Everyday CBT

Complete reading edition

This draft introduces cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) skills to adults with no psychology background. Diagnosis, individual treatment and professional training are outside its scope. A practitioner review and learner pilot are still pending.

Read all twelve chapters, including feedback, recall answers and worked lab responses. For recorded narration and interactive decisions, open a chapter from the course home.

Chapters

1. One event, several experiences
2. How a pattern keeps going
3. Catching the thought
4. Making room for another interpretation
5. Moving before motivation arrives
6. Solving what can be solved
7. Turning a belief into a question
8. Approaching what feels difficult
9. When thinking becomes a loop
10. The rules underneath
11. Working with a complicated situation
12. Becoming your own investigator

Chapter 1

One event, several experiences

The situation

Alex, Nia, and Jules meet at a Saturday drawing group. One afternoon the organiser writes: “We need to cancel next week.” There is no explanation in the message.

Alex thinks, “Maybe hardly anyone wanted to come,” feels disappointed, and leaves the group chat unopened. Nia thinks, “I have a free afternoon,” feels relieved, and plans some rest. Jules thinks, “Did I cause a problem?” and sends an apologetic message.

Everyone reads the same message. Their thoughts, feelings and actions differ. We do not yet know why the organiser cancelled. Begin by describing each person’s experience without deciding whose reaction is justified.

Start with what is known

An observation describes what happened. An interpretation suggests what it means. Which statement can you verify directly from the organiser’s message?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **The organiser sent a message cancelling next week’s group.**
   ▼ Feedback on option A

   This describes something that could be checked in the message. It leaves the organiser’s reasons open.

B. **The organiser no longer likes the group.**
   ▼ Feedback on option B

   This is a possible explanation, but the message does not establish it. Treat it as an interpretation to examine.

C. **Jules must have done something wrong.**

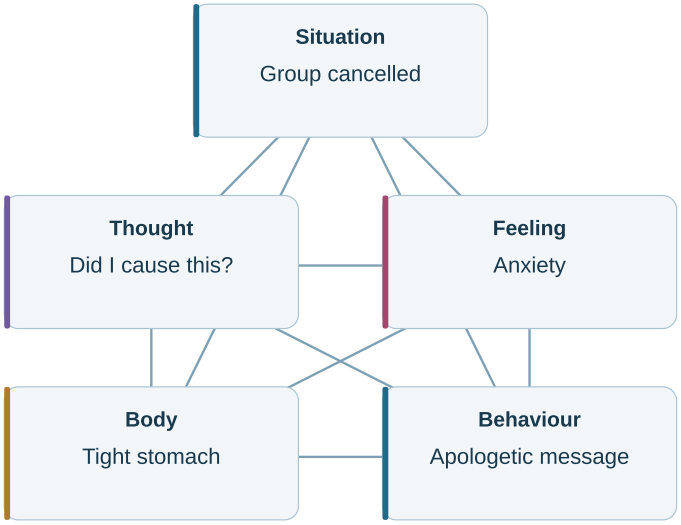
▼ Feedback on option C

This is Jules's worry presented as a fact. Their distress matters, but it does not establish responsibility.

Five parts, one experience

A situation is a specific event or circumstance. A thought is an interpretation, prediction, memory, or image. An emotion is a feeling such as sadness or anxiety. Bodily sensations include a tight stomach or warmth in the face. Behaviour is what a person does, including withdrawing or asking a question.

These parts influence one another. A racing heart can make a situation feel threatening; leaving can bring relief and change what happens next. The map is a working description, not proof that a thought caused every feeling. Sleep, pain, money, relationships, and other circumstances also matter.



Jules's five-part map

Make the map specific

"My week was awful" is too broad to investigate. "At three o'clock I read the cancellation message" gives us a moment to examine. "I feel rejected" can contain both an emotion and an interpretation: sadness is the feeling; "they do not want me there" is the meaning.

A map is a hypothesis you can correct. Ask what the person noticed rather than assigning thoughts to them. The first useful change may be practical: checking whether the session will be rescheduled, arranging rest, or asking for information.



Describe before explaining

A map with room for uncertainty

Jules writes: Situation: the group was cancelled. Thought: “My request for different materials annoyed the organiser.” Feeling: anxiety. Body: tight stomach. Behaviour: sending an apology before finding out why.

Jules changes “I caused the cancellation” to “I am predicting that my request caused it.” That small wording change preserves the concern while acknowledging uncertainty. It does not require Jules to feel calm or believe that everything is fine.

Try it in another setting

A colleague walks past without saying hello. You feel hurt. Which next description gives you the most useful starting point?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **They deliberately ignored me because they dislike me.**
   ▼ Feedback on option A

This combines an observation with an untested intention. You can record the possibility without treating it as established.

B. **They walked past; I thought they were avoiding me; I felt hurt and stopped approaching them.**

▼ Feedback on option B

This separates the event, interpretation, feeling, and action. You can now examine what is known and what could be checked.

C. **I should not feel hurt because it is probably nothing.**

▼ Feedback on option C

This dismisses the feeling and replaces one uncertain explanation with another. Understanding comes before judging the reaction.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

What distinguishes a thought from an emotion?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

A thought carries meaning, such as “I am unwanted.” An emotion names a feeling, such as sadness. Both can be present in the same moment.

Why is a five-part map provisional?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

It records what is currently understood. The person may remember more, clarify their meaning, or learn new facts. It does not capture every cause.

Lab: map one moment

Use Jules's cancellation story, or choose a mild everyday situation you are comfortable considering. Keep to one moment. Personal disclosure is optional.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What happened that another person could observe?
2. What thought or image appeared?
3. Which feelings and bodily sensations were present?
4. What did the person do next?
5. What is known, and what remains an interpretation?

▼ Worked response

Event — The organiser cancelled next week's group and gave no reason.

Thought — Jules wondered whether their request had caused it.

Feeling and body — Jules felt anxious and noticed a tight stomach.

Action — Jules sent an apology.

Known and unknown — The cancellation is confirmed. The reason is unknown.

Compare your event and thought fields. Which words describe what the message confirms? Which words describe Jules's explanation?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

The five-part map is a teaching aid for describing connections. A brief fictional case can illustrate a working explanation and leave other causes open.

- NHS: cognitive behavioural therapy
- CCI: depression resources — thinking and feeling

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 2

How a pattern keeps going

The situation

Alex volunteers to update the drawing group's non-critical signup list. They check the dates, then check again. For a moment the worry eases. A few minutes later Alex thinks, "What if I missed something?"

After the sixth check, the list is unchanged but Alex has missed a planned break. "I only finished because I kept checking," Alex concludes. We need to examine what each check achieves now and what it might make harder later.

Look at the consequence

What information would best help explain the repeated checking?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Whether Alex is a perfectionist by nature.**

▼ Feedback on option A

A label may sound explanatory but does not show how this particular pattern works. Look at triggers and consequences.

B. **What happens to the worry immediately after checking, and when doubt returns.**

▼ Feedback on option B

This can reveal a short-term reward and a longer-term cost. The explanation remains a hypothesis to test.

C. **Whether the list is perfectly accurate.**

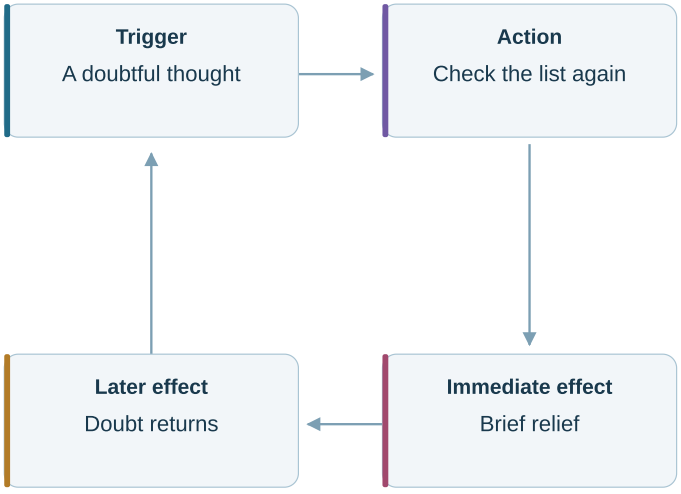
▼ Feedback on option C

Accuracy matters, but it cannot by itself explain why another check feels necessary after no changes. Both task demands and consequences matter.

