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In recent years, mindfulness has received increasing interest from the psychological and scientific community and now forms an essential element of several therapeutic approaches, including Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT; Girdali, 2019). Mindfulness frees the client from the “pattern of adding suffering to existing difficulty and pain” and has successfully treated various groups, from children to military veterans (Crane, 2009, p. 3). In this article, we share over 30 mindfulness exercises and worksheets for use with adults, children, and youths, in educational, health, and workplace settings. Before you continue, we thought you might like to download our three Mindfulness Exercises for free. These science-based, comprehensive exercises will help you cultivate a sense of inner peace throughout your daily life and give you the tools to enhance the mindfulness of your clients, students, or employees. Mindfulness is a powerful tool for treating clients with anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues in therapy. “It refers to the ability to focus one’s awareness on the present moment without judging the sensations, thoughts, feelings, or other characteristics of the experience” (Baker et al., 2019, p. 2).

“Research on the neurobiology of mindfulness in adults suggests that sustained mindfulness practice can enhance attentional and emotional self-regulation and promote flexibility” (Meiklejohn et al., 2012, p. 291). The following worksheets are helpful for working with adults. If used with younger clients, take care to ensure the language is pitched appropriately and reworded as required. Nature Play Nature Play is a mindful walk where time spent in nature is valuable for heightening awareness and promoting mindfulness. These six simple steps encourage the individual to become more present and grounded by immersing the senses outdoors. FLARE for Anxiety and Fear Working through the steps identified by the FLARE acronym encourages mindful acceptance of negative emotions (such as anxiety) rather than resistance, along with self-compassion. Funeral Meditation Despite the daunting name, this meditation encourages individuals to embrace new challenges as opportunities rather than let life events hold them back. Emotional Mental Models Mindful visualization can be performed across multiple situations and scenarios to improve emotional awareness and offer deeply personal insights. Reflect on what you would do with one year left to live or if you had enough money to do anything with your life. Square Breathing Mindful breathing exercises activate the parasympathetic nervous system, invoking calm and relaxation. In this exercise, the adult practices inhaling, holding, and exhaling, each to a count of four, to encourage presence and grounding (Nestor, 2020).

7 Best Mindfulness Worksheets for Kids Over the last two decades, practicing “moment-by-moment non-judgmental focused attention and awareness—has spread from its initial western applications in medicine to other fields, including education” (Meiklejohn et al., 2012, p. 291).

Family Vocabulary

Directions: Match the columns. Write the letters on the lines.

1. ___ mother	a. brother's wife
2. ___ children	b. father and mother
3. ___ uncle	c. father's sister
4. ___ father	d. father's wife (not your mom)
5. ___ grandparents	e. female grandparent
6. ___ your dad's dad	f. female parent
7. ___ family	g. grandfather
8. ___ parents	h. grandfather and grandmother
9. ___ cousin	i. group of relatives
10. ___ nephew	j. male grandparent
11. ___ grandmother	k. male parent
12. ___ grandfather	l. married man
13. ___ niece	m. married woman
14. ___ aunt	n. plural of child
15. ___ brother-in-law	o. same mom & different dad
16. ___ sister-in-law	p. sister's daughter
17. ___ wife	q. sister's husband
18. ___ husband	r. sister's son
19. ___ stepmother	s. your father's brother
20. ___ half sister	t. your mom's nephew

Mindfulness training has proven valuable for classroom teachers, increasing their sense of wellbeing and teaching self-efficacy (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). Training schoolchildren in mindfulness has shown significant cognitive, social, and psychological benefits. It positively affects their: Working memory Attention Academic skills Social skills Emotional regulation Self-esteem Mood, including lowered levels of anxiety, stress, and fatigue The following worksheets can be tailored according to the age and skills of the child or for group settings: Dragon Fire Breathing This worksheet helps children connect how they breathe with how they feel inside. It introduces a simple breathing exercise to enter a mindful state and diffuse physical tension within the body. Feelings Wheel We can all have trouble becoming aware and identifying how we feel; this is particularly the case for children. The Feelings Wheel helps them attend to their feelings and describe them in words or drawings. Fun Mindful Eating This mindful eating exercise encourages children to slow down and enjoy their food more. They practice attending closely to how their food smells, tastes, and feels and what they hear and see. Meditation Grounding Scripts for Children Grounding is a valuable skill that children can learn quickly. It can prepare them for stressful times. We include two scripts: one for older children and the other for younger children. Mindful Listening Challenge We typically fail to notice the many sounds surrounding us.

Barack Obama Worksheet

Directions: Match the columns. Write the correct letters on the lines.

