

# CBT for Teens Workbook

Learn and practice core ideas from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), an effective treatment for many adolescent mental health disorders

- **Thought Record for Teens**
- **Cognitive Distortions for Teens**
- **Fear Hierarchy for Teens**

# CBT for Teens Workbook

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an effective treatment for many mental health disorders and can be useful for children as young as six. **This workbook is designed to introduce the core ideas behind CBT for teens, and help teens and parents practice CBT techniques at home.** By engaging with these worksheets, you can take active steps toward better mental health and well-being for yourself or your child.

Here is a brief introduction to each worksheet included in this package:

## Thought Record for Teens

This worksheet helps teens break experiences down into thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behaviors. This exercise helps them slow down, understand their difficult thoughts and big feelings, and decide how to cope.

## Cognitive Distortions for Teens

This worksheet helps teens identify and challenge negative thoughts, and replace them with more balanced and positive ones. This exercise can reduce negative thinking and promote a healthier mindset.

## Fear Hierarchy for Teens

This worksheet helps teens break a fear down into manageable pieces and make a plan to tackle them. This exercise helps teens break the connection between their fear and their anxious response, one step at a time.

*\*This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*



# Thought Record for Teens

When we have big emotions, it can be helpful to check in with our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behaviors. This check-in process helps us slow down, so that later, we can decide how best to cope. We've written in a few examples below to show you how to use this worksheet.

## What happened?

Write about what happened. What caused your big emotion?

- *Someone teased me in the hallway and a lot of people laughed*
- *I got blamed for something that wasn't my fault*
- *My friend messaged me, telling me we need to talk*

## What did you think?

What words or images went through your head?

- *Everyone must think I'm dumb. I don't think I can show my face at school tomorrow*
- *This always happens to me! It's not fair!*
- *Is she mad at me? Did I do something wrong? Does she not like me anymore?*

## How did you feel?

Choose from the emojis below, or draw your feeling.



## How did your body feel?

Check off any body sensations.

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fast heartbeat    | <input type="checkbox"/> Tired     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fast breathing    | <input type="checkbox"/> Slouched  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shaky or dizzy    | <input type="checkbox"/> Curled up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tense muscles     | <input type="checkbox"/> Sweaty    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too much energy   | <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgety           | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsteady  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flushed face      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pressure  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teeth clenching   | <input type="checkbox"/> Numb      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lump in my throat | <input type="checkbox"/> Pain      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too hot           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too cold          | <input type="checkbox"/> _____     |

## What did you do?

What actions did you take? Or, what did you feel like doing?

- *I just stood there and looked at the ground. I tried not to show I was bothered*
- *I clenched my fists and argued. I felt like yelling and throwing something*
- *I just wrote "ok" and then ignored my phone for as long as I could*

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# Thought Record for Teens

When we have big emotions, it can be helpful to check in with our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behaviors. This check-in process helps us slow down, so that later, we can decide how best to cope. This page is blank so you can write in your answers.

## What happened?

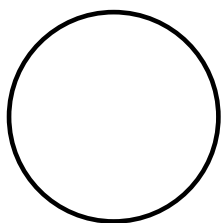
Write about what happened. What caused your big emotion?

## What did you think?

What words or images went through your head?

## How did you feel?

Choose from the emojis below, or draw your feeling.



## How did your body feel?

Check off any body sensations.

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Too hot           | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too cold          | <input type="checkbox"/> _____     |

## What did you do?

What actions did you take? Or, what did you feel like doing?

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# Thought Record for Teens

Our thoughts and feelings are important! They give us important information. But sometimes, thoughts and feelings can be so big that you may need some help regulating. Here are four sets of questions to help you regulate using your thoughts, sensations, feelings, and/or behaviors.

## Thoughts

- Is my thought helpful, true, or kind?
- If not, is there another way to think about this situation?
- Learn about cognitive distortions
- Is there a problem to solve? Who could help me with that problem?

## Sensations

- Is my environment too hot, loud, bright, or crowded?
- Is my environment too cold, quiet, or dark?
- Is my body feeling too tense or energetic?  
Can I stretch, exercise, or take deep breaths?
- Is my body feeling too sluggish? How can I get my body moving again?