Relief can strengthen a response

When a behaviour removes something unpleasant, a person may become more likely to repeat it. Psychologists call this negative reinforcement. “Negative” means removal here; it is not a judgment about the person.

Alex’s check briefly removes doubt. The next time doubt appears, another check seems attractive. This does not mean all checking is unhelpful: a proportionate check can prevent an actual error. The question is the function and cost of the extra checks in this context.



A possible checking loop

Choose a point of influence

A maintenance cycle describes what may keep a current difficulty going. It is different from a life history explaining how the difficulty began. Several influences can operate at once.

Alex could agree a clear, ordinary checking standard with the organiser, then observe what happens after following it. The aim is to learn, not to ban checking everywhere. Checking instructions for a medical, legal, or safety-critical task would require the proper standards for that task.



Useful checking or repeated relief?

Alex’s first working hypothesis

Alex records three occasions: after a check, worry falls briefly; later it returns despite no new information. That pattern fits the idea that relief helps maintain the repetition. It does not prove the explanation is complete.

For this ordinary signup list, Alex and the organiser agree to check names against the source once and review changed entries. Alex follows that plan, then records the outcome. If the standard misses important errors, they revise the process rather than declaring the experiment a personal failure.

A different loop

Nia repeatedly asks a friend whether a short message sounded rude. The reassurance lasts only minutes. What would best clarify the pattern?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Ask the friend to promise the message could not offend anyone.**

▼ Feedback on option A

A stronger promise might bring relief but cannot guarantee every response. It may leave the same need for reassurance in place.

B. **Decide that asking for support is always a problem.**

▼ Feedback on option B

Support can be valuable. The relevant question is whether repeated reassurance is providing new information or mainly brief relief.

C. **Record the trigger, reassurance, immediate relief, and return of doubt.**

▼ Feedback on option C

This distinguishes a possible maintenance loop from a blanket judgment about support. It also leaves room for a practical communication problem.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

What does negative reinforcement mean here?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

A behaviour becomes more likely because it removes something unpleasant, such as doubt. It does not mean punishment.

How does a maintenance explanation differ from an origin story?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

It focuses on present triggers and consequences that may sustain a pattern, even when the pattern began for other reasons.

Lab: follow the loop

Use Alex’s signup list. Describe a loop with four parts, then identify one small point that could be investigated.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What starts the sequence?
2. What does Alex do?
3. What changes immediately?
4. What happens later, including any cost?
5. What task-appropriate change could be tested?

▼ Worked response

Trigger — Alex doubts whether an entry is correct.

Action — Alex checks the unchanged list again.

Immediate effect — Doubt briefly eases.

Later effect — The doubt returns and Alex misses a break.

Possible test — Agree which checks this signup list needs, then see whether following that standard catches important errors.

Compare your immediate and later effects. How could brief relief make another check seem useful even when the list stays the same?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

This example illustrates a possible reinforcement process. Repetitive checking can have different functions; this course does not assess or treat compulsive symptoms.

- CCI: perfectionism — what keeps it going?
- CCI: social anxiety — safety behaviours

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 3

Catching the thought

The situation

Jules notices a wrong date on a poster they helped make. Someone quietly points it out. Jules says, “No problem,” then stays silent for the rest of the session.

Later Jules remembers a sudden image: everyone looking at the poster and shaking their heads. The words were, “I always let people down.” The visible mistake was small; the personal meaning was much larger.

Ask about the moment

Which question is most likely to uncover the thought linked to Jules’s change in mood?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **When you noticed the date, what went through your mind, including any image?**

▼ Feedback on option A

This invites Jules’s own recollection at the specific moment, without supplying a conclusion.

B. **You knew they all disliked the poster, didn’t you?**

▼ Feedback on option B

This leads Jules toward an interpretation the questioner has invented. The person’s actual meaning could be different.

C. **Why are you always so hard on yourself?**

▼ Feedback on option C

This generalises and may sound blaming. A specific moment is easier to investigate than a judgment about character.

A thought can arrive as a picture

Automatic thoughts often arrive quickly, before someone deliberately reasons through a situation. They can be words, images, or a sense of what will happen. “Everyone judging the poster” is an image carrying the prediction “They see me as unreliable.”

To notice a thought, return to a manageable moment: what happened, when did the feeling shift, and what did it seem to mean? If nothing comes to mind, leave the space open. You do not have to invent a thought to make the model fit.

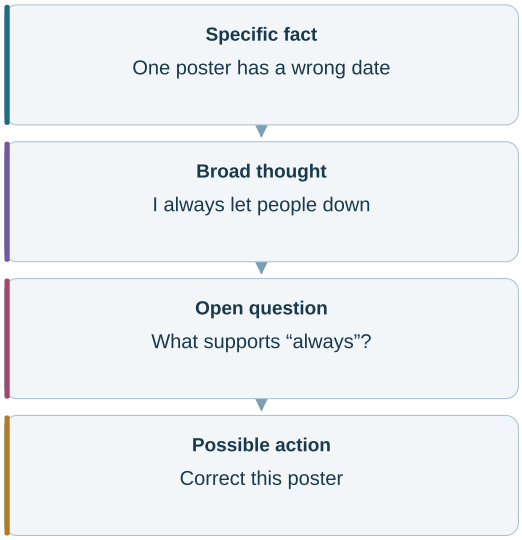


From a moment to its meaning

Name the meaning without endorsing it

“I am a failure” is a thought, not a diagnosis or a fact established by feeling ashamed. Recording “I had the thought that I am a failure” can help distinguish the experience from the conclusion.

Thinking patterns such as overgeneralising or mind-reading can be useful descriptions. They are not a checklist for proving someone irrational. Start with the exact thought, the context, and the evidence. A real mistake can coexist with a much broader conclusion that needs checking.



Keep the scale of the claim visible

A more precise record

Jules initially writes “I felt useless.” They clarify the feeling as shame and the thought as “If I make a visible mistake, people cannot rely on me.” Their shoulders tense, and they stop offering help.

Jules can now address two things: correcting the date and examining the prediction about reliability. The map does not erase the mistake. It prevents one error from silently becoming a complete verdict on their worth.

Find the thought

Alex says, “I felt anxious before the group because I pictured being unable to speak.” Which part is the automatic thought?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **The word anxious.**

▼ Feedback on option A

Anxious names an emotion. It is useful information, but it does not describe the prediction or image.

B. **The image of being unable to speak.**

▼ Feedback on option B

An image can carry a prediction just as words can. Ask what Alex believed the image meant or would lead to.

C. **The fact that Alex attended the group.**

▼ Feedback on option C

Attending is behaviour. It may be relevant to the map, but it is not the image Alex described.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

Must an automatic thought be a sentence?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

No. It can appear as an image, memory, or prediction. Ask what it means to the person.

What should you do if no thought is recalled?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

Record what is known and leave uncertainty. Do not manufacture a thought or insist that every bodily reaction has a clear verbal cause.

Lab: slow down one moment

Use Jules's poster story. Find the smallest specific moment at which the emotion changed.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What was happening just before the feeling shifted?

2. What words or image appeared?
3. What did that thought imply about Jules or the situation?
4. Which part is a feeling, and which part is a conclusion?
5. What practical issue still needs attention?

▼ Worked response

Moment — Someone points out the wrong date on the poster.

Image — Jules pictures others shaking their heads.

Meaning — “People cannot rely on me.”

Feeling and conclusion — Shame is the feeling. Being unreliable is the conclusion Jules draws.

Practical issue — The poster date still needs correcting.

Compare your feeling and conclusion fields. Which describes Jules’s experience, and which claim goes beyond the facts of the poster error?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Thought monitoring is an introductory observation skill. It is not an instruction to monitor every thought or analyse distress indefinitely.

- CCI: depression resources — automatic thoughts and ABC analysis
- NHS: reframing unhelpful thoughts

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 4

Making room for another interpretation

The situation

Jules sends Alex a message asking whether a drawing looks unfinished. Six hours pass without a reply. Jules thinks, “Alex is annoyed with me for asking,” and begins drafting an apology.

There has been no argument. Alex sometimes replies late, but yesterday answered another question quickly. Jules feels hurt and uncertain. We have some relevant information and several missing pieces.

