

15-Minute Worry Log — Thinking About Your Thinking

WORRY OFF-RAMP · CHAPTER 1

Name _____

Date _____

1 WHY WE ARE DOING THIS — THINKING ABOUT YOUR THINKING

This is the first exercise in the workbook, and it may be the most important one. Before you can change a thought pattern, you have to be able to see it. Counselors call this metacognition — the ability to observe your own thinking as if from the outside, rather than being swept along inside it.

Worry, like a physical compulsion, tends to run on autopilot. Most people have been worrying the same way for so long that the content and the triggers feel invisible — just "the way things are." This exercise is designed to interrupt that autopilot for fifteen minutes and help you begin to see what your mind actually does: what it worries about, how it worries, and what tends to set it off.

You are not doing this to fix anything today. The goal is simply to look. Whatever you write will be useful information — for you and for your counselor.

2 THE WRITING TASK

Set a timer for fifteen minutes. Write freely about whatever is worrying you or making you anxious right now. Do not edit for spelling or grammar — just write. If you run out of things to say, keep the pen moving: write "I don't know what else to write" until something else surfaces.

If fifteen minutes feels like too much today, choose one of these:

☐ **Option A — Full session**

Write for the full fifteen minutes.

☐ **Option B — Shortened session**

Write for eight minutes, then stop.

☐ **Option C — One worry**

Write about just one worry for as long as feels right.

My plan today

Writing space

There is no wrong way to do this. The goal is to get it out of your head and onto the page so you can begin to see it.

[illegible]

3 PLAN FOR OBSTACLES — DO THIS BEFORE YOU CLOSE THE WORKBOOK

People follow through more consistently when they anticipate barriers in advance. Take one minute to answer:

What might get in the way of doing this exercise? (e.g., "I'll feel silly," "I won't have time," "I'll forget")

Likely obstacle

My backup plan

If that happens, what is the smallest version of this exercise I am still willing to do?

Even writing one sentence still counts. It is the habit of observing your thinking that matters, not the length.

4 AFTER YOU HAVE WRITTEN — READ AND NOTICE

After your writing time is up, read back what you wrote. You are now doing something powerful: you are looking at your own thinking from the outside. This is metacognition in action.

As you read, notice and note the following:

Themes

What topics or worries came up most?

Triggers

What thoughts, people, feelings, or situations seem to set off your anxiety?

Surprises

Was there anything you wrote that surprised you, or that you didn't realize you were carrying?

— STEP FIVE

What to Bring to Your Next Session

This log is not just a private exercise — it is the starting point for your work together with your counselor. Bring what you wrote (or your notes above) to your next session. Your counselor will use this to:

- ✓ Help you identify your most significant worry themes and triggers.
- ✓ Begin building your exposure hierarchy.
- ✓ Practice noticing the difference between a thought and a fact — the core skill of cognitive restructuring.