## Feelings

- Do I need to let my feelings out?
  - Talk to a family member, friend, or pet
  - Draw or write about my feelings
  - Sing, hum, dance, or move to music that helps me feel better

## Behaviors

- Do I need to take a break?
- Is there something I can do to get my mind off my feelings?
  - Make or draw something
  - Play a game, take a walk, ride my bike
  - Relax with music, reading, or a bath
  - Spend time with someone I love

## What did you try?

Did a regulation idea work the way you hoped?

## What will you try next time?

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# Cognitive Distortions for Teens

When we are feeling really worried, sad, angry, or overwhelmed, sometimes our brains can get stuck in certain “modes,” or ways of thinking. These are ways of thinking that aren’t *actually* true, but *feel* true in the moment. For example, if you make one mistake, your brain might go into All-or-Nothing Mode and think, “I’m bad at everything,” even though that is not true. When we can name these modes, it can be easier to pause and look at a situation from a new perspective. Here are six common modes and some examples of what they sound like.

## Fortune Teller Mode

Our brains are in fortune teller mode when they predict that the *worst* possible outcomes are going to happen in the future. This is also called “catastrophizing.”

*I think I failed my math test today. I’m probably going to flunk for the rest of the year. What if I have to repeat the whole grade?!*



## Mind Reader Mode

Our brains are in mind reader mode when they take guesses at what other people are thinking. However, our brains feel *really sure* that their guesses are right.

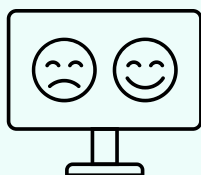
*My first day at my new school was awkward. I bet everyone else thinks I’m shy and weird. I bet none of them want to be friends.*



## All-or-Nothing Mode

Our brains are in all-or-nothing mode when they only see things in extremes. This is also called “black and white thinking.”

*If this audition doesn’t go well, then I’ll be a total failure at dance. It doesn’t matter that I was good at dance in the past.*



## All My Fault Mode

Our brains are in all my fault mode when they are *sure* something is all our fault, even if that’s not really true.

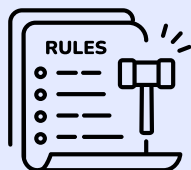
*I missed my friend’s text when he was upset. If I had answered, he would have felt better. So it’s my fault that he had a bad day.*



## I Should / I Must Mode

Our brains are in I should / I must mode when it seems like there are rigid rules about how you are always supposed to behave, with no room for mistakes.

*I can’t believe I dropped that pass. I should always give 100 percent. I can’t ever make a mistake.*



## Ignoring the Positive Mode

Our brains are in ignoring the positive mode when a mix of good, bad, and neutral things happen, but only the bad things seem to matter.

*My grades just got posted. It’s not important that I got my grade up in Science - my grade in Social Studies is still low.*



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# Cognitive Distortions for Teens

To get more familiar with these concepts, draw a line to match the examples to each mode.

To be a good friend, I always have to be available. I can't miss anything.

1

It doesn't matter that I got chosen for a part in the play. I didn't get the lead role.

2

My classmate got detention. He must be a really bad person.

3

She didn't laugh at my joke. She must hate my sense of humor.

4

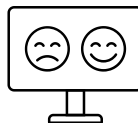
My teacher punished the whole class, but it's probably because I interrupted him.

5

I haven't made any friends yet. I won't in high school, or college, or ever.

6

A



## All-or-Nothing Mode

Black and white; no room for gray

B



## Mind Reader Mode

"Knowing" what someone is thinking

C



## Ignoring the Positive Mode

When only bad things seem to matter

D



## Fortune Teller Mode

Predicting the worst future outcome

E



## All My Fault Mode

Being sure something is your fault

F



## I Should / I Must Mode

Rigid rules about what you have to do

Answers: 1=F, 2=F, 3=C, 4=A, 5=B, 6=D

Are you experiencing a cognitive distortion? Write down your thought below.

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Which cognitive distortion does the thought match? Why?

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# Cognitive Distortions for Teens

If you are experiencing a cognitive distortion, you can practice looking at a situation in a new way. Use the ideas and examples below to try a new perspective.

Ask, what would you say if your best friend said this?