Choose a fair alternative

Which statement best preserves what Jules knows and does not know?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Alex definitely is not annoyed; everything is fine.**

▼ Feedback on option A

That is reassuring, but still claims access to Alex’s mind. A balanced thought should fit the evidence, including uncertainty.

B. **Six hours proves Alex is annoyed.**

▼ Feedback on option B

A delay is observable; the reason is not established. The conclusion is stronger than the available evidence.

C. **Alex has not replied. They may be busy or annoyed; I do not yet know why.**

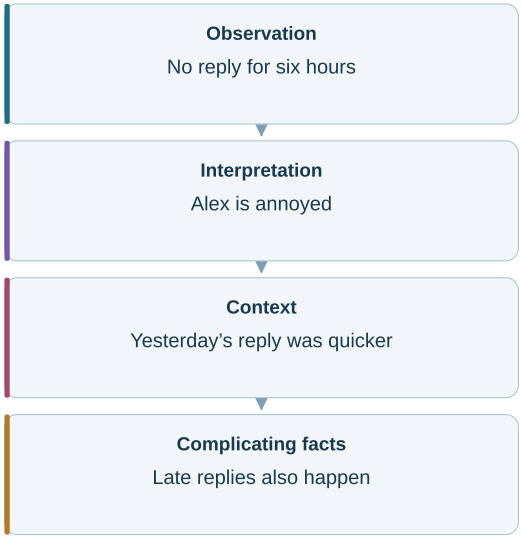
▼ Feedback on option C

This recognises the delay and the uncertainty without demanding a positive conclusion. Jules can choose a practical next step.

Evidence is more than a feeling

A thought record separates the event, the thought, the feeling, evidence supporting the thought, evidence that complicates it, and a balanced response. The aim is a fair account, not winning an argument against yourself.

Jules's feeling is evidence that the situation matters to Jules. It is not direct evidence of Alex's intention. A previous argument would be relevant evidence; imagining a frown is not an observed response. Evidence may support part of a thought without supporting its strongest version.



Separate the layers

A balanced response can remain uncomfortable

A balanced response should be believable and specific. "I cannot know the reason from the delay alone" may fit better than "Nobody is ever annoyed with me." It can include a coping statement: "If there is a disagreement, I can ask about it."

After reviewing the thought, Jules can choose whether an ordinary follow-up is needed. Repeatedly rewriting a record to reach certainty can become another loop. Set a reasonable stopping point and return to the activity you intended to do.



A short thought record

Jules writes a balanced response

Jules thinks Alex is annoyed by the request. Alex replied faster yesterday. That is a change in timing and leaves the reason unknown. Alex has replied late before, there has been no argument, and Jules does not know Alex's schedule today.

Jules writes, "The delay does not tell me why. If I need an answer by tomorrow, I can say when I need it." Jules still feels some uncertainty. They decide to work on another part of the drawing instead of sending several apologetic messages.

When the evidence changes

Alex later says, "I was irritated by the repeated requests, and I was busy." How should Jules update the record?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Acknowledge the irritation and discuss a clearer way to ask, without turning it into "Alex rejects me."**
   ▼ Feedback on option A

   New evidence should change the account. A specific disagreement can call for communication without establishing a global judgment.

B. **Ignore the message because CBT means choosing the positive explanation.**

▼ Feedback on option B

A fair account must include unwelcome evidence. CBT skills should not require denying a real disagreement.

C. **Conclude that every future delayed reply means irritation.**

▼ Feedback on option C

One clarified event does not settle the meaning of every future delay. Context still matters.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

What makes a balanced thought different from reassurance?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

It fits the available evidence and admits what is unknown. It does not guarantee the preferred outcome.

What if the difficult interpretation is partly supported?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

Update it, keep the claim specific, and consider problem-solving or communication. A real problem does not justify every broader conclusion.

Lab: write a short thought record

Use Jules’s unanswered message. Write an initial response before looking at the example.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. Specific event and initial thought
2. Feeling and optional intensity in your own terms
3. Facts that directly support the thought, if any
4. Facts that complicate it or remain unknown
5. A balanced response and a practical next step

▼ Worked response

Event and thought — Alex has not replied for six hours. Jules thinks Alex is annoyed.

Feeling — Jules feels hurt and uncertain.

Supporting facts — There is no direct evidence of annoyance from the delay. Yesterday's faster reply is timing information.

Other facts and unknowns — Alex sometimes replies late. Today's schedule and the reason for the delay are unknown.

Balanced response and action — "I don't know why Alex hasn't replied. If I need an answer by tomorrow, I can say so in one follow-up."

Compare your evidence and response fields. Does your response leave Alex's reason open while naming a next step that would help with the drawing?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Thought records are one CBT tool. They are not appropriate for resolving every difficulty, and a plausible alternative is not proof of what another person thinks.

- NHS: reframing unhelpful thoughts
- CCI: depression resources — detective work and balanced thoughts

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 5

Moving before motivation arrives

The situation

Nia’s shifts have been tiring. She stops sketching after work and turns down a short walk with Jules. Rest helps on some evenings, but over two weeks her days contain fewer things she enjoys or values.

Nia keeps thinking, “I will start again when I feel motivated.” The days become more empty, and starting feels harder. She wants to investigate this without treating exhaustion as a character flaw.

Make a manageable start

Which plan gives Nia the clearest, most realistic first experiment?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Fill every evening with activities so there is no time to feel low.**

▼ Feedback on option A

A crowded schedule may ignore exhaustion and be difficult to sustain. More activity is not automatically better.

B. **Try ten minutes of sketching after a suitable shift, with a smaller version if energy is low.**

▼ Feedback on option B

This specifies a meaningful activity and respects capacity. Nia can observe what follows without needing motivation to arrive first.

C. **Wait until she is certain the activity will improve her mood.**

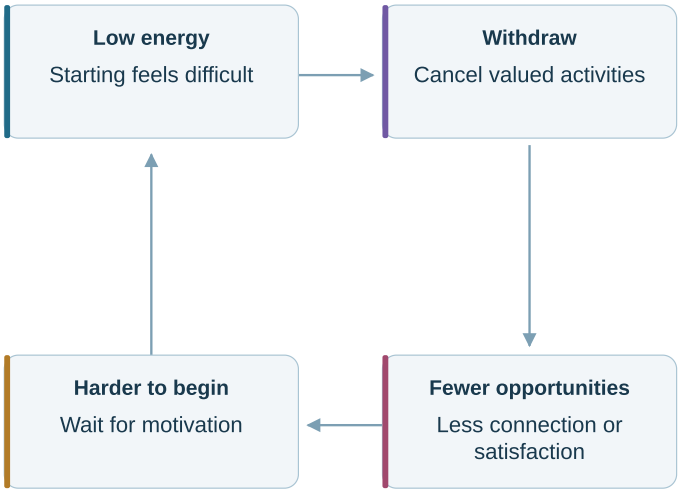
▼ Feedback on option C

That certainty is unavailable beforehand. A small, feasible experiment can provide information.

Action can create an opportunity

Behavioural activation involves noticing patterns of activity and their consequences, then planning manageable actions that may restore contact with meaningful or rewarding parts of life. Motivation sometimes follows action; it does not always arrive first.

Activities can offer connection, enjoyment, accomplishment, care, or rest. Those experiences may matter even if mood does not improve immediately. Activity planning must fit physical health, responsibilities, resources, and the person's preferences.

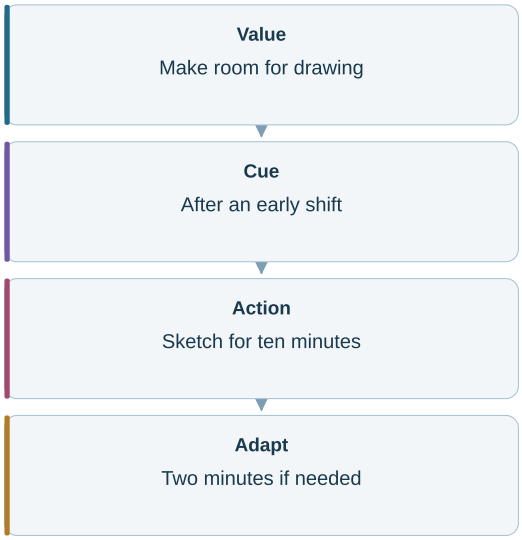


A possible withdrawal cycle

Plan an action you can actually observe

"Be more active" is vague. "After Tuesday's early shift, put paper on the table and sketch for ten minutes" specifies a cue and a doable action. A two-minute version can help Nia start without making it an all-or-nothing test.

