Thought Balancing

Participant Workbook | Looking for a fuller picture

Our minds make quick interpretations, especially when emotions are strong. Sometimes those interpretations fit the facts; sometimes they overlook important information. Thought balancing means looking carefully, not forcing yourself to feel positive.

1. Notice the thinking pattern

Some common patterns include “always/never” conclusions, predicting the worst, assuming you know what someone thinks, blaming yourself for events outside your control, or treating a feeling as proof. Noticing a pattern is an invitation to investigate—not a judgment.

2. Practice with a fictional example

Situation: You were not invited to a gathering.
First thought: “Nobody wants me around.”
Evidence for: You did not receive an invitation.
Evidence against / unknown: You do not know who planned it or why; other friends have invited you before.
Balanced thought: “It hurts to be left out. I do not have enough information to conclude nobody likes me. I can ask someone I trust or make other plans.”

3. My thought record

What happened? (Who, what, where, when—observable facts.)

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_____

_____

What automatic thought came to mind?

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_____

What emotions did I notice, and how strong were they?

_____

_____

What evidence supports my thought?

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_____

What evidence does not support it, or what information is missing?

_____

_____

What is another realistic explanation?

_____

_____

What balanced thought fits the evidence without dismissing my feelings?

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What action, if any, would be helpful and safe?

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Additional Practice & Reflection

4. Compare the extremes

All-or-nothing thought: “I made a mistake, so I am a failure.”

Forced-positive thought: “My mistake does not matter at all.”

Balanced thought: “I made a mistake. It matters, and I can take responsibility and learn from it.”

Try your own example:

_____

_____

_____

5. Questions to take with you

• What facts do I know for certain?

• Am I leaving out context or assuming intent?

• What would I say to someone I care about in this situation?

• Does my balanced thought acknowledge both the problem and my options?

My practice plan

A situation where I will try pausing and checking the evidence:

_____

_____

_____

Reminder: A balanced interpretation does not mean tolerating unsafe behavior or abandoning a boundary. Seek trusted or professional support when needed. This is an educational exercise, not a diagnostic test or a substitute for individualized care.

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