Focus on what you know in the present moment

Get more flexible by brainstorming “maybe”s

Balance the positives and negatives with “and”

<b>Mind Reader Mode</b> “Knowing” what someone is thinking	<i>She didn't laugh at my joke. She must hate my sense of humor.</i>	→	<i>Maybe she didn't like that joke or she's heard it before. Maybe she just has a different sense of humor from mine.</i>
<b>Ignoring the Positive Mode</b> When only bad things seem to matter	<i>It doesn't matter that I got chosen for a part in the play. I didn't get the lead role.</i>	→	<i>I didn't get the lead in the play - AND - I was the first choice for the role I did get.</i>
<b>Fortune Teller Mode</b> Predicting the worst future outcome	<i>I haven't made any friends yet. I won't in high school, or college, or ever.</i>	→	<i>Right now, I'm still working on making friends. I'm going to keep trying.</i>
<b>All My Fault Mode</b> Being sure something is your fault	<i>My teacher punished the whole class, but it's probably because I interrupted him.</i>	→	<i>Punishing the whole class for just your behavior would be really unfair. It was probably because of multiple students.</i>
<b>I Should / I Must Mode</b> Rigid rules about what you have to do	<i>To be a good friend, I always have to be available. I can't miss anything.</i>	→	<i>Everybody misses things sometimes. That doesn't mean you're a bad friend, just human!</i>
<b>All or Nothing Mode</b> Black and white; no room for gray	<i>My classmate got detention. He must be a really bad person.</i>	→	<i>Maybe he was just having a bad day. Maybe good kids can make mistakes. Maybe the teacher was being unfair.</i>

Try writing a new, more balanced thought to replace your distorted thought:

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# Fear Hierarchy for Teens

This worksheet is designed to help you overcome your fears, one small step at a time. Start by naming your primary fear, then break the fear down in to smaller examples and rate each from least to most anxiety-provoking. Next, tackle each example, starting with the least anxiety-provoking. As you work through each example, your nervous system will begin to break the connection between the fear and your anxiety symptoms.

## STEP 1: What is your primary fear?

Example: Fear of talking in front of people

## STEP 2: List smaller challenges that are related to your primary fear

Making a speech in front of a large group

Making a phone call

Ordering food or a drink from a cashier

Raising my hand and answering a question in class

Giving a presentation to my class

Making small talk on the bus

Raising my voice to get someone's attention

## STEP 3: Rate these challenges with the Anxiety Scale

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level
Making a speech in front of a large group	8
Making a phone call	4
Ordering food or a drink from a cashier	2
Raising my hand and answering a question in class	3
Giving a presentation to my class	7
Making small talk on the bus	5
Raising my voice to get someone's attention	6

### Anxiety Scale

10 panic

9 

8 fearful

7 

6 afraid

5 

4 worried

3 

2 okay

1 

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# Fear Hierarchy for Teens

## STEP 4: Prepare for challenges

What makes this technique effective is **staying in the situation until your anxiety naturally comes down on its own**. This process is what helps your nervous system to learn that the feared situation is tolerable (and teaches your mind that situations are not as scary as you may think!).

As you can imagine, facing your fears and waiting for your anxiety to come down is difficult! So here are two ways to prepare for the challenge.

### List effective coping skills in case they're needed

If a situation is far more challenging than you thought, you may need to use coping skills like taking a break, deep breathing, listening to music, or taking a walk. List coping skills that you know work for you on the right.

*deep breaths, listen to my favorite song,*  
*text a friend*

### Plan some appropriate rewards

Facing fears takes practice and motivation! Use the space to the right to consider small rewards you (or your parents) are willing to reward you with, like stickers, treats, money towards a purchase, etc.