Record what happened before drawing a conclusion. Did the task fit the available energy? Did it offer any interest or accomplishment? Did transport, pain, cost, or another barrier intervene? Review the plan rather than judging the person.



A plan that fits a real day

A mixed result is still information

Nia sketches for six minutes. Her mood does not noticeably change, but she enjoys choosing a colour and wants to finish the drawing another day. She also notices that she had planned it too close to a late shift.

Nia keeps the activity, moves it to a more suitable evening, and protects rest after late shifts. The experiment supports a narrower conclusion than “drawing cures low mood”: a small creative activity can be feasible and worthwhile on some days.

Review the plan fairly

Jules plans a walk but rain and a care commitment prevent it. What is the most useful review?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **The plan proves Jules lacks commitment.**

▼ Feedback on option A

This converts practical barriers into a global judgment and provides little guidance for the next attempt.

B. **Double the length of tomorrow’s walk as compensation.**

▼ Feedback on option B

An automatic increase may make the next plan less feasible. There is no exercise debt to repay.

C. **Identify the barriers and choose a smaller or differently timed activity that serves the same purpose.**

▼ Feedback on option C

This treats the outcome as information. It preserves the purpose while adapting to circumstances.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

Why not wait for motivation every time?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

A small planned action can create opportunities for interest or connection that waiting may not provide. It is an experiment, not a guarantee.

What counts as a useful outcome besides improved mood?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

Feasibility, connection, satisfaction, accomplishment, or learning about barriers. Rest can also be a meaningful planned action.

Lab: plan one meaningful activity

Use Nia’s situation or an optional mild everyday example. Choose something affordable, accessible, and compatible with health and responsibilities.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What purpose would the activity serve?
2. What small action, when and where?
3. What is the smaller version?
4. What barrier might occur, and how could the plan adapt?
5. Use Nia’s six-minute result or record your own if you tried an activity. What happened, and what would you change?

▼ Worked response

Purpose — Make room for creativity.

Plan — Sketch at home for ten minutes after an early shift.

Smaller version — Sketch for two minutes if energy is low.

Barrier and adaptation — Protect rest after late shifts. Move drawing to a more suitable evening.

Result and revision — Nia sketched for six minutes and enjoyed choosing a colour. Her mood stayed the same. She plans to change the timing.

Compare your purpose and result fields. What made the activity worthwhile for Nia, and what did the result suggest changing?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Behavioural activation is an established treatment approach when delivered appropriately. This brief activity-planning exercise is introductory education; it is not an evaluated treatment programme.

- CCI: depression resources — behavioural strategies and activity scheduling
- NICE NG222: treatment options and individual needs

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 6

Solving what can be solved

The situation

Alex has agreed to design a poster, update a signup list, and collect supplies before Saturday. There are only two free evenings. “What if everyone thinks I am unreliable?” keeps running through their mind.

There is a practical capacity problem as well as a prediction about other people’s reactions. Arguing with the prediction will not create another evening. Alex needs to decide what can change.

Define the problem

Which problem statement is specific enough to work on?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Three tasks need doing before Saturday, and I have time for about two.**
   ▼ Feedback on option A

   This identifies a current gap and makes possible solutions visible: change scope, timing, or who does the work.

B. **I am incapable of managing my life.**
   ▼ Feedback on option B

   This global judgment does not identify a changeable task. It may be a thought worth examining separately.

C. **What if I disappoint everyone forever?**
   ▼ Feedback on option C

This predicts a broad future outcome. A useful immediate problem statement focuses on the current situation.

Separate a current problem from a hypothetical future

A practical problem has a present situation and some possible action. A hypothetical worry asks what might happen, often without a decision that can be made now. The same concern can contain both.

Alex can estimate the work and contact the organiser. Alex cannot guarantee nobody will ever feel disappointed. Useful problem-solving addresses the actionable part, then leaves room for the uncertainty that remains.



Two questions need different responses

Generate options before choosing

Define the goal, list possible approaches, consider costs and feasibility, choose a step, and set a review point. Options can include asking for help, reducing scope, delaying a task, or deciding that a task is not needed.

Problem-solving is not a demand to solve structural problems alone. Some situations require resources, specialist advice, or collective action. A useful step can be identifying who has the authority or support to help.



A practical problem-solving sequence

Alex makes a decision with incomplete certainty

Alex estimates the poster at one evening, the list at half an evening, and the supplies trip at another. Options include a simpler poster, another volunteer collecting supplies, or a later deadline.

Alex asks the organiser to prioritise. They agree on the simpler poster and share the collection task. Alex still worries about seeming difficult. The practical issue is better specified even though the feeling has not disappeared.

Choose the next tool

Nia has sent a complete application and cannot change it before next week’s response. She keeps asking, “What if I am rejected?” What fits now?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Rewrite the unavailable application in her mind until she feels certain.**
▼ Feedback on option A

This cannot change the submitted application and may extend the loop without producing a decision.

B. **Check once whether a real next step is available, then practise returning attention while accepting the outcome is unknown.**

▼ Feedback on option B

This distinguishes useful preparation from repeated attempts to obtain certainty. A planned review point may help.

C. **Assume rejection is impossible because there is nothing more to do.**

▼ Feedback on option C

Lack of an action does not guarantee a preferred result. The skill is making room for uncertainty, not denying it.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

What makes a problem statement workable?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

It identifies a specific current situation and a realistic goal, rather than judging the whole person.

Can a practical solution leave anxiety behind?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

Yes. A useful action can address the situation while uncertainty or emotion remains. Feeling calm is not a prerequisite for every decision.

Lab: choose a practical next step

Use Alex’s three tasks. Keep the problem within the person’s influence while recognising where help is needed.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. State the current problem without a character judgment
2. Describe a realistic goal
3. List at least three options
4. Compare effort, resources, consequences, and fairness
5. Choose a step, who will act, and a review point

▼ Worked response

Problem — Three jobs need doing before Saturday and Alex has two free evenings.

Goal — Finish the essential jobs in the time available.

Options — Simplify the poster, share the supplies trip or renegotiate timing.

Comparison — A simpler poster saves time. Sharing the trip depends on another volunteer. A later deadline depends on the organiser.

Step and review — Ask the organiser to set priorities today, then check whether the agreed jobs fit the two evenings.

Compare your chosen step and review point. What would you look for to decide whether the new plan actually fits two evenings?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Structured problem-solving is a general skill. Legal, financial, employment, or safeguarding problems may require qualified advice beyond the scope of an introductory course.

- CCI: worry and rumination — problem-solving
- CCI: depression resources — problem solving

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 7

Turning a belief into a question

The situation

Jules is unsure which paper size the group needs. “If I ask, the organiser will think I am incompetent,” they predict. Guessing would hide the uncertainty but might produce the wrong order.

Jules wants to investigate the prediction in an ordinary, low-stakes interaction. The question needs to be clear enough that the result can teach them something.

Make the prediction observable

Which prediction about the organiser’s response could Jules check by listening to the words or observing the actions that follow?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **The organiser will secretly judge me.**
▼ Feedback on option A

A private judgment cannot be directly observed in this interaction. Choose indicators while recognising that they cannot reveal every hidden thought.

B. **Asking will feel completely comfortable.**
▼ Feedback on option B

Jules could observe their own feelings, but this prediction would tell them about comfort and leave the question about the organiser’s response open.

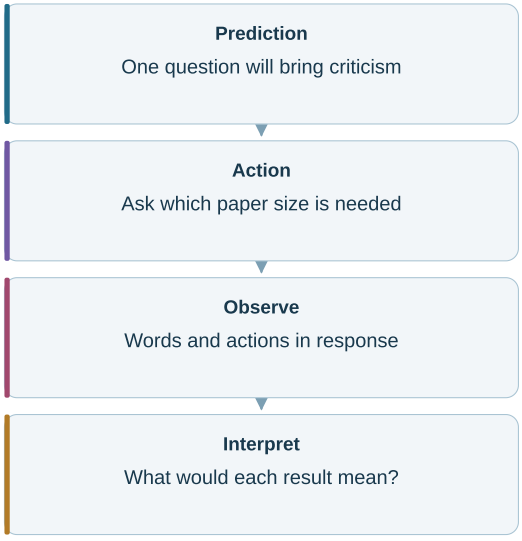
C. **If I ask one clear question, the organiser will refuse to answer or explicitly criticise me for asking.**
▼ Feedback on option C

This identifies observable responses. It is a narrower claim than knowing what the organiser privately thinks.