1. ___ January 20	a. abbreviation for the United States of America
2. ___ President	b. number way to write 44th
3. ___ USA	c. colors of the flag
4. ___ Barack Obama	d. what Obama was elected
5. ___ red, white, and blue	e. event when people vote
6. ___ November 4, 2008	f. First Lady of the USA
7. ___ Michelle Obama	g. highest US political office
8. ___ lawyer	h. inauguration day
9. ___ Illinois	i. location of the White House
10. ___ White House	j. Obama's former career
11. ___ Washington, D.C.	k. Obama's political party
12. ___ Hawaii	l. period of time President is elected for
13. ___ 44th	m. President's main job
14. ___ forty-fourth	n. President of the United States
15. ___ Joe Biden	o. President's home
16. ___ election	p. person the President
17. ___ four-year term	q. state Obama represented in the US States
18. ___ Secret Service	r. state Obama was born in
19. ___ Democratic Party	s. Vice President of the USA
20. ___ Executive Branch	t. year Obama was born

In this challenge, the child practices slowing down, paying closer attention, heightening their awareness, and becoming a more mindful listener. Teaching Others About Mindfulness This fascinating exercise uses the power of teaching to help the child learn and practice mindfulness before sharing with others to form a deeper understanding. Gratitude Gifts This drawing task encourages the positive emotion of gratitude to foster a more mindful outlook on the child’s environment, including the people, toys, and pets in their lives. These detailed, science-based exercises will help you or your clients enjoy the benefits of mindfulness and create positive shifts in their mental, physical, and emotional health.

What Could Happen vs. What Will Happen

When you are worried about something, it's easy to imagine the worst thing that could possibly happen. In reality, these worries may never come true. What could happen isn't the same as what will happen.

What is something you are worried about?

Thinking about what will happen, instead of what could happen, can help you worry less. Whenever you start to worry, answer these questions:

What are some clues that your worry will not come true?

What if your worry does not come true, what will probably happen instead?

If your worry does come true, how will you handle it? Will you eventually be okay?

After answering these questions, how has your worry changed?

As with children and adults, mindfulness is a powerful intervention for youths in groups and as individuals. Success has been across various settings and associated with many different events, including when facing acute or chronic adjustment struggles, such as ill health or educational challenges (Jones et al., 2013). We have collected some of our favorite activities for practicing mindfulness in youths: Countdown to Calmness Use this activity with young people experiencing emotions that leave them feeling out of control. They learn to count down from five to one acknowledging and mindfully embracing each of the senses. Connect the DOTS Unwanted thoughts and emotions can damage and upset young people. This exercise introduces four types of strategies for dealing with unhelpful thoughts and painful feelings. Creating a Mindfulness Anxiety Plan Youths are more likely to manage challenging emotions when they have a plan in place to deal with them. This exercise involves creating a mindfulness plan to anticipate and manage their anxiety triggers. Interacting With Your Emotions Becoming more familiar with emotions can make them less of a struggle when they surface. The clients are given a series of sentences to contemplate, encouraging them to think about the emotions that might arise from the various situations presented. Mini Mindfulness Bingo This exercise is a fun way to introduce mindfulness practices in a playful setting, especially in a group environment. Right Here, Right Now This activity would equally work with younger children. The young person takes a few moments to relax and then observes what they can see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. 3-Step Mindfulness Worksheet This is a valuable exercise for a more informal mindfulness practice involving three steps: stepping out of autopilot, becoming aware of each breath, and expanding awareness outward. DBT Mindfulness Worksheets Dialectical Behavior Therapy exercises are intended to help clients deal with intense negative emotions and experiences. DBT is a modified form of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, encompassing elements of mindfulness and focusing on developing the skills required to manage highly emotional situations and events (Leonard, 2020). Mindfulness is valuable for entering a calm space to identify, consider, and understand situations and emotions that clients struggle to accept. It helps individuals acknowledge that they cannot control every aspect of their experience and instead can choose to respond mindfully instead of reacting emotionally (Goodman et al., 2014). DBT mindfulness training skills have proven valuable in reducing sadness, anger, and anxiety (among other mental health issues) in face-to-face and digital settings (Navarro-Haro et al., 2017).

