Everyday CBT

Practice workbook

Choose a lab to practise one skill or a fictional case to practise several. You can use the fictional examples for every task.

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.

Chapter labs

1. Lab: map one moment
2. Lab: follow the loop
3. Lab: slow down one moment
4. Lab: write a short thought record
5. Lab: plan one meaningful activity
6. Lab: choose a practical next step
7. Lab: design a fair test
8. Lab: build a voluntary ladder
9. Lab: notice, decide, return
10. Lab: turn a demand into a guide
11. Lab: choose the tool, explain the fit
12. Lab: a plan for the next difficult week

Independent cases

- Checkpoint 1 · The unread invitation
- Checkpoint 2 · Asking at the library
- Final case · The first book-group session

Chapter 1

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?

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2. What thought or image appeared?

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3. Which feelings and bodily sensations were present?

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4. What did the person do next?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 2

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?

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2. What does Alex do?

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3. What changes immediately?

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4. What happens later, including any cost?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 3

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?

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2. What words or image appeared?

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3. What did that thought imply about Jules or the situation?

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4. Which part is a feeling, and which part is a conclusion?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 4

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

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2. Feeling and optional intensity in your own terms

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3. Facts that directly support the thought, if any

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4. Facts that complicate it or remain unknown

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 5

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?

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2. What small action, when and where?

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3. What is the smaller version?

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4. What barrier might occur, and how could the plan adapt?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 6

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

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2. Describe a realistic goal

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3. List at least three options

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4. Compare effort, resources, consequences, and fairness

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 7

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?

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2. What action, setting, and time?

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3. What observations would support or complicate the prediction?

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4. What could make the result hard to interpret?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 8

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?

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2. What is a manageable first step?

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3. What two or three later steps might fit?

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4. Which supports or accommodations should remain?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 9

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?

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2. Is there new information or a practical action?

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3. If needed, what one proportionate step fits?

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4. What present activity will receive attention?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 10

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?

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2. What value or need might it be trying to protect?

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3. What are its benefits and costs in this situation?

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4. What more flexible guide fits the evidence?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 11

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?

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2. What interpretation goes beyond those facts?

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3. Which parts are within Nia’s influence?

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4. What practical support or advice might be appropriate?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Chapter 12

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?

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2. What two early signs are observable?

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3. What small first response has a clear purpose?

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4. Who or what could provide support?

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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?

Open this lab in the chapter

Checkpoint 1 · The unread invitation

Read Rowan's story and draft your reasoning before reading each suggested response.

Rowan receives an invitation to a community book group. They think, "I will have nothing useful to say," notice tension without describing where they feel it, and leave it unanswered. Not replying brings relief that evening. A week later Rowan feels more isolated and believes they would not fit in.

1. Map the moment

In Your response, list the event, thought and action. What does "tense" tell you about Rowan's experience? Which details would you still ask about?

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 1

The invitation is the event. "I will have nothing useful to say" is Rowan's thought. Leaving the invitation unanswered is the action. Rowan reports tension. Ask what emotion they felt and what physical sensations they noticed before filling in either detail.

2. Explain a possible cycle

Compare how Rowan feels that evening and a week later. How might leaving the invitation unanswered connect those two experiences?

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 2

Avoiding the reply brings relief but prevents new information and a possible connection. Later isolation may strengthen the initial prediction. This is a hypothesis, not proof of the only cause.

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3. Write a balanced account

What can Rowan fairly conclude from the available facts?

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 3

The invitation does not establish how a visit would go. Rowan can acknowledge uncertainty and consider a small information-gathering step if participation fits their interests.

Review your first draft

Find one place your draft meets these criteria and one place you would revise. This is a self-check.

- Event and interpretation are separate.
- The cycle includes immediate and later consequences.
- Missing information stays open rather than being invented.

Checkpoint 2 · Asking at the library

Read Rowan's story and draft your reasoning before reading each suggested response.

Rowan wants to ask a librarian whether a beginner book group is suitable. They predict, "The librarian will laugh or say my question is stupid." Rowan usually asks a friend to speak for them. The library is an ordinary setting they have safely visited before.

