5-Column Thought Record

The short version for bad days. Catch the thought, name the feeling, test it, re-rate. If your mood improves even a little, the record did its job.

1. Situation What happened? Where, when, who.	**2. Automatic thought** The exact sentence or image. Belief 0–100%.	**3. Emotion** Name it. Intensity 0–100%.	**4. Balanced response** Which distortion? What is a more accurate thought?	**5. Outcome** Re-rate belief and emotion. What will you do now?

How to use it, with one worked example

This layout follows the shorter Beck-style thought record (situation, automatic thought, emotion, response, outcome). Common distortions to name in column 4: all-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing, mind reading, labeling, mental filter, overgeneralization, personalization, should statements, emotional reasoning, discounting the positive.

Worked example (an illustration, not a real client)

1. Situation What happened? Where, when, who.	**2. Automatic thought** The exact sentence or image. Belief 0–100%.	**3. Emotion** Name it. Intensity 0–100%.	**4. Balanced response** Which distortion? What is a more accurate thought?	**5. Outcome** Re-rate belief and emotion. What will you do now?
Sunday evening. Friend hasn't replied to my message for two days.	"She's annoyed with me." Belief 75%	Hurt 60% Anxious 50%	Mind reading. She told me she's on a work trip this week; she replied slowly last time too. More accurate: "She's busy. I don't know she's annoyed."	Belief 30%. Hurt 25%. I'll leave it until Wednesday, then ask directly.

Questions that help with column 4

- What is the evidence that this thought is true? What is the evidence that it is not?
- Is there another way to explain what happened?
- What is the worst that could realistically happen, the best, and the most likely? Could I cope with the worst?
- What would I tell a friend who had this thought in this situation?
- What happens if I keep believing this thought, and what could happen if I changed it?

Prefer your phone? The same columns, guided, in Conviction for iPhone.

The free Thought Record walks you through each column and keeps your records encrypted on your iPhone, so you can see when the same hot thought comes back. Needs an iPhone 15 Pro or later (Apple Intelligence).
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