The following worksheets either directly confront issues of negative thinking or help create a state of acceptance and readiness to reflect on them with less emotion. Observing Anxiety Mindfully Guiding the client through this script can help them handle their anxiety and self-identify more compassionately, seeing negative emotions as less impactful than they may seem. Negative Thoughts Checklist Write and experience negative thoughts. It's natural, albeit unsettling. Use this checklist to identify those most frequently experienced by the client and begin to recognize and understand their patterns of thinking. Linking Feelings and Situations We often find it challenging to uncover the relationships between our thoughts and feelings. This activity is used to identify past situations and uncover emotions that are associated with them. 3 Group Mindfulness Exercises Even brief (for example, three-session) mindfulness interventions have proven successful in group mindfulness therapy, decreasing psychological distress and enhancing overall life satisfaction (Harnett et al., 2010). While the therapist can apply the following exercises to individuals, they are particularly valuable in group sessions: Silent Connections Mindfulness of our thoughts allows us to perceive them as they are: ongoing mental processes rather than facts. The group is tasked with building stronger connections and positive relationships through mindful nonverbal cues. Squeeze and Release This group activity involves the mindful experiencing and releasing of stress in a positive form, helping groups discover its energizing effect and potential for improving coping. Breath Awareness This simple exercise can be performed individually but is extremely powerful in a group setting, where everyone is engaged and experiencing deep feelings of connection. Mindfulness techniques offer positive and far-reaching benefits for both physical and psychological health, including immune function, stress reduction, better sleep, and our sense of self-compassion (Shapiro, 2020). For depression Depression can be accompanied by feelings of anxiety. Both can benefit from cognitive and behavioral treatments, particularly when advanced by the application of mindfulness (Hofmann & Gómez, 2017). As a result, mindfulness-based treatment protocols have been integrated into DBT and ACT for clients with depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues (Hofmann & Gómez, 2017). The following examples are valuable for working with clients presenting with depression or anxiety: Who Am I Beyond My Anxiety? Defining ourselves by how we feel can lead to a deeply negative self-view that can exacerbate symptoms of depression.

Use this mindful reflection exercise to redefine how clients see themselves. Three Steps to Deep Breathing Breathing exercises are helpful for managing negative emotions and remaining more present. Share this activity with the client to help them practice abdominal, thoracic, and clavicular breathing. For addiction Complementary therapies such as breathing and mindfulness practices are increasingly used with those experiencing addiction. Their success may be due to targeting "multiple psychological, neural, physiological, and behavioral processes implicated in addiction and relapse" (Khanna & Greeson, 2013, p. 244). Consider using the following to manage unhelpful or negative thoughts and emotions and foster a greater perception of control: Triangle Breathing This breathing exercise helps us regain a sense of calm and control over our body and mind and encourages increased feelings of wellness. Yogic Breathing Practiced for thousands of years, yoga breathing is a powerful technique for improving focus and choosing where our attention sits.

Thoughts and Feelings: Why do we complain? Life can seem like a struggle. It's helpful to identify what lies beyond our control and commit to life-enhancing actions rather than damaging ones. Being Present When we feel present and strongly linked to this moment, we are more aware of how we feel and what is happening around us. It means we are less likely to be tempted by unhelpful or unhealthy actions or thoughts. For workshops Mindfulness-based workshops have proven successful in treating a wide variety of conditions, from eating disorders (Godfrey et al., 2014) to schizophrenia (Langer et al., 2017). The following two examples are ideal for sharing and practicing in the context of a workshop: The Raisin Meditation This eating exercise can be shared with a group to enter a mindful experience. Each person is given a raisin to hold and experience through touch, sight, smell, and taste. The Five Senses Worksheet Perform this exercise in a group setting to encourage individual and shared mindfulness experiences. The group is asked to notice five things they can see, four things they can feel, three things they can hear, two things they can smell, and one thing they can taste. At work Research confirms the value of mindfulness in the workplace. A 2018 study exploring the impact of mindfulness interventions in insurance and pharmaceutical firms found marked improvements in morale, empathy, and more successful teams (Karlin, 2018). Workplace Mindfulness Our working environment need not be a place of constant stress; it can be somewhere we can practice and experience mindfulness. In this exercise, the employee considers three elements of mindfulness in relation to their workday. STOP The Panic The STOP acronym is a helpful reminder of four steps to manage feelings and thoughts when panicking at work or elsewhere. Focus on the Little Things Ikigai is a valuable tool for creating a sense of flow and focusing on the little things at work, increasing our experience of being grounded and mindful. Alternate Nostril Breathing Practicing breathing techniques can positively affect our physical and mental health and quickly restore a sense of control. PositivePsychology.com's Mindfulness X0 PositivePsychology.com has many resources and worksheets to help you start your personal mindfulness habit or teach clients essential practices and exercises. One of our most valuable resources is the Mindfulness X0 course, which will help you further develop and master your mindfulness therapy practice. Try Mindfulness X0, which offers a comprehensive eight-week training template to inform your approach to mental health and wellness. You will gain access to a train-and-studied program that can be seamlessly integrated into your practice. Mindfulness X0 includes: An instruction manual for your participants 8 Pillars of mindfulness video course 8 Slide deck presentations Transcripts of all the presentations Expert guided meditations in MP3 A complete train-the-trainer course White-label rights: Use your own brand Lifetime updates to Mindfulness X0 Developed by experts in positive psychology, this course has been thoughtfully designed to provide a solid foundation in mindfulness techniques and practices. If you're not quite ready to sign up for the course, but you are looking for more science-based ways to help others enjoy the benefits of mindfulness, check out this collection of 17 validated mindfulness tools for practitioners. Use them to help others reduce stress and create positive shifts in their mental, physical, and emotional health. A Take-Home Message Mindfulness has been shown to address various mental health concerns effectively while enhancing attention, emotional self-regulation, and adaptability. One limited to contemplative traditions, mindfulness now plays a central role in many therapeutic approaches, including DBT and ACT. Research shows that such practices contribute to physical and psychological wellbeing, bolstering immune function, aiding stress management, promoting better sleep, and nurturing self-compassion. As a result, mindfulness has become an invaluable tool for fostering mental wellness and treating mental health issues across different settings and age groups, including anxiety, depression, and addiction for adults, children, and youths in educational, healthcare, and workplace environments. Many of you are already using mindfulness practices with your clients. We invite you to explore some of our many additional resources you may not have encountered before. For therapists new to these techniques, take a moment to review the article and free worksheets and consider trying those that resonate with you, your practice, and your clients' needs. 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PositivePsychology.com B.V. Built with love in the Netherlands Even if you're relatively unfamiliar with psychology, chances are you've heard of cognitive-behavioral therapy, commonly known as CBT. It's an extremely common type of talk therapy practiced around the world. If you've ever interacted with a mental health therapist, a counselor, or a psychiatrist clinician in a professional setting, it's likely you've participated in CBT. If you've ever heard friends or loved ones talk about how a mental health professional helped them identify unhelpful thoughts and patterns and behavior and alter them to more effectively work towards their goals, you've heard about the impacts of CBT. CBT is one of the most frequently used tools in the psychologist's toolbox. Though it's based on simple principles, it can have wildly positive outcomes when put into practice. In this article, we'll explore what CBT is, how it works, and how you can apply its principles to improve your own life or the lives of your clients. Before you read on, we thought you might like to download our three resources for free: These science-based exercises will provide you with a comprehensive insight into Positive CBT and will give you the tools to apply it in your therapy or coaching. What is CBT? "This simple idea is that our unique patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving are significant factors in our experiences, both good and bad.