An experiment asks a question

A behavioural experiment compares a prediction with what happens after an action. Specify the situation, the prediction, what you will do, what you will observe, and how different outcomes could be interpreted.

Choose an ordinary, ethical, low-stakes action. Do not manufacture conflict, put someone at risk, or use an experiment to test a dangerous situation. The aim is useful information rather than proving bravery or forcing a preferred result.



Before the experiment

Mixed outcomes need careful interpretation

The organiser might answer warmly, answer briefly, ask Jules to check the written instructions, or criticise the repeated question. Each result supports a different, limited conclusion.

A brief answer does not prove warmth or hostility. One friendly interaction does not establish that criticism can never happen. If an awkward result occurs, examine what it shows about the specific situation and how Jules coped. Avoid turning one trial into a verdict on the person.



After the experiment

Jules gets a brief answer

Jules asks, “For Saturday’s drawings, should I order A3 or A4?” The organiser replies, “A3, thanks,” then returns to another task. No criticism occurs. Jules still feels tense.

The observable prediction of refusal or explicit criticism was not supported in this trial. Jules cannot conclude that the organiser had no private judgment. They learn that asking a clear question was possible while anxious and obtained the information they needed.

Review an awkward outcome

In another experiment, a colleague says, “Please check the instructions first next time.” What is the fairest conclusion?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **The response identifies a specific expectation; examine whether it was reasonable and what to do next.**

▼ Feedback on option A

This accepts the actual feedback without generalising to “I am incompetent.” The experiment can inform a practical adjustment.

B. **The experiment failed, so there is nothing to learn.**

▼ Feedback on option B

An unwelcome result can still provide useful information about the situation, the prediction, and possible responses.

C. **This proves every request for clarification will be rejected.**

▼ Feedback on option C

One response cannot establish what every person will do in every context. Keep the conclusion at the scale of the evidence.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

Why specify an observable prediction?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

It makes comparison possible and reduces the temptation to interpret any outcome as proof of a hidden judgment.

Does a useful experiment have to disconfirm the prediction?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

No. Supporting or mixed evidence can inform an updated understanding, a practical change, or a different question.

Lab: design a fair test

Use Jules's paper order. You can design the experiment without carrying it out. If choosing your own example, keep it ordinary, voluntary, and safe.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What specific prediction will you investigate?
2. What action, setting, and time?
3. What observations would support or complicate the prediction?
4. What could make the result hard to interpret?
5. If you are planning only, use the reply "A3, thanks." Which part of the prediction fits this reply, what remains unknown, and what would you revise?

▼ Worked response

Prediction — The organiser will refuse to answer or criticise Jules for asking.

Action — Ask once whether the group needs A3 or A4 paper.

Observations — Record the answer or refusal and any explicit words of criticism.

Limit — The organiser's private thoughts are unknown.

Example result — The organiser says "A3, thanks." Jules receives an answer without explicit criticism. A future reply may be different.

Compare your prediction and result. Which part of the predicted response occurred, and what could the reply never tell you about the organiser's private opinion?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Behavioural experiments are used across CBT approaches. This lesson illustrates the reasoning process; individual experiments may need adaptation and professional guidance.

- CCI: social anxiety — behavioural experiments
- CCI: perfectionism — testing beliefs

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 8

Approaching what feels difficult

The situation

Alex wants to talk to new people at the drawing group. They arrive late, look busy with their phone, and leave before the break. This lowers the immediate chance of an awkward greeting, but also limits the conversations they want.

Alex does not want to deliver a speech. They want a manageable way to practise an ordinary greeting in a group they have chosen to attend.

Choose a first step

Which first step gives Alex a manageable way to practise the greeting they want to try?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Give an unprepared speech to everyone immediately.**

▼ Feedback on option A

A much larger task may not fit the goal or readiness. A useful step can be small and agreed voluntarily.

B. **Arrive at the usual time and say hello to one familiar person, then review the experience.**

▼ Feedback on option B

This creates a manageable opportunity for learning and connection. It can be adjusted if it does not fit.

C. **Keep avoiding the break until all anxiety has disappeared.**

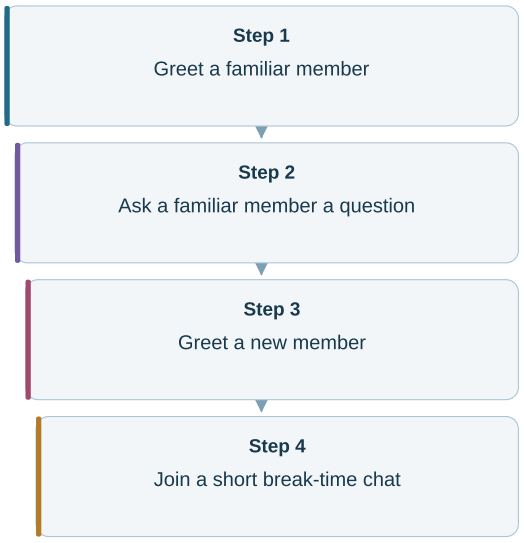
▼ Feedback on option C

Waiting for no anxiety may leave the same avoidance pattern in place. Alex can consider a manageable step with some discomfort.

Avoidance changes what you can learn

Avoidance can bring short-term relief while reducing opportunities to discover how a situation unfolds or how a person can cope. This is one reason gradual approach is used in CBT for some fears.

Avoiding actual danger can be sensible. A safe everyday social situation is different from harassment, unsafe conditions, or an activity that conflicts with medical advice. Choose the context carefully and keep the person in control.

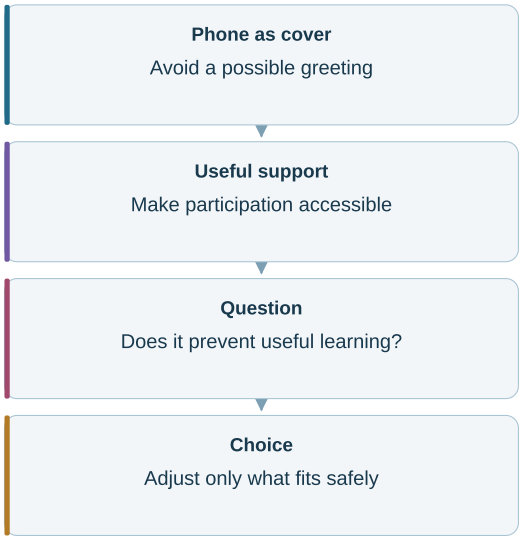


A voluntary approach ladder

Review learning, not a courage score

A ladder divides a chosen goal into steps that differ in difficulty. The order is personal, not a ranking imposed by someone else. Repeating, adjusting, or seeking support can be appropriate.

Safety behaviours are actions intended to prevent a feared outcome that may also make it harder to discover what happens without them. Hiding behind a phone may serve that function for Alex. Disability aids, necessary accommodations, and genuine safety precautions should not be removed on that basis. Ask about the function before making changes.



What is this action doing?

Alex tries one greeting

Alex chooses to greet a familiar member at the start. Their voice feels shaky. The member says hello and asks about the drawing. Alex stays for two minutes, then returns to their materials.

Alex records that greeting was possible with some anxiety and led to a brief exchange. They decide to repeat the same step once more before considering a new one. They do not need to report zero anxiety or reach the top of a ladder on a fixed schedule.

Keep the context in view

Nia avoids a group where someone has repeatedly harassed her. What is the most appropriate starting point?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Use the same approach ladder because all avoidance maintains fear.**
▼ Feedback on option A

This ignores evidence of real harm. A general model must not override the actual circumstances.

B. **Remove every source of support so the experiment is pure.**
▼ Feedback on option B

Support and accommodations can protect access and safety. Removing them indiscriminately is not a useful learning goal.

C. **Consider safety, boundaries, and appropriate support before any decision about returning.**

▼ Feedback on option C

A real threat calls for a contextual response. Nia does not owe the group an exposure exercise.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

Why can avoidance maintain a fear?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

It may reduce immediate discomfort while limiting opportunities to test predictions or learn how to cope.

