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*How to Change
the Way You Feel:
The Four Steps to Happiness*

↓
"Really 6 steps"

Let's assume you want to change the way you feel. First you will need a pen or pencil. It's far better to confront your problems by writing them down than by simply thinking them through. I can't emphasize the importance of this enough, if you want positive changes in your life! You can jot down your negative thoughts whenever you feel upset—in your office, at home, on a plane or bus. Once you get in the habit, you will see in black and white just how unrealistic they are.

Many people will tell themselves, "I'll just read this book and try to think things through a little better and that will be enough." This is a real trap. When you're upset, your negative thoughts will chase each other around in your mind in endless circles. Once you get them down on paper, you develop a more objective perspective. As you read the following pages, try the techniques I describe, even if you're convinced they won't work for you. I think you'll be surprised to discover how helpful they can be.

There are four steps to becoming a happier person.

Step 1: Identify the Upsetting Event

The first thing I want you to do is to write a brief description of a specific problem that's bothering you at the top of the blank Daily Mood Log on page 75, where it says "STEP ONE: DESCRIBE THE UPSETTING EVENT." A completed example is illustrated on pages 78-79. As you can see, when Marge was baby-sitting her two grandchildren she inadvertently let her granddaughter use her grandson's toothbrush. Her grandson had a sore throat and Marge started worrying that her granddaughter might catch it from him. When she went to bed that night Marge obsessed about the incident. She was concerned that her daughter, who was often quite critical of Marge, would become angry when she found out. Marge described the situation this way: "I inadvertently let Luci use her brother's toothbrush. Now I feel tormented and I can't sleep."

Perhaps you feel annoyed because a friend made a rude remark. Or you're embarrassed because you wrote a check that bounced, or received an upsetting letter in today's mail. Some people even get upset when something good happens. A graduating law student heard that his roommate had just received a job offer from a prestigious law firm. He felt jealous because he hadn't yet received such an appealing offer.

Sometimes bad moods are triggered by a negative memory or fantasy that comes out of the blue. While editing this paragraph, I suddenly felt as if I'd been kicked in the stomach. I realized I had been thinking about a patient who was angry with me for being charged for a late cancellation of a therapy session—I was imagining being hauled into court for a malpractice suit.

The most important principle to keep in mind when you identify the upsetting event is to be *specific*. Don't write down "Life stinks." If you told me that you wanted help with this problem, I would ask you, "What time of day was it stinking? Where were you when you noticed the smell?" Obviously I wouldn't really know what your complaint meant. If you just had an argument with your spouse or your boss, that would be something specific we could work on.

An attractive but shy young woman named Rita with a mild chronic depression told me that the problem she wanted help with was that she didn't have enough fun in life. I think you can see the difficulty with this: it's a little too vague. I asked Rita *when* she

THE DAILY MOOD LOG*

STEP ONE: DESCRIBE THE UPSETTING EVENT _____

STEP TWO: RECORD YOUR NEGATIVE FEELINGS—and rate each one from 0 (the least) to 100 (the most). Use words like sad, anxious, angry, guilty, lonely, hopeless, frustrated, etc.

Emotion	Rating	Emotion	Rating	Emotion	Rating
1.		3.		5.	
2.		4.		6.	

STEP THREE: THE TRIPLE-COLUMN TECHNIQUE—

Automatic Thoughts	Distortions	Rational Responses
Write your negative thoughts and estimate your belief in each one (0–100).	Identify the distortions in each Automatic Thought.	Substitute more realistic thoughts and estimate your belief in each one (0–100).

(Continue on next page)

THE DAILY MOOD LOG* (continued)

Automatic Thoughts	Distortions	Rational Responses

STEP FOUR: OUTCOME—Re-rate your belief in each Automatic Thought from 0 to 100 and put a check in the box that describes how you now feel:

- not at all better
- somewhat better
- quite a bit better
- a lot better

CHECKLIST OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS*

1. All-or-nothing thinking: You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories.
2. Overgeneralization: You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
3. Mental filter: You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
4. Discounting the positives: You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities "don't count."
5. Jumping to conclusions: (A) Mind reading—you assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there's no definite evidence for this; (B) Fortune-telling—you arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly.
6. Magnification or minimization: You blow things way up out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately.
7. Emotional reasoning: You reason from how you feel: "I *feel* like an idiot, so I really must be one." Or "I don't *feel* like doing this, so I'll put it off."
8. "Should statements": You criticize yourself or other people with "shoulds" or "shouldn'ts." "Musts," "oughts," and "have tos" are similar offenders.
9. Labeling: You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you tell yourself, "I'm a jerk," or "a fool," or "a loser."
10. Personalization and blame: You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behavior might contribute to a problem.

