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2nd Edition

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook

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-  ***Review how your feelings are linked to your behaviour***
-  ***Practise all the key techniques of CBT***
-  ***Develop strategies to beat anxiety and depression***

Rhena Branch

Rob Willson

*Authors of Cognitive Behavioural
Therapy For Dummies, 2nd Edition*



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***Cognitive
Behavioural Therapy
Workbook***

FOR
DUMMIES®

2ND EDITION

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook

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2ND EDITION

by Rhena Branch and Rob Willson



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About the Authors

Editors: For a book with one author, do not include the author's name as a heading. For more than one author, start a paragraph with the author's name in bold, as shown here.

Rhena Branch MSc, Dip CBT, is an accredited CBT practitioner and qualified clinical supervisor. She has co-written several books in addition to those in the *For Dummies* series. Rhena teaches and supervises on the MSc in CBT at Goldsmiths, University of London and runs a private practice in central London.

Rob Willson, BSc, MSc, Dip SBHS, currently divides the majority of his work time between private practice and conducting research on Body Dysmorphic Disorder at the Institute of Psychiatry, London. Previously he spent twelve years working at the Priory Hospital, North London where he was a therapist and therapy services manager. He also trained numerous CBT therapists over a seven-year period at Goldsmiths, University of London. Rob's main clinical interests are anxiety and obsessional problems, and disseminating CBT principles through self-help. He has made several TV appearances including in the BBC documentary 'Too Ugly for Love'.

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Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

Acquisitions, Editorial, and Vertical Websites

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Commissioning Editor: Kerry Laundon

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Cartoons: Rich Tennant (www.the5thwave.com)

Composition Services

Project Coordinator: Kristie Rees

Layout and Graphics: Carrie Cesavice, Erin Zeltner

Proofreader: Melissa Cossell

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Publishing and Editorial for Consumer Dummies

Kathleen Nebenhaus, Vice President and Executive Publisher

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Introduction

Welcome to the *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook For Dummies*, 2nd Edition. Cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT, is a form of psychotherapy found scientifically to be effective with depression, anxiety, and many other types of problems.

Quite often people accept a physical illness or accident that impairs their daily functioning but may fail to accept that they have become mentally unwell. Every human being regardless of culture, creed, class, background, race or any other distinguishing characteristic is likely to experience some form of emotional or mental disturbance during the course of their lives. The good news is that it's totally normal to become psychologically disturbed and it's absolutely possible to recover. CBT can really help.

We've written this book to bring the types of CBT exercises we use in our work with troubled clients to you. We know that CBT works because we've seen it work! And we want it to work for you too. Whatever your problem, we hope that you'll find this book useful and informative.

About This Book

This book gives you an arsenal of skills and tools to help you beat a range of psychological problems. We try to give you just enough theoretical information to enable you to do the exercises contained in each chapter. All the worksheets and tasks in this workbook are indicative of the types of work we do with our clients in one-to-one CBT therapy.

You can use this workbook on your own to help you to basically become your own CBT therapist. Alternatively, you can use it alongside a course of CBT treatment with a qualified professional. Unfortunately we can't cover every type of psychological difficulty in depth in this book or it would turn out to be encyclopedic in length! So we've endeavoured to touch on the most common disorders that CBT has been proved effective at resolving. You can use this book as a jumping-off point to better understand your particular problems and how to battle them. If you think that you need some additional professional input then don't hesitate to get it!

Yep, it's a workbook, and that means it involves – you guessed it – work. But if you really put your energy into doing the work and regular practice, you'll get benefits. Is it worth it to you to sweat and struggle in order to feel and function better? If so, roll up your sleeves, do some preliminary stretches, put on your sweatbands and hurl yourself into the process!