How is an accommodation different from a safety behaviour?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

An accommodation may provide necessary access or protection. Function and context matter; the same outward action cannot be classified from appearance alone.

Lab: build a voluntary ladder

Use Alex’s ordinary greeting goal. Designing a fictional ladder is enough. Do not use this exercise for dangerous situations, trauma memories, or severe symptoms without appropriate professional support.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What chosen goal would the steps serve?
2. What is a manageable first step?
3. What two or three later steps might fit?
4. Which supports or accommodations should remain?
5. What learning would you review, and how could you adjust the pace?

▼ Worked response

Goal — Have more everyday conversations at the group.

First step — Greet a familiar member.

Later steps — Ask a familiar member a question, then consider greeting a new member.

Support — Keep any communication and access aids Alex needs.

Review — Record whether the greeting was possible and what happened. Alex can repeat or adjust the step.

Compare your goal and first step. What could Alex learn even if their voice still shakes? Which supports would help them take part?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

This chapter introduces gradual approach in safe everyday situations. It is not an exposure protocol for a diagnosed condition and does not replace individual assessment.

- NHS: facing your fears
- CCI: social anxiety — avoidance, stepladders, and safety behaviours

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 9

When thinking becomes a loop

The situation

After the drawing group, Nia remembers a joke that received little response. She replays it on the bus, at dinner, and while preparing for bed. Each replay asks, “Why did I say that?” but produces no new information.

Nia would like to learn from social mistakes. She also notices that tonight’s analysis is taking time away from rest without reaching a decision.

Reflection or repetition?

Which question best distinguishes useful reflection from a thinking loop?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Is this producing new information or a specific decision I can act on?**

▼ Feedback on option A

This looks at the function of the thinking. A repeated question without new information may call for a different response.

B. **Have I thought about it for exactly the right number of minutes?**

▼ Feedback on option B

Time can be a clue, but there is no universal minute limit that separates helpful and unhelpful thinking.

C. **Can I force myself never to think about it again?**

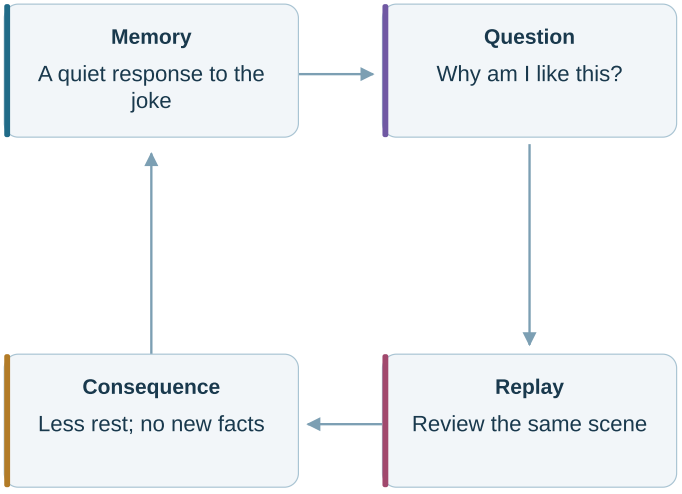
▼ Feedback on option C

> Trying to eliminate a thought can create another struggle. The skill is choosing how to respond when it appears.

Thinking can become an activity of its own

Worry often concerns what might happen; rumination often returns to what happened or what it means about oneself. They can overlap. The useful question is whether the thinking helps a decision or keeps circling without one.

A difficult thought returning does not mean the person chose it or failed. Notice its arrival, name the process gently, and consider whether something useful can be done. If there is a practical issue, use a defined problem-solving step.

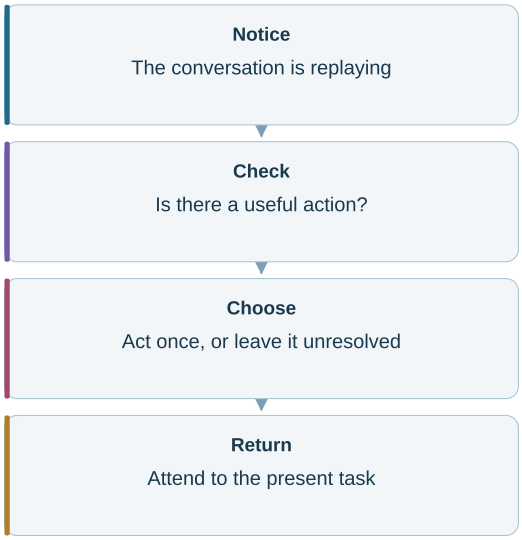


A loop without new information

Return attention without demanding an empty mind

Nia can acknowledge, “That conversation is back in my mind,” check whether an action is needed, and deliberately return attention to a chosen activity. The thought may remain in the background. The aim is flexible attention rather than thought suppression.

Choose something concrete: notice the feel of a brush, follow a paragraph, or listen to a person speaking. When attention wanders, return again without treating it as a test. If a real repair is needed, decide on one proportionate action rather than rehearsing indefinitely.



A different response to the replay

Nia makes one useful distinction

Nia asks whether the joke contained a hurtful remark that needs an apology. She remembers no such content and has no new information about the quiet response. She writes one brief note to listen more carefully at the next group, then returns to dinner.

The memory returns twice. Nia notices it and returns to the conversation at the table. The exercise is not disproved by the thought returning. The relevant observation is whether Nia can re-engage with the activity she chose.

When there is an actionable concern

Jules realises they made a specific hurtful remark. Which response fits?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Label every concern as rumination and ignore it.**
   ▼ Feedback on option A

   That could bypass a real responsibility. Distinguish an actionable issue from repetition about the whole self.

B. **Decide on a proportionate apology, then notice and redirect repeated self-condemnation.**

▼ Feedback on option B

A practical repair and flexible attention can both be useful. Neither requires a guarantee about the other person’s response.

C. **Keep replaying until no shame remains before acting.**

▼ Feedback on option C

Waiting for a feeling to disappear can delay a reasonable action and keep the loop going.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

How can you distinguish reflection from rumination?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

Ask whether the thinking produces new information, a concrete decision, or useful learning. Repeated abstract self-judgment often does not.

What if a thought returns after redirecting attention?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

Notice it and return again. The goal is flexible engagement, not proving that a thought can never appear.

Lab: notice, decide, return

Use Nia’s joke example or a mild everyday replay. You may stop or use the fictional story if personal reflection becomes uncomfortable.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What is the repeated question?
2. Is there new information or a practical action?
3. If needed, what one proportionate step fits?
4. What present activity will receive attention?
5. In the story, Nia's memory returns twice. What does she do, and how could she tell whether it helped her rejoin the conversation?

▼ Worked response

Repeated question — "Why did I say that?"

Check — The quiet response supplies no new facts about whether anyone was hurt.

Action — Nia decides to listen more carefully next time.

Chosen activity — Nia returns to the conversation at dinner.

Result — The thought returns twice. Each time Nia notices it and rejoins the conversation.

Compare your action and result fields. What did Nia do about the possible concern, and what showed she was able to rejoin dinner?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Attention practices can be useful, but persistent or intrusive thinking may require tailored support. This lesson does not establish the cause of any individual's repetitive thoughts.

- CCI: worry and rumination — attention training and uncertainty

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 10

The rules underneath

The situation

Jules agrees to bring extra materials, design another poster, and cover a session despite a full week. “If I disappoint someone, I am selfish,” they think. Resentment builds, and they eventually cancel at the last minute.

The same rule appears in several situations. It may once have helped Jules stay connected or avoid conflict. Now its rigid form seems to make honest planning harder.

Identify the rule

Which statement is a conditional personal rule rather than a specific event or emotion?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Jules agreed to bring extra paper.**

▼ Feedback on option A

This describes an action. A rule would express a broader demand or an if-then assumption.

B. **Jules feels resentful.**

▼ Feedback on option B

This names a feeling. It may signal an unmet need, but it is not itself the underlying rule.

C. **If I disappoint anyone, it means I am selfish.**

▼ Feedback on option C

This links an event to a broad conclusion about identity. It is a candidate rule to investigate, not a fact to accept.

Thoughts can reflect broader assumptions

An automatic thought belongs to a moment: “I cannot say no to this request.” A conditional assumption expresses a rule: “If I refuse, I will lose people.” A core belief is a broader view of self, others, or the world, such as “I am not worth caring about.”