*stickers, chocolates, money towards a*  
*new videogame*

## STEP 5: Plan your challenges and rewards, starting with the least scary

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level	Reward Per Try
<i>Ordering food or a drink from a cashier</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>sticker</i>
<i>Raising my hand and answering a question in class</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>sticker</i>
<i>Making a phone call</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>chocolates</i>
<i>Making small talk on the bus</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>chocolates</i>
<i>Raising my voice to get someone's attention</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>money for game</i>
<i>Giving a presentation to my class</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>money for game</i>
<i>Making a speech in front of a large group</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>money for game</i>






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# Fear Hierarchy for Teens

## STEP 3: Do challenges and record your progress

At the beginning of each challenge, use the Anxiety Scale to rate your anxiety. Your goal is to **stay in the scary situation until your anxiety naturally comes down on its own**. Every so often through the challenge, re-rate your anxiety. You can stop the challenge when your anxiety has come down significantly (at least halfway). Unless a challenge is much too difficult or you get really stuck, try not to use coping skills. When the same challenge causes less *starting* anxiety, you'll know you're ready to move on to the next challenge.

Date	Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety At:		Anxiety Scale
		Start	End	
May 3	Ordering food or drink from a cashier	2	1	10 panic
May 4	Ordering food or drink from a cashier	1	1	9 
May 5	Raising my hand and answering a question in class	1	1	8 fearful
May 6	Making a phone call	5	2	7 
May 7	Making a phone call	4	1	6 afraid
May 8	Making a phone call	2	1	5 
May 9	Making small talk on the bus	7	6	4 worried
May 10	Making small talk on the bus	5	2	3 
May 11	Making small talk on the bus	3	1	2 okay
May 12	Making small talk on the bus	2	1	1 
May 13	Raising my voice to get someone's attention	6	2	

As you work through the challenges, use these spaces to reflect and adjust if needed.

How does it feel to "wait out" anxiety?	Do any of the challenges need to be adjusted?	Are rewards and coping skills (if necessary) working?
<p><i>It was really hard at first and didn't feel natural. After a couple of challenges, I think I got the hang of it though.</i></p>	<p><i>May 9: I tried talking to a stranger on the bus and got way too overwhelmed.</i></p> <p><i>May 10: talking to someone familiar on the bus worked better.</i></p>	<p><i>May 9: needed to use coping skills on the bus. Deep breathing worked okay, but listening to music worked better.</i></p>

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# Fear Hierarchy for Teens

## OPTIONAL: Draw Your Fear or Progress Bar

If you'd like, draw your fear. As you complete each challenge, cover the fear with a sticker. As the challenges add up, your fear will be slowly covered up and defeated.



You might also enjoy creating a progress chart similar to an Experience Points (XP) bar in a videogame. For each challenge, color in a section and watch your progress grow.

## Challenge Progress Bar



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## STEP 1: What is your primary fear?

## STEP 2: List smaller challenges that are related to your primary fear

## STEP 3: Rate these challenges with the Anxiety Scale

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level

### Anxiety Scale

10 panic

9 

8 fearful

7 

6 afraid

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4 worried

3 

2 okay

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# Fear Hierarchy for Teens

## STEP 4: Prepare for challenges

What makes this technique effective is **staying in the situation until your anxiety naturally comes down on its own**. This process is what helps your nervous system to learn that the feared situation is tolerable (and teaches your mind that situations are not as scary as you may think!).

As you can imagine, facing your fears and waiting for your anxiety to come down is difficult! So here are two ways to prepare for the challenge.

### List effective coping skills in case they're needed

If a situation is far more challenging than you thought, you may need to use coping skills like taking a break, deep breathing, listening to music, or taking a walk. List coping skills that you know work for you on the right.

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### Plan some appropriate rewards

Facing fears takes practice and motivation! Use the space to the right to consider small rewards you (or your parents) are willing to reward you with, like stickers, treats, money towards a purchase, etc.

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## STEP 5: Plan your challenges and rewards, starting with the least scary

Challenges That Trigger Your Fear	Anxiety Level	Reward Per Try
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>






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# Fear Hierarchy for Teens

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May 10				3 
May 11				2 okay
May 12				1 
May 13				

As you work through the challenges, use these spaces to reflect and adjust if needed.

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### My Fear

You might also enjoy creating a progress chart similar to an Experience Points (XP) bar in a videogame. For each challenge, color in a section and watch your progress grow.

### Challenge Progress Bar

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# Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

## You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



**325+**  
Companies Reviewed



**3,625+**  
Hours of Firsthand Experience



**1,545+**  
Data Points Analyzed



### [Best Online Therapy Platforms for Teens](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

### [Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



### [Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

### [Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.