A Serious Note About Humour

Embarking on a course of self-help can be daunting. Learning a bunch of new techniques designed to help you overcome your psychological problems is hard work, no question about it. In an attempt to lighten the mood we inject a bit of humour and irreverence into

our writing. Please understand however, that we do take psychological disturbance very seriously and we know that feeling bad isn't funny. Hopefully our writing style will make this book entertaining and accessible. Laughter can indeed be good medicine. But most of all our aim with this book is to give you some seriously useful advice and practice opportunities to help you get well and stay well.

How To Use This Book

Like most *For Dummies* books, you don't need to read this book in order from start to finish. You can dip in and out of it, going to the chapters that seem most relevant to you. We've made efforts to cross reference a lot so that you're guided to other chapters which complement or more fully explain concepts or exercises. The following table shows where to find information on specific issues CBT can help with, and you can use the Table of Contents at the front of the book and the Index at the back to locate the information you want as well.

Characteristics of CBT and relevant chapters	
<i>CBT Characteristic</i>	<i>Chapter Number(s)</i>
Helps you develop flexible, self-enhancing beliefs and attitudes toward yourself, others, and the world around you	16
It is goal-directed	8
Offers skills and strategies for overcoming common problems such as anxiety, addictions, depression and more	9, 10, 11, 12, 13
Addresses your past with a view to understanding how it may be affecting your present day beliefs and behaviours	16, 17
Focuses on how your problems are being perpetuated rather than searching for a singular reason or root cause	2, 7
Encourages you to try things out for yourself and practice new ways of thinking and acting	4, 5
Highlights relapse prevention and personal development	18, 19, 20

Please use this book to write in, make notes and work! That's what it's written for! You've got our express permission to mess it up as much as you like; after all it's your book and you're the one who'll benefit by using it.

What Not to Read

Don't read anything that you don't want to read. This book is for you. Read whatever you think will be most helpful to you. Perhaps you've had enough of this introduction chapter. Fair enough, move on. Ideally we'd like you to read the whole thing (if we're honest) but that's because we wrote it and we think that every chapter has something of value to offer. But hey, it's up to you and you certainly don't have to agree with us (or our egos . . .).

Anything in this book that is relevant to you and helps you with your individual problems is what you should be reading. Focus on that. If it bores you, confuses you, or doesn't seem to apply to you – give it a miss.

Foolish Assumptions

We assume that if you've bought this book then you're interested in using CBT techniques on yourself. We're guessing that you've heard of CBT before or had it recommended to you by a friend or professional. We're also guessing that you've got one or two psychological problems that you'd like to be free from.

But even if our assumptions are completely wrong (or indeed foolish), this book may be of interest to you. You may have a friend or family member who you're concerned about and want to learn more about CBT treatment. You may be feeling okay but still have an interest in CBT and how it may be able to further your enjoyment of life. So we assume, foolishly or not, that you'll get something of use out of this book whatever your reasons for buying it.

How This Book Is Organised

The *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook For Dummies* has five parts.

Part I: Pinpointing Primary Principles

This part of the book gives you the groundwork for understanding your problems in relation to the CBT framework. Chapter 1 gives you an idea of what CBT is all about and how it applies to common problems. In Chapter 2 we show you how to recognise your problematic thinking patterns. Chapter 3 is all about how to get on top of toxic thinking and finding better alternative ways of thinking for the future. In Chapter 4 we show you how to act like a scientist in the interest of improving your emotional and mental health. We get a bit new age in Chapter 5 by introducing mindfulness and other techniques for directing your focus of attention.

Part II: Pinning Down Problems and Giving Yourself Goals

The chapters in this part are devoted to helping you to define your problems in specific terms and to choosing specific goals with regard to your identified difficulties.

Chapter 6 explains the CBT view of healthy and unhealthy negative emotions and gives you the chance to get to grips with your own emotional responses. Chapter 7 shows you how some of the ways in which you try to cope with problems may be in themselves problematic. In Chapter 8, we really focus on getting to grips with appropriate goals.