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THE DAILY MOOD LOG*

STEP ONE: DESCRIBE THE UPSETTING EVENT I inadvertently let Luci use her brother's toothbrush. Now I feel tormented and can't sleep.

STEP TWO: RECORD YOUR NEGATIVE FEELINGS—and rate each one from 0 (the least) to 100 (the most). Use words like sad, anxious, angry, guilty, lonely, hopeless, frustrated, etc.

Emotion	Rating	Emotion	Rating	Emotion	Rating
1. Anxious	90	3.		5.	
2. Guilty	90	4.		6.	

STEP THREE: THE TRIPLE-COLUMN TECHNIQUE—

Automatic Thoughts	Distortions	Rational Responses
Write your negative thoughts and estimate your belief in each one (0-100).	Identify the distortions in each Automatic Thought.	Substitute more realistic thoughts and estimate your belief in each one (0 and 100).
1. If Luci gets a sore throat it will be my fault. (100%) (20%)	1. personalization fortune-telling	1. I made an honest mistake. Luci probably won't get a sore throat. It won't be the end of the world if she does. I don't deserve to be punished like this. (100%)

(Continue on next page)

THE DAILY MOOD LOG* (continued)

Automatic Thoughts	Distortions	Rational Responses
2. If Bess finds out, she will be angry with me. (100%) (20%)	2. fortune-telling personalization	2. I don't know for certain that she'll blame me. If she is critical, I can apologize for making a mistake. If she continues to be angry and upset with me, I can tell her that I made an innocent mistake and that I'm uncomfortable with the way she's treating me. (100%)

STEP FOUR: OUTCOME—Re-rate your belief in each Automatic Thought from 0 to 100 and put a check in the box that describes how you now feel:

- not at all better
 somewhat better
 quite a bit better
 a lot better

wanted to have more fun. At first she said "all the time." I pointed out that I didn't know *anybody* who had fun *all* the time! With some encouragement, Rita admitted that she wanted to have more fun on the train home to New York after her session. When I asked her to tell me what she had in mind, it turned out that she wanted to talk to other people instead of feeling left out. When I asked whom, she reluctantly admitted that she hoped to talk to a cute guy.

This seemed like an easy assignment, since Rita was as cute as a bug in a rug! I can imagine that practically any young man on the train would jump at the chance to meet her. However, Rita had many negative thoughts in social situations that made her feel inhibited, such as, "It would be embarrassing to get shot down or rejected" and "What if I make a fool of myself in front of the other passengers?" After we dealt with these fears, we talked about how she could be more outgoing so she could start conversations with attractive fellows on the train.

A high school senior told her therapist she wanted help with "an identity crisis." You could talk about that problem for years without getting anywhere. The expression doesn't really mean anything. Her therapist asked her if there were any specific problems in her life she needed help with. She answered that she couldn't decide whether to go to college at Vassar or Bryn Mawr. After two sessions reviewing the relative merits of each option, she decided on Vassar. She said she felt great. Then her therapist asked if she still wanted help with her "identity crisis." She said she didn't think she had one anymore, and she felt ready to terminate her therapy. Defining the specific problem was the key to success.

Remember: only *real* problems can be solved. To be real, a problem must occur at some place and at some time of day. Sometimes you may have a nagging feeling that something isn't quite right but you can't put your finger on it. When this happens to me, I review on an hour-by-hour basis the various things I've done in the past day or two. I often go through my appointment book to see what I've been doing. Usually this helps me figure out what's bothering me. If I still can't figure it out, I may ask my wife or an associate at work who will often know why I'm upset even when I don't!

If worse comes to worst and you can't think of the specific problem, just write a general description of what you were doing when you felt bad. Examples: "At home washing the dishes and feeling lousy" or "Reading this book and feeling discouraged."