Since these patterns have such a significant impact on our experiences, it follows that altering these patterns can change our experiences" (Martin, 2016). Cognitive-behavioral therapy aims to change our thought patterns, our conscious and unconscious beliefs, our attitudes, and, ultimately, our behavior, in order to help us face difficulties and achieve our goals. Psychiatrist Aaron Beck was the first to practice cognitive behavioral therapy. Like most mental health professionals at the time, Beck was a psychoanalysis practitioner.

While practicing psychoanalysis, Beck noticed the prevalence of internal dialogue in his clients and realized how strong the link between thoughts and feelings can be. He altered the therapy he practiced in order to help his clients identify, understand, and deal with the automatic, emotion-laden thoughts that regularly arose in his clients. Beck found that a combination of cognitive therapy and behavior techniques produced the best results for his clients. In describing and honing this new therapy, Beck laid the foundations of the most popular and influential form of therapy of the last 50 years. This form of therapy is not designed for lifelong participation and aims to help clients meet their goals in the shortest time possible, with clients participating in one 50- to 60-minute session per week. CBT is a hands-on approach that requires the therapist and the client to be invested in the process and willing to actively participate. The therapist and client work together as a team to identify the problems the client is facing, come up with strategies for addressing them, and creating positive solutions (Martin, 2016). Cognitive Distortions Many of the most popular and effective cognitive-behavioral therapy techniques are applied to what psychologists call "cognitive distortions," inaccurate thoughts that reinforce negative thought patterns or emotions (Groh, 2016). There are 15 main cognitive distortions that can plague even the most balanced thinkers. 1. Filtering Filtering refers to the way a person can ignore all of the positive and good things in life to focus solely on the negative. It's the trap of dwelling on a single negative aspect of a situation, even when surrounded by an abundance of good things. 2. Polarized thinking / Black-and-white thinking This cognitive distortion is all-or-nothing thinking, with no room for complexity or nuance—everything's either black or white, never shades of gray. If you don't perform perfectly in some area, then you may see yourself as a total failure instead of simply recognizing that you may be unskilled in one area. 3. Overgeneralization Overgeneralization is taking a single incident or point in time and using it as the sole piece of evidence for a broad conclusion. For example, someone who overgeneralizes could bomb an important job interview and instead of brushing it off as one bad experience and trying again, they conclude that they are terrible at interviewing and will never get a job offer. 4. Jumping to conclusions Similar to overgeneralization, this distortion involves faulty reasoning in how one makes conclusions. Unlike overgeneralizing one incident, jumping to conclusions refers to the tendency to be sure of something without any evidence at all. For example, we might be convinced that someone dislikes us without having any real evidence, or we might believe our fears will come true because we have a hunch. 5. Catastrophizing / Magnifying or Minimizing This distortion involves expecting that the worst will happen or has happened, based on an incident that is nowhere near as bad as we think it is, and we may make a mistake at work or be convinced that it will ruin the project, and that you'll lose your job. Alternatively, one might minimize the importance of positive things, such as an accomplishment at work or a desirable personal characteristic. 6. Personalization This is a distortion where an individual believes that everything they do has an impact on external events or other people, no matter how irrational that may be. A person with this distortion will feel that he or she has an exaggerated role in the bad things that happen around them. For instance, a person may believe that arriving a few minutes late to a meeting led to it being derailed and that everything would have been fine if they were on time. 7. Control fallacies This distortion involves feeling like everything that happens to you is either a result of purely external forces or entirely due to your own actions. Sometimes what happens to us is due to forces we can't control, and sometimes what it's due to our own actions, but the distortion is assuming that it is always one or the other. We might assume that difficult coworkers are to blame for our own less-than-stellar work, or alternatively assume that every mistake another person makes is because of something we did. 8. Fallacy of fairness We are often concerned about fairness, but this concern can be taken to extremes. As we all know, life is not always fair. The person who goes through life looking for fairness in all their experiences will end up resentful and unhappy. Sometimes things will go our way, and sometimes they will not, regardless of how fair it may seem. 9. Blaming When things don't go our way, there are many ways we can explain or assign responsibility for the outcome. One method of assigning responsibility is blaming others for what goes wrong. Sometimes we may blame others for making us feel or act a certain way, but this is a cognitive distortion. Only you are responsible for the way you think.