Part III: Putting CBT into Practice

The chapters in this part are all about putting CBT into practice on specific problems like anxiety, depression and low self-opinion. Chapter 9 deals with anxiety problems, Chapter 10 looks at exercises for overcoming addictions, and in Chapter 11 we deal with common body image problems. Chapter 12 covers tips for dealing a blow to depression, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is addressed in Chapter 13. In Chapter 14 we look at ways to lift low self-esteem. Chapter 15 is all about improving interpersonal relationships.

Part IV: Forging into the Future

In this part Chapter 16 helps you to look at long standing beliefs and ways of thinking that may affect you in the present. We include a lot of worksheets to help you challenge old and unhelpful beliefs about yourself, others and the world at large. Chapter 17 deals with techniques to make your new beliefs more permanent. In Chapter 18 you get the chance to focus on further personal development. Relapse is a real possibility and in Chapter 19 we give you a chance to plan and trouble shoot for possible problem resurgence. Chapter 20 is about helping you to live in a positive way even after you've largely defeated your initial problems.

Part V: The Part of Tens

This part contains handy top ten tips for working with professionals, getting some sleep, and renewing your motivation to get better. Sometimes readers may like to start at the part of tens and then go on to other chapters and parts in the book!

Case Examples Used in This Book

All the characters used in case examples throughout this book are entirely fictional. However, the types of problems we use them to typify are very common and based on our clinical experience with real clients over the years. Our hope is that you'll be readily able to identify with aspects of these made-up character's experiences and relate them to your own difficulties.

Icons Used in This Book



We use icons throughout this workbook to bring different types of information to your attention and to clearly guide you through the book.

This icon signposts a case example and completed sample worksheet.



You'll see this icon next to blank worksheets. It indicates your chance to put the work into workbook.



This alerts you to additional useful information that may help you to better understand a concept or to complete an exercise.



This icon is used to emphasise information worth bearing in mind throughout your CBT self-help work.



This icon is an alarm! It denotes possible pitfalls, common errors, or potential dangers.

Where to Go from Here

This workbook is designed to be a hands-on practical approach to using CBT. It contains lots of exercises and tasks to get you moving along the road to recovery. Because it's a workbook we don't go into great depth about theoretical CBT concepts and principles. It's a book focused more on action. For more about background CBT theory you're recommended to get the companion book, *Cognitive Behavioural Therapy For Dummies*, 2nd Edition (Wiley). It also has a section that suggests other useful CBT-based books to add to your library. *Boosting Self-Esteem For Dummies* (also written by us) has a lot of very useful CBT tips and techniques designed to help you learn to appreciate yourself more fully. We also recommend getting the *CBT Journal For Dummies* (we did this one, too), which is a valuable adjunct to all other CBT-based *For Dummies* books. You may also want to get *Personal Development For Dummies All-in-One*, edited by Gillian Burn (Wiley), which has a CBT section as well as sections based on other useful *For Dummies* self-help books.

Part I

Pinpointing Primary Principles

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"I'm tired of letting everyone pull my strings."

In this part . . .

You'll get the groundwork for understanding your problems in relation to the CBT framework. We show you what CBT is all about and how it applies to common problems. We show you how to recognise your problematic thinking patterns, how to get on top of toxic thinking and how to find better alternative ways of thinking for the future.

You also get to act like a scientist in the interest of improving your emotional and mental health, before we come over a bit new age by introducing mindfulness and other techniques for directing your focus of attention.

Chapter 1

Exploring the Basics of CBT

In This Chapter

- ▶ Seeing the science and the sense of CBT
- ▶ Making CBT work for you
- ▶ Understanding your personal events
- ▶ Putting problems into an A-B-C format

Usually people respond to negative, difficult, or downright bad life events with negative emotions such as sadness or anger (to name but two). It is both natural and normal to feel distressed when bad things happen. The degree of distress you feel depends partly on the severity of the bad event. But the key word here is 'partly'. Often the meanings you attach to given events can take a bad situation and make it worse. The way you *think* about aspects of your current life or past experiences can move you from healthy, normal distress to more problematic psychological disturbance. Feelings of depression, anxiety, rage, or guilt, for example, are painful and can lead to further difficulties in your life.

