response occurs to you. "What might be helpful?" (See Step C for suggestions.)  
Response: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How has this exercise affected you? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_