Now I want you to write a brief description of a situation that is bothering you at the top of the blank Daily Mood Log on page 78. Once you've done this, you can proceed to the next step.

Step 2: Record Your Negative Feelings

Write down your negative emotions and rate each of them on a scale from 1 to 100. Use words like sad, frustrated, discouraged, angry, hurt, anxious, embarrassed, upset, or guilty. A score of 1 for any emotion would be the least you could feel and a score of 100 would be the most. You can put down several negative feelings, because you will usually have more than one. You can see in her Daily Mood Log that Marge rated her feelings as "anxious—90" and "guilty—90." This indicated she was quite upset about the toothbrush incident.

Some of you won't like to rate your emotions with numbers because it seems artificial or overly compulsive. However, it can be a surprisingly effective device because then you can estimate how much better you feel after you complete the Daily Mood Log. It can also help you break the habit of thinking about your emotions in an all-or-nothing manner. If your anxiety goes down from 100 to 50, you might still be feeling tense, but you're nevertheless feeling quite a bit better. Giving yourself credit for this improvement will boost your morale and keep it high until you've resolved the problem completely. By the same token, there may be times when you still feel upset after completing the Daily Mood Log. This is important information. You can review the Troubleshooting Guide on page 86 to find out why you're stuck. Once you know what the problem is, it will help you to turn your feelings around.

I want you to write down and rate each of your negative emotions about the upsetting event you described in your Daily Mood Log. Once you've done that, you will be ready for the next step.

Step 3: The Triple-Column Technique

Ask yourself, "What are the negative thoughts that are associated with my bad feelings? What am I saying to myself about the upsetting situation?" Tune in to your inner dialogue. Listen with your "third ear." For example, during an argument with your hus-

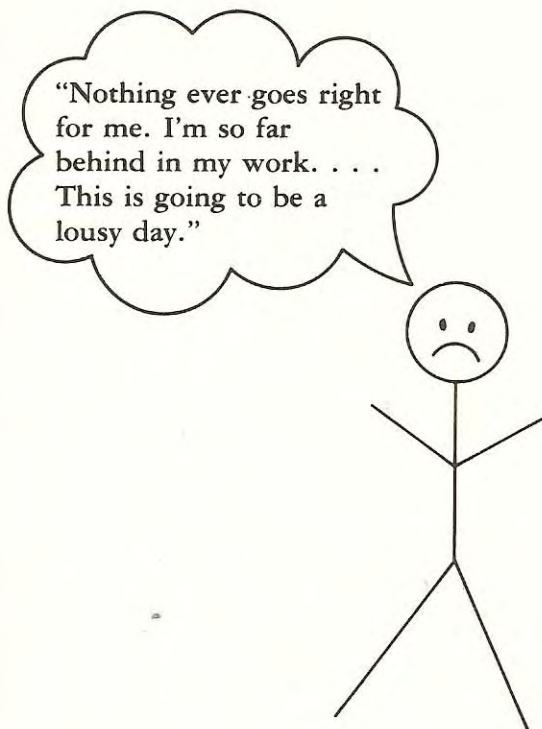
band you may be telling yourself, "If he really loved me he would listen to what I have to say." If you didn't get the promotion you had your hopes pinned on, you might be telling yourself, "I'll be stuck at this crummy job forever" or "I'm not getting fair treatment" or "I just don't have what it takes." If you're on a diet and you overeat, you might tell yourself that you're a fat pig with no willpower. If you notice an ache or pain or a tightness in your chest, you might feel panicky because you think you're on the verge of a heart attack or are dying of some dreadful disease.

As you become aware of your negative thoughts, write them down and number them in the "Automatic Thoughts" column of your Daily Mood Log. They're called Automatic Thoughts because when you feel upset, they come into your mind automatically, without any effort on your part. Getting in the habit of recording these Automatic Thoughts is one of the most important things you will learn in this book!

Many of my patients resist doing this when they feel upset. They believe that the Daily Mood Log won't help them. Don't succumb to these feelings! These methods are much more likely to help if you will grab a pen and do some writing while you read! Turn to page 75 now, if you have not done so already, and write a brief description of any upsetting event. Then record your negative emotions and write down your Automatic Thoughts. Do it now!