10. "Shoulds" "Shoulds" refers to the implicit or explicit rules we have about how we and others should behave. When others break our rules, we are upset. When we break our own rules, we feel guilty. For example, we may have an unofficial rule that customer service representatives should always be accommodating to the customer. When we interact with a customer service representative that is not immediately accommodating, we might get angry. If we have an implicit rule that we are irresponsible if we spend money on unnecessary things, we may feel exceedingly guilty when we spend even a small amount of money on something we don't need. 11. Emotional reasoning This distortion involves thinking that if we feel a certain way, it must be true. For example, if we feel unattractive or uninteresting in the current moment, we think we are unattractive or uninteresting. This cognitive distortion boils down to: "I feel it, therefore it must be true." Clearly, our emotions are not always indicative of the objective truth, but it can be difficult to look past how we feel. 12. Fallacy of change The fallacy of change lies in expecting other people to change as it suits us.

This ties into the feeling that our happiness depends on other people, and their unwillingness or inability to change, even if we demand it, keeps us from being happy. This is a damaging way to think because no one is responsible for our own happiness except ourselves. 13. Global labeling / mislabeling This cognitive distortion is an extreme form of generalizing, in which we generalize one or two instances or qualities into a global judgment. For example, if we fail at a specific task, we may conclude that we are a total failure in not only that area but all areas. Alternatively, when a stranger says something a bit rude, we may conclude that he or she is an unfriendly person in general. Mislabeling is speaking in an emotionally loaded language, such as saying a woman has abandoned her children when she leaves her children with a babysitter to enjoy a night out. 14. Always being right While we all enjoy being right, this distortion makes us think we must be right, that being wrong is unacceptable. We may believe that being right is more important than the feelings of others, being able to admit when we've made a mistake or being fair and objective. 15. Heaven's Reward Fallacy This distortion involves expecting that any sacrifice or self-denial will pay off. We may consider this karma, and expect that karma will always immediately reward us for our good deeds. This results in feelings of bitterness when we do not receive our reward (Groh, 2016). Many tools and techniques found in cognitive behavioral therapy are intended to address or reverse these cognitive distortions. 9 Essential CBT Techniques and Tools There are many tools and techniques used in cognitive behavioral therapy, many of which can be used in both a therapy context and in everyday life. The nine techniques and tools listed below are some of the most common and effective CBT practices. 1. Journaling This technique is a way to gather about one's moods and thoughts. A CBT journal can include the time of the mood or thought, the source of it, the extent or intensity, and how we reacted, among other factors. This technique can help us to identify our thought patterns and emotional tendencies, describe them, and change, adapt, or cope with them (Utley & Garza, 2011). Follow the link to find out more about using a thought diary for journaling. 2. Unraveling cognitive distortions This is a primary goal of CBT and can be practiced with or without the help of a therapist. In order to unravel cognitive distortions, you must first become aware of the distortions from which you commonly suffer (Hamami, 2022). Part of this involves identifying and challenging harmful automatic thoughts, which frequently fall into one of the 15 categories listed earlier. 3. Cognitive restructuring Once you identify the distortions you hold, you can begin to explore how those distortions took root and why you came to believe them. When you discover a belief that is destructive or harmful, you can begin to challenge it (Larsson, Hooper, Osborne, Bennett, & McHugh, 2015). For example, if you believe that you must have a high-

