

Now you have learned what you need to know to complete all seven columns of a Thought Record. Thought Records help you identify, examine, and perhaps change the thinking and beliefs that contribute to your distress. Constructing alternative or balanced thoughts helps free you from automatic thinking patterns that contribute to the difficulties you are having. If you are able to see yourself and situations from a different perspective, it is likely that you will feel better about yourself and your life.

Complete two or three Thought Records per week to help improve your skills in developing alternative and balanced thinking. (There are additional copies of Worksheet 9.2 in the Appendix of this book.) In the future, whenever you get stuck evaluating a thought, you can write down the evidence and a balanced or alternative thought on a Thought Record.

There are three advantages to completing Thought Records regularly. First, we often respond in emotional ways that can be a bit confusing. For example, at first Linda did not realize why she was panicking on the airplane. Thought Records can help you make sense of your emotional reactions, just as they did for Linda. Second, a Thought Record can help you broaden your perspective on troubling situations, so that you react in ways that are consistent with the “big picture” rather than a narrow and possibly distorted view. Third, repeated practice filling out Thought Records actually helps you learn to think more flexibly. After completing 20–40 Thought Records, many people report that they automatically begin to think alternative or balanced thoughts in distressing situations without writing out a Thought Record. When you reach this point, you will experience fewer and fewer situations as truly distressing, and you can spend your energy on solving what problems remain and on enjoying yourself in more situations.