Sometimes you might not be able to pinpoint your Automatic Thoughts. If so, there's a simple solution. Draw an unhappy stick figure with a bubble above its head, like the one on page 83. Make up some negative thoughts that are upsetting the stick figure and write them down in the bubble. Ask yourself, "Why is this stick figure so unhappy?" Just make something up—anything will do. What you write down will usually tip you off to what's bothering you. A woman who insisted she didn't know what she was feeling upset about wrote this in the bubble: "I'll never be able to finish my graduate studies and get my master's degree." This led to a productive discussion of her perfectionism and fears of failure. Psychologists call this a "projective" technique, because the thoughts you put in the cartoon figure's mind are ones that you are projecting from your own mind. So it's not so surprising that they turn out to be the same ones that are actually bugging you!

After you have written down your Automatic Thoughts, estimate how much you believe each of them from 0 (not at all) to 100 percent (completely), and write the figure down in parentheses. The first



When you can't figure out what your gloomy thoughts are, draw an unhappy stick figure. Make up some negative thoughts that are making the stick figure upset and write them down in the bubble over his or her head.

negative thought Marge wrote down was "If Luci gets a sore throat it will be my fault," and the second one was "If Bess finds out she will be very angry with me." She recorded her belief in each thought as 100 percent, because they both seemed absolutely true.

When these negative thoughts first cross your mind, you will nearly always believe that they are the gospel truth. After all, if you don't believe a negative thought, it can't affect the way you feel. For example, you probably don't believe the thought "The world is coming to an end today." Therefore this thought won't make you feel

anxious or depressed. If you did believe it, you'd be *quite* agitated! You will eventually discover that the thoughts that upset you are nearly always quite unrealistic, although they seem completely valid when they are running through your mind. Your Automatic Thoughts are deceptive. They create the illusion of truth, even when they're extremely illogical. When you write them down, it will be easier to put the lie to them. The moment you see how unrealistic and pessimistic they are, you will feel better.

After you have written down and numbered each of your Automatic Thoughts, identify the distortion(s) in them in the middle column. You can refer to "The Checklist of Cognitive Distortions" on page 77 when you do this. What are the distortions in Marge's first negative thought, "If Luci gets a sore throat it will be my fault"? Put your ideas here:

1. _____
2. _____

Answer: One distortion is "personalization," because Marge is blaming herself for a negative event that is beyond her control. A second distortion is "fortune-telling," since she is predicting that Luci will catch her brother's sore throat.

You can see that her second negative thought contains the same two distortions. She's predicting that her daughter will be angry with her, and she's prepared to blame herself for her daughter's reaction. Many people with depression automatically blame themselves and get terribly self-critical whenever anyone is angry with them. Do you ever react this way? I know that I sometimes do, and it can really hurt! You just suddenly feel that you're "no good" inside.

After you identify the distortions in your Automatic Thoughts, substitute Rational Responses in the right-hand column, and indicate how strongly you believe each one from 0 percent to 100 percent. Marge's first Rational Response was: "I made an honest mistake. Luci probably won't get a sore throat. If she does it won't be the end of the world, and I don't deserve to be punished like this." In parentheses, she indicated that she believed this 100 percent. For the second Rational Response, Marge reminded herself that if her daughter did get hostile and critical—as she often did—she could calmly acknowledge that she made a mistake and apologize without getting defensive and without putting herself down. If her daughter continued to

harangue her, she could indicate that she was uncomfortable with the way her daughter was treating her.

This illustrates that the solution to a mood problem frequently has both an *individual* and an *interpersonal* dimension. Marge needs to change the way she thinks. She needs to develop better self-esteem and to stop being so self-critical. That's the individual dimension. At the same time, she needs to change the way she relates to other people, including her daughter. That's the interpersonal dimension. This may require some communication training, because Marge is extremely unassertive and she's afraid to express her feelings. She is terribly insecure and afraid of anger or conflict, so she takes too much abuse from other people. She automatically blames herself whenever anyone is annoyed with her. She is like an animal that goes belly up when threatened, hoping the predator will lose interest and go away. In Part IV we will talk about how to solve personal relationship problems and communicate more effectively.