Play the script until the end This technique is especially useful for those suffering from fear and anxiety. In this technique, the individual who is vulnerable to crippling fear or anxiety conducts a sort of thought experiment in which they imagine the outcome of the worst-case scenario. Letting this scenario play out can help the individual to recognize that even if everything he or she fears comes to pass, the outcome will still be manageable (Chankapa, 2018). 8. Progressive muscle relaxation This is a familiar technique to those who practice mindfulness. Similar to the body scan, progressive muscle relaxation instructs you to relax one muscle group at a time until your whole body is in a state of relaxation (McCallie, Blum, & Hood, 2006). You can use audio guidance, a YouTube video, or simply your own mind to practice this technique, and it can be especially helpful for calming nerves and soothing a busy and unfocused mind. 9. Relaxed breathing This is another technique that will be familiar to practitioners of mindfulness. There are many ways to relax and bring regularity to your breath, including guided and unguided imagery, audio recordings, YouTube videos, and scripts. Bringing regularity and calm to your breath will allow you to approach your problems from a place of balance, facilitating more effective and rational decisions (Megan, 2016). These techniques can help those suffering from a range of mental illnesses and afflictions, including anxiety, depression, OCD, and panic disorder, and they can be practiced with or without the guidance of a therapist. To try some of these techniques without the help of a therapist, see the next section for worksheets and handouts to assist with your practice.

How does cognitive behavioral therapy work - Psych Hub Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Worksheet (PDFs) To Print and Use If you're a therapist looking for ways to guide your client through treatment or a hands-on person who loves to learn by doing, there are many cognitive-behavioral therapy worksheets that can help. The Cognitive Behavioral Worksheet for Depression, A Step-by-Step Program by William J. Knaus and Albert Ellis (Amazon); Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Skills Workbook by Barry Gregory (Amazon); A Course in CBT Techniques: A Free Online CBT Workbook by Albert Bonill and Suraji Vagstad (online here). There are many other manuals and worksheets available that can help get you started with CBT, but the tools above are a good start. Peruse our article: 30 Best CBT Tools to Master Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for an excellent list of these books. 5 Final Cognitive Behavioral Activities Before we go, there are a few more CBT activities and exercises that may be helpful for you or your clients that we'd like to cover. 1. Mindfulness meditation Mindfulness can have a wide range of positive impacts, including helping with depression, anxiety, addiction, and many other mental illnesses or difficulties. The practice can help those suffering from harmful automatic thoughts to disengage from rumination and obsession by helping them stay firmly grounded in the present (Jain et al., 2007). Mindfulness meditations, in particular, can function as helpful tools for your clients in between therapy sessions, such as to help ground them in the present moment during times of stress. If you are a therapist who uses mindfulness-based approaches, consider finding or pre-recording some short mindfulness meditation exercises for your clients. You might then share these with your clients as part of a toolkit they can draw on at their convenience, such as using the blended care platform Quenza (pictured here), which allows clients to access meditations or other psychoeducational activities on-the-go via their portable devices. 2. Successive approximation This is a fancy name for a simple idea that you have likely already heard of: breaking up large tasks into small steps. It can be overwhelming to be faced with a huge goal, like opening a business or remodeling a house. This is true in mental health treatment as well, since the goal to overcome depression or anxiety and achieve mental wellness can seem like a monumental task. By breaking the large goal into small steps, you can map out the path to success and make the journey seem a little less overwhelming (e.g., Emmelkamp & Ultee, 1974). 3. Writing self-statements to counteract negative thoughts This technique can be difficult for someone who's new to CBT treatment or suffering from severe symptoms, but it can also be extremely effective (Anderson, 2014). When you (or your client) are being plagued by negative thoughts, it can be hard to confront them, especially if your belief in these thoughts is strong. To counteract these negative thoughts, it can be helpful to write down a positive, opposite thought. For example, if the thought "I am worthless" keeps popping into your head, try writing down a statement like "I am a person with worth," or "I am a person with potential." In the beginning, it can be difficult to accept these replacement thoughts, but the more you bring out these positive thoughts to counteract the negative ones, the stronger the association will be. 4. Visualize the best parts of your day When you are feeling depressed or negative, it is difficult to recognize that there are positive aspects of life. This simple technique of bringing to mind the good parts of your day can be a small step in the direction of recognizing the positive (Anderson, 2014). All you need to do is write down the things in your life that you are thankful for or the most positive events that happen in a given day. The simple act of writing down these good things can forge new associations in your brain that make it easier to see the positive, even when you are experiencing negative emotions. 5. Reframe your negative thoughts