Fortunately, the situation's not all doom and gloom! You can learn to recognise how your thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes impact on your feelings. Once you understand this principle, you can then work on changing your thinking and behaviour to help you take bad situations and make them better.

In this chapter we introduce the main theoretical stuff you need to know about Cognitive Behavioural Therapy – CBT for short – to get you started.

Understanding the Nuts and Bolts of CBT

As the name implies, CBT is a form of psychotherapy that focuses on *cognition* – your thoughts – and on *behaviour* – your actions. One way of summing up CBT is to say 'you feel the way you think'. But CBT also looks closely at behaviour, since the way you act is often determined by how you feel. Furthermore, the way you act can have either a positive or negative influence on your feelings. Without necessarily realising it, you may be acting in ways that are actually fuelling your bad feelings.

The interaction between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours is at the core of CBT. Therefore CBT looks closely at how you think and act in order to help you overcome both behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Blinding you with the science of CBT

CBT practitioners are interested not only in helping people to *feel* better in the short term but also in using scientifically verified strategies to help people *get* better and stay better in the long term. CBT has been tested and developed through many scientific studies. With

continued research it is likely that more will be learnt about which techniques work best for specific types of problems. Because of CBT's scientific basis, it invites you to take a more scientific approach to both understanding and resolving your problems.

A big component of CBT involves helping people become their own therapists through the continued use of specific techniques. This self-directed element is probably one of the reasons people who have had CBT relapse less frequently than those treated using other psychotherapeutic approaches or medications without CBT.

Okay. So here might be a good place to clarify a few terms. Like many professions, psychology and psychotherapy use a lot of jargon. Sometimes in this book we use weird words and other times we use more everyday words, but *weirdly*. The following definitions help to make your reading more straightforward:

- ✓ **Cognitive:** Refers to your thoughts and anything else that goes through your mind including your dreams, memories, images, and your focus of attention.
- ✓ **Behaviour:** Includes everything that you do and all the things you choose *not* to do – such as avoiding situations or sulking instead of speaking.
- ✓ **Therapy:** Describes a method of treating a problem – physical, mental, or emotional. We use it mainly to refer to *talking therapies* such as CBT and other types of psychotherapy.
- ✓ **Belief:** Refers to your personal thinking styles and your way of understanding the world and your experiences. It also means your personal rules, codes, and attitudes for living.
- ✓ **Consequence:** Describes the result or outcome of an event of some kind. In this book we mainly refer to behaviour and emotional consequences (basically the kind of results produced by ways of acting or from specific emotions).
- ✓ **Distress:** Refers to normal negative human emotions that, though uncomfortable and unpleasant, don't cause you long-term problems.
- ✓ **Disturbance:** Refers to more extreme, intense negative emotions that can cause long-term problems and interfere significantly in your life.
- ✓ **Experiment:** No, we're not talking about test tubes and chemistry. What we mean are exercises that you devise and try out to see what sort of effect they have on your feelings.
- ✓ **Exposure:** Refers to action on your part to expose yourself to feared or avoided situations in order to help yourself recover from your problems. Note that we're not referring to the kind of exposure that could get you arrested!
- ✓ **Healthy:** Refers to appropriate and constructive behaviour, thoughts, or emotions.
- ✓ **Unhealthy:** Refers to inappropriate and destructive behaviour, thoughts, or emotions.

Linking thinking and feeling

You may generally conclude that if something happens to you, such as your car breaking down, that it is the actual event that makes you feel angry or anxious. Makes sense, right? Well, not entirely actually, no. According to CBT, what determines the quality and intensity of the emotion you experience are your *thoughts* about the event.

So whilst events contribute to your emotional and behavioural reactions (sometimes significantly), it is your *beliefs*, or the meaning you give to events, that lead you to feel healthy distress or unhealthy disturbance.