These are different levels of a possible formulation. Do not assume a core belief simply because a behaviour repeats. Ask the person what the situation means, look for patterns, and remain open to context and alternative explanations.

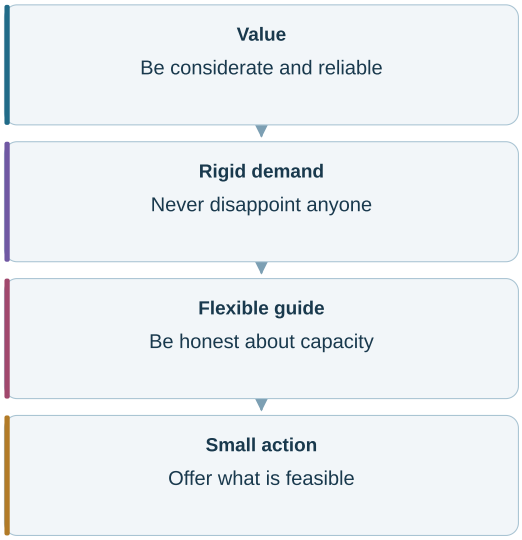


Three levels of a possible pattern

Make a rule more flexible and test it

A flexible rule keeps a value without turning it into an impossible demand. Jules values reliability. “I can be considerate and honest about capacity” allows planning, negotiation, and occasional disappointment.

A new sentence does not automatically change a long-standing belief. Look for small experiences that fit or challenge it, and practise acting consistently with it. Some beliefs are connected to difficult histories that deserve more support than a short self-study exercise.



Keep the value; soften the demand

Jules tries a different response

Jules replies, “I can bring the paper, but I cannot cover the session this week.” The organiser finds another volunteer. Jules feels guilty at first, but keeps their feasible commitment.

This experience supports a more flexible possibility: setting one limit can coexist with being helpful. It does not guarantee every person will welcome a boundary. Jules can examine an unfavourable response without deciding their needs are illegitimate.

Avoid over-interpreting behaviour

Alex hesitates before accepting an invitation. Can you conclude Alex has the core belief “I am unwanted”?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **No. Ask what the hesitation means; tiredness, logistics, preference, or several beliefs could fit.**

▼ Feedback on option A

The outward behaviour does not uniquely identify a hidden belief. A formulation needs the person’s own account and context.

B. **Yes. Hesitation is enough to reveal the belief.**

▼ Feedback on option B

That assigns a private meaning without evidence and can miss practical explanations.

C. **No beliefs can ever influence behaviour.**

▼ Feedback on option C

Beliefs may influence behaviour, but recognising that possibility is different from knowing which belief is present.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

How does a rule differ from a momentary thought?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

A rule applies across situations, often as a should, must, or if-then statement. A thought occurs in a particular moment.

What makes a more flexible rule useful?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

It is believable, preserves an important value, allows context and limits, and suggests an action that can be tested.

Lab: turn a demand into a guide

Use Jules’s commitments. You can work entirely with this fictional example.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What repeated should, must, or if-then rule appears?
2. What value or need might it be trying to protect?
3. What are its benefits and costs in this situation?
4. What more flexible guide fits the evidence?
5. What small action could test it, and what would you review?

▼ Worked response

Rule — “If I disappoint someone, I am selfish.”

Value — Jules wants to be considerate and reliable.

Benefit and cost — Accepting tasks may avoid an awkward refusal. Taking on too much makes it harder to keep promises.

Flexible guide — “I can be considerate and honest about what I have time for.”

Test — Offer to bring paper and decline the extra session. Review what happened and whether Jules could keep the commitment.

Compare your value, flexible guide and test. How could Jules protect reliability and learn whether the new commitment fits their week?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Core beliefs and assumptions are formulation concepts, not labels to impose on someone. Deeply distressing beliefs may be better explored with a qualified practitioner.

- CCI: depression resources — core beliefs
- CCI: perfectionism — rules and assumptions
- CCI: assertiveness

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 11

Working with a complicated situation

The situation

At work, Nia is repeatedly assigned unpopular late shifts despite an agreed rotation. When she asks about it, her manager dismisses the concern. Nia thinks, “I am powerless, so there is no point speaking up.”

The rota provides evidence of a real imbalance. At the same time, “there is no possible action” is a broader conclusion. Nia needs an approach that respects the actual working conditions and the possible costs of challenging them.

Choose the starting point

Which response takes the documented rota problem and Nia’s circumstances into account?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Assume the manager must have a good reason.**
   ▼ Feedback on option A

   That invents a reassuring explanation and can minimise the documented imbalance.

B. **Acknowledge the evidence and explore Nia’s priorities, safety, support, and practical options.**
   ▼ Feedback on option B

   This keeps the real circumstances central. It also allows specific thoughts to be examined without denying unfairness.

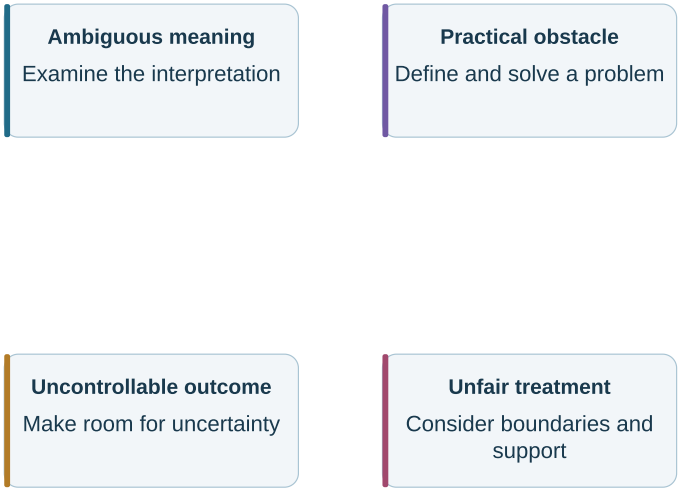
C. **Tell Nia that feeling powerless proves she has no choices.**
   ▼ Feedback on option C

The feeling is understandable but does not by itself establish every possible option. Options may still be limited and costly.

Match the tool to the situation

Different parts of a situation may call for different responses. Check an interpretation when evidence is ambiguous. Use problem-solving for a changeable task. Consider boundaries, support, or appropriate advice for a real interpersonal or structural problem.

CBT skills do not require accepting mistreatment or taking responsibility for another person’s actions. Emotional responses can be understandable signals. A useful formulation includes the environment, power, access to resources, and the costs of each option.

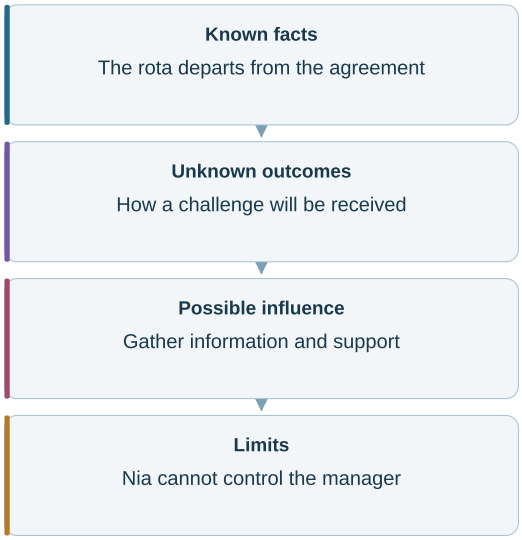


Choose a response that fits

Agency can be partial

Nia may not control the manager’s response. She might control whether to keep a record, consult a trusted representative, request a meeting, or seek other advice. None of those options is automatically safe or available in every workplace.

A specific alternative to “I am powerless” could be “My options are constrained; I can find out what support exists before deciding.” This preserves the constraints and identifies a possible next step. It is not a promise that speaking up will fix the situation.



Keep three things separate

A plan with context

Nia checks the rota and the written agreement, then privately asks a trusted staff representative about options. She considers potential consequences before deciding whether to make a formal request.

Nia also notices the thought “If this is happening, I must deserve it.” The rota does not support that conclusion. Challenging self-blame and addressing the working conditions can proceed together.

A mixed situation

Jules receives fair criticism about a missed deadline and also a personal insult. Which response best fits?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Reject all feedback because the insult makes every criticism false.**
▼ Feedback on option A

The insult is inappropriate, but the deadline issue may still need a practical response. Separate the claims.