Of course, it can be hard to accept this, especially when we are in the throes of a dysfunctional thought or intense emotion. Filling out this worksheet can help you come to this realization. The worksheet includes 16 statements that the user must decide are either fact or opinion. These statements include: I'm a bad person. I failed the test. I'm selfish. I didn't lend my friend money when they asked. This is not a trick—there is a right answer for each of these statements. (In case you're wondering, the correct answers for the statements above are as follows: opinion, fact, opinion, fact.) This simple exercise can help the user to see that while we have lots of emotionally charged thoughts, they are not all objective truths. Recognizing the difference between fact and opinion can assist us in challenging the dysfunctional or harmful opinions we have about ourselves and others. 7. Cognitive restructuring This worksheet employs the use of Socratic questioning, a technique that can help the user to challenge irrational or illogical thoughts. The first page of the worksheet has a thought bubble for "What I'm Thinking." You or your client can use this space to write down a specific thought, usually, one you suspect is destructive or irrational. Next, you write down the facts supporting and contradicting this thought as a reality. What facts about this thought being accurate? What facts call it into question? Once you have identified the evidence, you can use the last box to make a judgment on this thought, specifically whether it is based on evidence or simply your opinion. The next page is a mind map of Socratic Questions which can be used to further challenge the thought. You may wish to re-write "What I'm Thinking" in the center so it is easier to challenge the thought against these questions. One question asks whether this thought is truly a black-and-white situation, or whether reality leaves room for shades of gray. This is where you think about (and write down) whether you are using all-or-nothing thinking, for example, or making things unreasonably simple when they are complex. Another asks whether you could be misinterpreting the evidence or making any unverified assumptions. As with all the other bubbles, writing it down will make this exercise more effective. A third bubble instructs you to think about whether other people might have different interpretations of the same situation, and what those interpretations might be. Next, ask yourself whether you are looking at all the relevant evidence or just the evidence that backs up the belief you already hold. Try to be as objective as possible. It also helps to ask yourself whether your thought may be an over-inflation of a truth. Some negative thoughts are based in truth but extend past their logical boundaries. You're also instructed to consider whether you are entertaining the negative thought out of habit or because the facts truly support it. Then, think about how this thought came to you. Was it passed on from someone else? If so, is that person a reliable source of truth? Finally, you complete the worksheet by identifying how likely the scenario your thought brings up actually is, and whether it is the worst-case scenario. These Socratic questions encourage a deep dive into the thoughts that plague you and offer opportunities to analyze and evaluate those thoughts. If you are having thoughts that do not come from a place of truth, this Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet can be an excellent tool for identifying and defusing them. How is positive cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) different from traditional CBT? Although both forms of CBT have the same goal of bringing about positive changes in a client's life, the pathways used in traditional and positive CBT to achieve this goal differ considerably. Traditional CBT, as initially formulated by Beck (1967), focuses primarily on the following: Analyzing problems Lessening what causes suffering Working on clients' weaknesses Getting away from problems Instead, positive CBT, as formulated by Bannick (2012), focuses mainly on the following: Finding solutions Enhancing what causes flourishing Working with client's strengths Getting closer to the preferred future In other words, Positive CBT shifts the focus on what's right with the person (rather than what's wrong with them) and on what's working (rather than what's not working) to foster a more optimistic process that empowers clients to flourish and thrive. In an initial study comparing the effects of traditional and Positive CBT in the treatment of depression, positive CBT resulted in a more substantial reduction of depression symptoms, a more significant increase in happiness, and it was associated with less drop out (Geschwind et al., 2019). Some More CBT Interventions and Exercises Haven't had enough CBT tools and techniques yet? Read on for additional useful and effective exercises. 1. Behavioral experiments These are related to thought experiments, in that you engage in a "what if" consideration. Behavioral experiments differ from thought experiments in that you actually test out these "what ifs" outside of your thoughts (Boyes, 2012). In order to test a thought, you can experiment with the outcomes that different thoughts produce. For example, you can test the thoughts: "If I criticize myself, I will be motivated to work harder." "First, you would try criticizing yourself when you need the motivation to work harder and record the results. Then you would try being kind to yourself and recording the results. Next, you would compare the results to see which thought was closer to the truth.

