

Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors Journaling Exercise

Feelings are emotions you can usually name in one word, like sad, worried, or angry. They often come along with sensations in your body, like a pit in your stomach or shaky hands.

Thoughts are words or images in our heads. They usually need more than one word to describe, like “I can’t do this” or imagining your favorite place. Thoughts and emotions often go together, and people sometimes confuse them because we say things like, “I felt like he was wrong.” In that case, the thought is “*He was wrong,*” and the emotion might be frustration.

Behaviors are things that we do - actions like frowning, walking away, or speaking. Sometimes therapists also talk about *behavior urges*, which are urges or impulses to act. An example might be an urge to yell during an argument (even if you chose to stay calm instead).

Being able to name and distinguish between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors is an important skill. Many coping skills or therapy techniques help you to change how you think, feel, or behave - but they work best if you know how you’re thinking, feeling, or behaving.

Thoughts, Feelings, Behaviors Journaling Exercise

You can practice telling thoughts, feelings, and behaviors apart with this journaling exercise. Recall a time you felt a very strong feeling. It doesn’t matter if the feeling was pleasant or unpleasant. Write about that experience as if you were telling a friend all about it. When you’re done, circle, highlight, or underline all of your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that you can. We’ll start with an example:

As my birthday was coming up this year, I was feeling pretty down. I had been really busy with work in the weeks beforehand and didn’t have time to arrange any sort of get-together. Also, I didn’t really think anyone would remember anyways - my birthday is near a major holiday so it gets missed sometimes. On the day, I went to work as usual, and read a text from my mom wishing me a happy birthday. I felt a little comforted knowing she didn’t forget. I figured I would run to the grocery store and at least make myself a nice meal after work. But as I left work, I was astonished to see my closest friends standing on the sidewalk! At first I thought it was just a coincidence, but when they yelled, “Surprise!!” I knew they remembered. We walked to my favorite restaurant to celebrate and I felt so grateful and excited.

----- = thought

_____ = feeling

..... = behavior







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](#)

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.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://choosingtherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

Learn More with [Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



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