The more negative the event, the more distressed you probably feel. So if you lose your job, get mugged, or are involved in a serious accident you are very likely to feel intensely distressed. Intense distressed feelings in response to very negative events are still considered healthy because they're appropriate to your experience. But you can avoid becoming disturbed even in the face of very challenging life situations if you monitor your thinking.

Attaching meaning to events

Positive events normally lead to positive emotions and negative events to negative emotions (rather obviously). But the personal meanings you assign to events in your life sometimes may lead to unhealthy and problematic emotional reactions. Sometimes your thinking can lead you to attach extreme meanings to relatively minor events. For example, you may decide that your husband working late means that he's about to leave you for another woman. Some of the meanings that you give to events may be unrealistic, inaccurate, and fundamentally unhelpful.

When you attach a faulty meaning to an event, you're very likely to experience an unhealthy negative emotion, such as extreme guilt as Coral does in the following example. However when Coral attaches a fair and accurate meaning to the event, she experiences the healthy negative emotion of intense disappointment.

We also use the words *distressed* and *disturbed* to refer to healthy and unhealthy negative emotions. The difference between distress and disturbance is in the *quality* of the emotion you experience. This is an important concept that we go over more fully in Chapter 6.

- ✓ **Disturbed** refers to inaccurate or rigid ways of thinking about events that lead you to experience extreme unhealthy negative emotions.
- ✓ **Distressed** refers to accurate and balanced ways of thinking about events that lead you to experience appropriate healthy negative emotions.



Coral was putting her young children to bed but they just wouldn't settle down. After several minutes of trying to get them to sleep she lost her temper, shouted, and threw a cuddly toy across the room. Worksheet 1-1 shows the disturbed meaning she gave the event.

Worksheet 1-1	Coral's Unhealthy Personal Meaning Page
Event:	Losing my temper with my children
Personal meaning	I should never get that angry around the kids. This means that I am a terrible mother.
Emotion	Guilt

The extreme meaning Coral attaches to her loss of temper leads her to feel guilty. Guilt is likely to feed further self-downing and is unlikely to help Coral to make it up to her kids. Worksheet 1-2 shows a more healthy evaluation.



In CBT, we use the term *self-downing* to mean extreme self-criticism or putting yourself down on the basis of your actions. In Chapter 12 we discuss the healthy alternative to self-downing, which is self-acceptance.

Worksheet 1-2	Coral's Healthy Personal Meaning Page
Event:	Losing my temper with my children
Personal meaning:	I wish I hadn't got so angry with the kids. This means that I did a bad thing but I am still a pretty good mum overall.
Emotion:	Disappointment

Because Coral attaches an appropriate and fair meaning to her temper tantrum, she experiences a healthy negative emotion. Disappointment helps Coral to condemn her behaviour but not herself as a mother. She may now look more closely at her beliefs that led her to become so angry in the first place and make some changes.

Take a recent event from your own life in which you got yourself into a unhealthy emotional state. Use the Personal Meaning Page in Worksheet 1-3 to reassign a different meaning to the event and see if you can end up feeling a healthier emotion. Try to think differently about the event. Perhaps the personal meaning you're giving the event is overly negative and extreme. Try taking a more compassionate and objective view of yourself within the context of the negative event. You may find it useful to use these questions as a guide to filling out the worksheet:

- ✓ What happened exactly? What did you or someone else do? Record this as the event.
- ✓ What does the event mean about you? About other people? The world or life conditions? This is your personal meaning.
- ✓ How do you feel inside? Record your emotion.
- ✓ Is your personal meaning accurate, fair, and balanced? Or is it inaccurate, biased, and rigid?
- ✓ In order to be distressed about the event instead of disturbed, what new meaning could you give to the event?

You can use two pages as we did in Coral's case if you want to see a clear distinction between your personal meanings. If you're having trouble coming up with words for your feelings, take a look at Chapter 6, which covers emotions in depth.

Worksheet 1-3	My Personal Meaning Page
Event:	
Personal meaning:	
Emotion:	