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If she thought I was a bad friend, she probably wouldn't have invited me." Once you have evidence for and against, the goal is to come up with more balanced thoughts, such as, "My friend is busy and has other friends, so she can't always answer the phone when I call. If I am understanding of this, I will truly be a good friend." Thought records apply the use of logic to ward off unreasonable negative thoughts and replace them with more balanced, rational thoughts (Boyes, 2012). Here is a helpful Thought Record Worksheet to download. 3. Pleasant activity scheduling This technique can be especially helpful for dealing with depression (Boyes, 2012). It involves scheduling activities in the near future that you're also instructed to consider whether you are entertaining the negative thought out of habit or because the facts truly support it. Then, think about how this thought came to you. Was it passed on from someone else? If so, is that person a reliable source of truth? Finally, you complete the worksheet by identifying how likely the scenario your thought brings up actually is, and whether it is the worst-case scenario. These Socratic questions encourage a deep dive into the thoughts that plague you and offer opportunities to analyze and evaluate those thoughts. If you are having thoughts that do not come from a place of truth, this Cognitive Restructuring Worksheet can be an excellent tool for identifying and defusing them. How is positive cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) different from traditional CBT? Although both forms of CBT have the same goal of bringing about positive changes in a client's life, the pathways used in traditional and positive CBT to achieve this goal differ considerably. Traditional CBT, as initially formulated by Beck (1967), focuses primarily on the following: Analyzing problems Lessening what causes suffering Working on clients' weaknesses Getting away from problems Instead, positive CBT, as formulated by Bannick (2012), focuses mainly on the following: Finding solutions Enhancing what causes flourishing Working with client's strengths Getting closer to the preferred future In other words, Positive CBT shifts the focus on what's right with the person (rather than what's wrong with them) and on what's working (rather than what's not working) to foster a more optimistic process that empowers clients to flourish and thrive. In an initial study comparing the effects of traditional and Positive CBT in the treatment of depression, positive CBT resulted in a more substantial reduction of depression symptoms, a more significant increase in happiness, and it was associated with less drop out (Geschwind et al., 2019). Some More CBT Interventions and Exercises Haven't had enough CBT tools and techniques yet? Read on for additional useful and effective exercises. 1. Behavioral experiments These are related to thought experiments, in that you engage in a "what if" consideration. Behavioral experiments differ from thought experiments in that you actually test out these "what ifs" outside of your thoughts (Boyes, 2012). In order to test a thought, you can experiment with the outcomes that different thoughts produce. For example, you can test the thoughts: "If I criticize myself, I will be motivated to work harder." "First, you would try criticizing yourself when you need the motivation to work harder and record the results. Then you would try being kind to yourself and recording the results. Next, you would compare the results to see which thought was closer to the truth.

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It can be easy to succumb to negative thoughts as a default setting. If you find yourself immediately thinking a negative thought when you see something new, such as entering an unfamiliar room and thinking "I hate the color of that wall," give reframing a try (Anderson, 2014). Reframing involves countering the negative thought(s) by noticing things you feel positive about as quickly as possible. For instance, in the example where you immediately think of how much you hate the color of that wall, you would push yourself to notice five things in the room that you feel positively about (e.g., the carpet looks comfortable, the lampshade is pretty, the windows let in a lot of sunshine). You can set your phone to remind you throughout the day to stop what you are doing and think of the positive things around you. This can help you to push your thoughts back into the realm of the positive instead of the negative. A Take-Home Message In this post, we offered many techniques, tools, and resources that can be effective in the battle against depression, anxiety, OCD, and a host of other problems or difficulties. However, as is the case with many treatments, they depend on you (or your client) putting in a lot of effort. We encourage you to give these techniques a real try and allow yourself the luxury of thinking that they could actually work. When we approach a potential solution with the assumption that it will not work, that assumption often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. When we approach a potential solution with an open mind and the belief that it just might work, it has a much better chance of succeeding. So if you are struggling with negative automatic thoughts, please consider these tips and techniques and give them a shot. Likewise, if your client is struggling, encourage them to make the effort, because the payoff can be better than they can imagine. If you are struggling with severe symptoms of depression or suicidal thoughts, please call the following number in your respective country: USA: National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 988; UK: Samaritans hotline at 116 123; The Netherlands: Netherlands Suicide Hotline at 09000767; France: Suicide écoute at 01 45 39 40 00; Germany: Telefonseelsorge at 0800 111 0 111 for Protestants, 0800 111 0 222 for Catholics, and 0800 111 0 333 for children and youth. For a list of other suicide prevention websites, phone numbers, and resources, see this website. Please know that

there are people out there who care and that there are treatments that can help. Please let us know about your experiences with CBT in the comments section. If you've tried it, how did it work for you? Are there any other helpful exercises or techniques that we did not touch on in this piece? We'd love to know your thoughts. We hope you enjoyed this article. For more information, don't forget to download our three Positive CBT Exercises for free. Abramowitz, J. S. (1996). Variants of exposure and response prevention in the treatment of obsessive-compulsive disorder: A meta-analysis. *Behavior Therapy*, 27(4), 583-600. Anderson, J. (2014, June 12). 5 Get-positive techniques from cognitive behavioral therapy. Retrieved from Arntz, A. (2002). Cognitive therapy versus interoceptive exposure as treatment of panic disorder without agoraphobia. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 40(3), 325-341. Bannink, F. (2012). Practicing positive CBT: From reducing distress to building success. John Wiley & Sons. Beck, A. T. (1967).

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