1. Design the experiment

Write the question Rowan could choose to ask. What words or actions would count as ridicule? What support needs to stay in place?

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 1

Rowan could choose to ask one clear suitability question. Observe words and actions, not hidden opinions. Preserve any communication accommodations; consider voluntarily changing only the friend speaking on their behalf if that fits Rowan's needs.

2. Interpret a brief response

The librarian says, "Yes, beginners are welcome," then turns to another visitor. Did the predicted ridicule occur? What can Rowan conclude about the visit, and what is still unknown?

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 2

The predicted explicit ridicule did not occur in this trial. A brief answer does not establish a private opinion. Rowan obtained information while possibly still anxious.

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3. Interpret an awkward response

Now imagine the librarian says, “It is on the sign.” Compare those words with Rowan’s prediction of laughter or an insult. What would you conclude from this version, and what could Rowan do next?

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 3

This may be unhelpful or brusque, but it is not identical to explicit ridicule. Note the exact response, consider its limits, and decide whether another source of information or a different next step is useful.

Review your first draft

Find one place your draft meets these criteria and one place you would revise. This is a self-check.

- The prediction is observable.
- Support and access needs are respected.
- Both favourable and awkward results permit specific learning.

Final case · The first book-group session

Read Rowan’s story and draft your reasoning before reading each suggested response.

Rowan attends the group and answers one question briefly. Another participant interrupts twice. Afterwards the organiser thanks Rowan for coming. At home Rowan thinks, “Nobody wants me there,” replays the interruptions, and decides never to return.

Rowan also has a genuine scheduling problem: the next meeting overlaps a regular care commitment. They feel tired and have stopped a short reading routine they used to enjoy.

1. Map without mind-reading

Separate observations, interpretations, feelings, actions, and unknowns.

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 1

Observations include two interruptions and thanks from the organiser. “Nobody wants me” is broader than the evidence. Fatigue is reported; ask about other bodily and emotional experiences rather than inventing them.

2. Identify a possible loop

What might withdrawal and repeated analysis accomplish now and cost later?

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 2

Withdrawal may offer relief while limiting connection and new information. Replaying without new facts may take time from rest. Neither explanation removes the real interruptions or care commitment.

3. Choose tools that fit

Select responses for the interpretation, interruptions, scheduling, and reduced activity.

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 3

Examine the global rejection thought; consider a boundary or organiser support about interruptions; problem-solve the scheduling constraint; consider a manageable reading activity if Rowan values it. Do not treat every issue as a thinking error.

4. Design one small experiment

Using the facts available so far, write a voluntary action Rowan could take, a prediction you could observe, and what two possible outcomes would tell you.

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 4

If Rowan wants to return and finds a meeting they can attend, they might make one short contribution. They predict they will be interrupted before they finish. Finishing would show a contribution was possible on that occasion. An interruption would show what happened that time and could help Rowan decide whether to ask the organiser for support.

▼ Read the organiser’s message after tasks 1–4

New information arrives: the organiser says interruptions have affected other participants too and proposes a turn-taking format. The organiser cannot change the next meeting’s time.

5. Update with new information

Read the organiser’s message above. Which part of your original account would you revise? Name one obstacle that remains and one change Rowan could now consider.

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 5

Other participants were interrupted too, which gives Rowan another way to understand the interruptions. The turn-taking format could change how long members get to speak. The next meeting still conflicts with Rowan’s care commitment.

6. Plan for a difficult week

Write an early sign, one feasible response, and a source of support.

Your response (optional)

▼ Suggested response for task 6

An early sign could be repeated replay replacing rest. A response could be one practical decision and a return to a chosen activity. Support might include a trusted person or professional help if difficulties persist or substantially interfere.

Review your first draft

Find one place your draft meets these criteria and one place you would revise. This is a self-check.

- Reasoning stays specific to the evidence.
- Several tools are matched to distinct problems.
- The experiment is voluntary, safe, and observable.
- New facts revise the account.
- The maintenance plan recognises capacity and support.