B. **Accept the insult as proof that the criticism is accurate.**
▼ Feedback on option B

A personal attack is not established by a specific missed commitment. Keep behaviour, evidence, and identity separate.

C. **Address the missed deadline and consider a boundary or support about the insult.**

▼ Feedback on option C

This distinguishes a practical responsibility from unacceptable treatment. Several tools may fit different parts of the same event.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

Why include the environment in a CBT formulation?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

Real demands, resources, discrimination, power, and support affect experiences and options. A thought-only account can miss important causes and constraints.

Can checking self-blame and seeking practical support happen together?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

Yes. Examining an unsupported personal conclusion does not require denying a real problem or delaying appropriate support.

Lab: choose the tool, explain the fit

Use Nia’s rota example. Consider several responses rather than assuming one tool must solve everything.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What facts indicate a real problem?
2. What interpretation goes beyond those facts?
3. Which parts are within Nia’s influence?
4. What practical support or advice might be appropriate?
5. What first step fits Nia’s priorities and possible risks?

▼ Worked response

Facts — The rota departs from an agreed shift rotation and the manager dismisses Nia’s concern.

Interpretation — “There is no possible action” is broader than those facts.

Influence — Nia can consider gathering records or checking support. The manager’s response remains unknown.

Support — A trusted staff representative may be able to explain options.

First step — If it fits her circumstances, privately ask about those options before deciding whether to raise the issue formally.

Compare the facts, possible influence and first step. Which details make it a real workplace problem, and what information would help Nia decide what to do?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

The fictional workplace example teaches tool selection, not employment advice. Practical and professional support may be essential; no outcome is guaranteed.

- CCI: assertiveness — communication and boundaries
- NHS: what CBT involves

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Chapter 12

Becoming your own investigator

The situation

Several weeks later, Alex has used clearer checking standards and small social steps. Then a busy week disrupts sleep and routines. Alex notices the signup list being checked repeatedly again.

“I am back at the beginning,” they think. But Alex now notices the pattern earlier, can explain part of the loop, and knows a response that has helped before. A returning difficulty and losing all learning are not the same event.

Read the setback carefully

Which conclusion best fits the information?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **The pattern has returned under strain; Alex can use what they have learned and reassess what support is needed.**

▼ Feedback on option A

This acknowledges the difficulty without erasing previous learning. The next step can be specific and manageable.

B. **Any returning worry proves the course has failed.**

▼ Feedback on option B

A single recurrence does not establish that no learning occurred. This course is not a treatment with a promised symptom outcome.

C. **Ignore the checking because progress means nothing can go wrong now.**

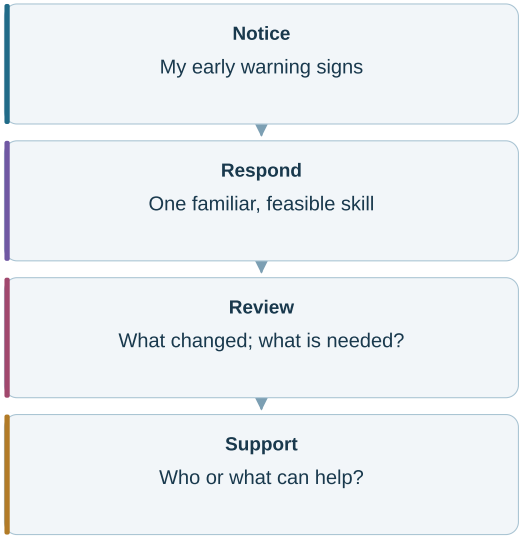
▼ Feedback on option C

That dismisses new information. A useful maintenance plan includes noticing and responding to changes.

Make a personal learning summary

A maintenance plan records what you have learned about a pattern, early signs that it is intensifying, small responses that fit, and sources of support. It should be short enough to use when things are difficult.

Alex's early signs include repeated checks without new information, missed breaks, and the thought "I must be completely certain." Their first response might be to revisit the agreed checking standard, simplify an overloaded day, and speak to someone supportive.

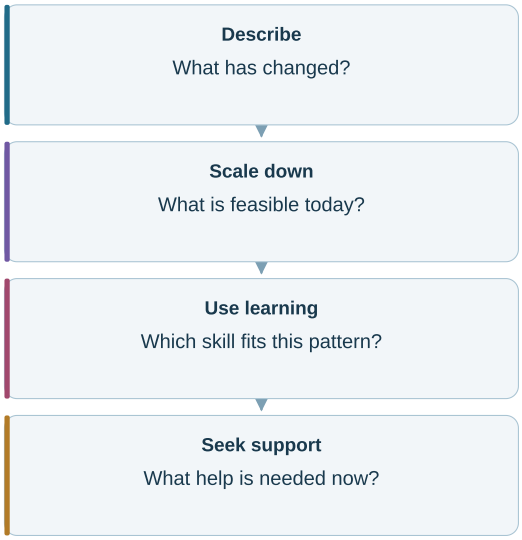


A usable maintenance plan

Review patterns without turning life into a test

Progress can include noticing earlier, choosing a more workable action, asking for support, or recovering from a difficult day more flexibly. A course score or streak cannot capture all of that.

Plan a brief revisit after using a skill and another at a useful later point. Adjust the timing to your circumstances. If difficulties persist, worsen, or substantially affect daily life, consider support from a qualified professional. You do not have to complete more exercises before asking.



Respond to a difficult week

Alex’s one-page plan

Pattern: doubt followed by extra checking and short relief. Early signs: three returns to an unchanged list and a skipped break. First steps: check the actual task standard, pause the extra work, and review the week’s capacity.

Support: ask the organiser to clarify priorities; contact a qualified practitioner if the pattern becomes persistent or substantially disruptive. Review: after the next ordinary task, record what happened and update the plan. The plan guides a response; it does not promise that doubt will disappear.

Bring the skills together

After a stressful week, Nia has less energy and starts replaying a conversation. What is the best next step?

Choose one option before reading its feedback.

A. **Complete every worksheet immediately to catch up.**
   ▼ Feedback on option A

   An overloaded response may ignore current capacity. Choose the tool that fits the immediate pattern.

B. **Map the current situation, choose one feasible response, and consider whether more support is needed.**

▼ Feedback on option B

This combines observation, tool selection, and context. It does not require starting the entire course again.

C. **Use thought challenging for every feeling regardless of the cause.**

▼ Feedback on option C

Different problems call for different responses. Rest, practical help, or attention shifting may fit better.

Explain it without looking

Answer each question in your own words before reading the suggested answer.

What should a maintenance plan contain?

▼ Suggested answer for question 1

A short description of the pattern, early signs, feasible responses, a review point, and sources of support.

What can show learning even when a difficulty returns?

▼ Suggested answer for question 2

Earlier recognition, more specific understanding, a more flexible action, or seeking useful support. Absence of all difficult feelings is not the standard.

Lab: a plan for the next difficult week

Use Alex’s pattern, or create an optional personal summary. Keep it brief and realistic. Then try the final case to practise choosing tools without a chapter label.

Work through the five prompts in order. Read the worked response after your first draft, then use the review question to compare.

1. What pattern and trigger do you want to recognise?
2. What two early signs are observable?
3. What small first response has a clear purpose?
4. Who or what could provide support?
5. When will you review, and what would tell you more help is needed?

▼ Worked response

Pattern and trigger — A busy week disrupts routines and Alex starts checking the signup list repeatedly.

Early signs — Reopening the unchanged list and missing planned breaks.

First response — Revisit the agreed checking standard so Alex knows when the task is complete.

Support — Ask the organiser to clarify priorities. Seek qualified support if the pattern persists or disrupts daily life.

Review — After the next ordinary task, note whether the new plan met the agreed standard and left time for a break.

Compare your early signs, first response and review point. Would each be specific enough for Alex to recognise or use during a busy week?

▼ What this example illustrates and where to read more

Maintenance planning supports continuing learning. This course has not been tested for prevention of relapse or for clinical outcomes; recurrent symptoms deserve appropriate assessment and support.

- CCI: depression resources — self management
- CCI: worry and rumination — self management plan
- NHS: cognitive behavioural therapy

Source links checked 2026-11-19.

Everyday CBT

Draft 0.1.0 · practitioner review pending.
Introductory education. The course does not submit your responses.

Guidance & sources
Font licenses