

THOUGHT RECORDS



3 Column Thought record

This tool also originates from the toolset of cognitive therapy and features two advanced versions- five- and seven-column thought records. It applies to each of these tools whose aim is reduction rather than absolute deletion, and the coachee has to keep records both in the coaching session and at home. Its aim is similar to that in cognitive therapy. It often occurs in coaching also that otherwise healthy clients are hindered by the same cognitive distortions and negative automatic thoughts (NAT) when performing certain actions. The goal is to enable the client to identify by himself or herself negative automatic thoughts typical for him or her, and isolate the event, emotions triggered by the latter and the specific negative automatic thought.

Objective description of the situation	Emoion triggered by the event	Negative automatic thought (NAT)
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When can you apply this tool in coaching? It is an optimal tool in the case of clients with a low self- esteem (e.g.: I'm stupid, I could never achieve it anyway; I'm useless) in the Situation stage. As a part of assessing the situation, you can define the mindset typical for the client as a starting base. It is important to teach the client in the session first how to use this tool and complete the template together with a few illustrations, and assign it for homework only afterwards. You can achieve very good results in identifying mindsets even in the time between two sessions.

Furthermore, this tool can prove to be useful in cases where the client's sight is clouded by emotions, e.g. when he or she looks at a problem only from an emotional standpoint.

5 Column Thought record

This is an advanced version of the 3-column thought record.

Case Study (Excerpt)

The coachee had to choose three or four situations when she felt that she did not achieve her objective, or believed that others achieved much more than her. The five columns are labeled as follows: situation, negative automatic thought (NAT), how she felt; what would have been a more reasonable thought and how she would feel then.

Objective description of the situation	Moods, %	Negative automatic thought (NAT)	Alternative thoughts (brain- storming)	Reevaluation of moods, %
Husband is late.	Fear 80% Worry 10% Anger 10%	He had an accident 5%. He does not love me and is being unfaithful 95%.	The meeting was long. Traffic jam. Flat tire. He is buying a surprise.	Fear 70% Worry 10% Anger 10% Optimism 10%



7 Column Thought record

This advanced version of the 5-column thought record helps question the rationality of NATs and seek more reasonable (alternative) thoughts to replace distorted thoughts. Hence, this tool aids the client in revising his or her subjective thoughts, thereby enabling him or her, for example, to boost self-confidence. When applying this tool, it is important that you first complete the template together during the session with the client and then that he or she observes himself or herself between sessions like using the previous tool. In addition to the Situation stage, this tool can be integrated in other phases (Positioning and Alternatives) since it helps restructure the client's mindset and achieve an outcome that is tangible and noticeable even to the environment.

Case Study (Excerpt)

A multinational company was seeking a coach for one of its employees, a young woman who had just completed the two-year-long management training program funded by the company. She was soon to be promoted to a management position. The coach found out as early as during the introductory session that, despite the positive appraisals she had received, she lacked confidence and was riddled self-doubt. As she put it, "I'll never succeed in anything"; "I'm stupid". In the first session, they began discussing the contexts in which these feelings arise, and found that, that they manifested themselves both in her work and private life. Therefore, the coach taught her how to use the 7-column thought record, and they agreed that she would keep a log of the events throughout the coming two weeks when she experienced similar emotions. The following table contains a few events she recorded:



Objective description of the situation	Moods, %	Negative automatic thought (NAT)	Supporting evidence	Opposing evidence	More realistic thought	Reevaluation of moods, %
I cannot cope with capacity planning.	Anxious 80%	I am incapable and not good at anything.	The work is not completed.	I have worked on it a lot. Already have a great deal of information. So far, I have managed every task.	I am not silly; I am on the right track. I have to keep working because it is a complex task. I still have to interview X.Y..	Nervous 30%
Out of the tasks on the language proficiency exam, I am deficient at providing a summary.	Tense 90%	I am stupid.	Already looked up unfamiliar words in the dictionary and I am still not ready with the summary.	I passed the oral exam. I understood everything on it. My teacher is encouraging me.	I am not stupid; I simply have to learn how to do this.	Tense 50%
It is Friday, and I am sitting at home alone. I do not have anyone to go out with.	Lonely 80 %	Nobody needs me.	I am at home alone.	I haven't even tried to seek company. Didn't call.	I was tired from work. I am too exhausted to go anywhere.	Lonely 60%

The two weeks of self-observation and manifestation of a more conscious mindset helped the client approach situations and challenges more calmly. Furthermore, this tool will remain constantly at her disposal; she can resort to it anytime in the future to help herself.