Now I want you to complete your Daily Mood Log. After you write down your Automatic Thoughts, write how much you believe each one on a scale from 0 to 100 percent. In the middle column, identify the distortions in each thought, using the list on page 77 as a guide. Then write down more positive and realistic thoughts in the Rational Response column. Indicate in parentheses how much you believe each of them.

It is not terribly important to do a good job, because this is your first effort. It's much like your first time on roller skates: all you have to do is go through the motions, even if your efforts don't seem terribly graceful or effective. Once you've completed your Rational Responses, you're ready for the next step.

Step 4: Outcome

After you've answered all of your Automatic Thoughts, re-rate your belief in each of them. Cross out the original percent you rate each one, and put a new estimate of how much you now believe it in light of your Rational Response. You can see that Marge crossed out 100% and put in 20%, indicating she no longer believed her two Automatic Thoughts nearly so strongly. You will feel better the moment you see that your Automatic Thoughts are not valid.

Finally, evaluate how much better you feel in the "Outcome"

TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE*

If you still feel just as upset after you fill out a Daily Mood Log, ask yourself these questions:

1. **Have I correctly identified the upsetting event?** Sometimes you can't put your finger on the problem that's bothering you. You will often discover what it is if you review your activities for the past day or two. Make your description of the negative event specific: What happened? Where were you? What time was it? With whom were you involved?
2. **Do I want to change my negative feelings about this situation?** List the advantages and disadvantages of changing your feelings.
3. **Have I identified my Automatic Thoughts properly?** Remember not to put descriptions of upsetting events or feelings in the Automatic Thoughts column. If you have trouble figuring out what your negative thoughts are, use the stick figure technique.
4. **Are my Rational Responses convincing, valid statements that put the lie to my Automatic Thoughts?** Rationalizations won't make you feel any better. Your Rational Responses must not only be realistic and believable, but they must contradict your Automatic Thoughts. The moment you see that your Automatic Thoughts aren't valid, you'll feel better.

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section at the bottom of the sheet. As you can see in her log, Marge indicated she felt considerably relieved. That's because her Rational Responses were more realistic and believable than her Automatic Thoughts.

If you don't feel better after you complete the exercise, review the Troubleshooting Guide on page 86. Ask yourself the following questions:

Have I identified the upsetting event correctly? Remember to make the event specific, not vague. If you feel overwhelmed because you have many problems, then just choose one to work on first. It usually won't make any difference which one it is. Overcoming one problem will give you some inspiration and make it a lot easier to deal with the others.

If you can't put your finger on precisely what's bothering you, then review what's been going on in your life. With whom have you been talking? What have you been doing recently? This is like retracing your steps when you've lost something. Usually it will suddenly dawn on you what the problem is.

Do I really want to feel better? Sometimes you will have mixed feelings about letting go of a negative emotion. In fact your negative feelings may be quite healthy and realistic. If so, it might be better to express them instead of trying to make them go away by using the Daily Mood Log. For example, if someone is mad at you, or you are angry with them, it may be better to talk the problem over with them instead of trying to change your feelings about the situation with cognitive techniques. The chapters in Part IV on communication could be especially helpful in this case.

In deciding whether or not you want to change your feelings, list the advantages and disadvantages of feeling upset. (See page 113 for this "cost-benefit" technique.) Maybe you want to pamper yourself and let the feelings pass, or maybe there's a realistic problem you need to deal with. If you discover that the disadvantages of feeling upset outweigh the advantages, then it will be much easier to modify your feelings using the Daily Mood Log.

Have I identified my Automatic Thoughts properly? When you fill out the Daily Mood Log, remember that the thoughts you write down in the Automatic Thoughts column are the *interpretations* of the upsetting situation, not descriptions of the actual event. If you feel annoyed

because your husband is late coming home, it wouldn't be appropriate to put "George was late again" in the Automatic Thoughts column. This is the actual problem, so it goes in the space at the top of the sheet. The premise of cognitive therapy is that only your *thoughts*, and not actual events, upset you. In the Automatic Thoughts column you would put your negative thoughts about this event. You might be thinking, "This shows George doesn't love me" or "He's always late" or "He's probably having an affair with his secretary."

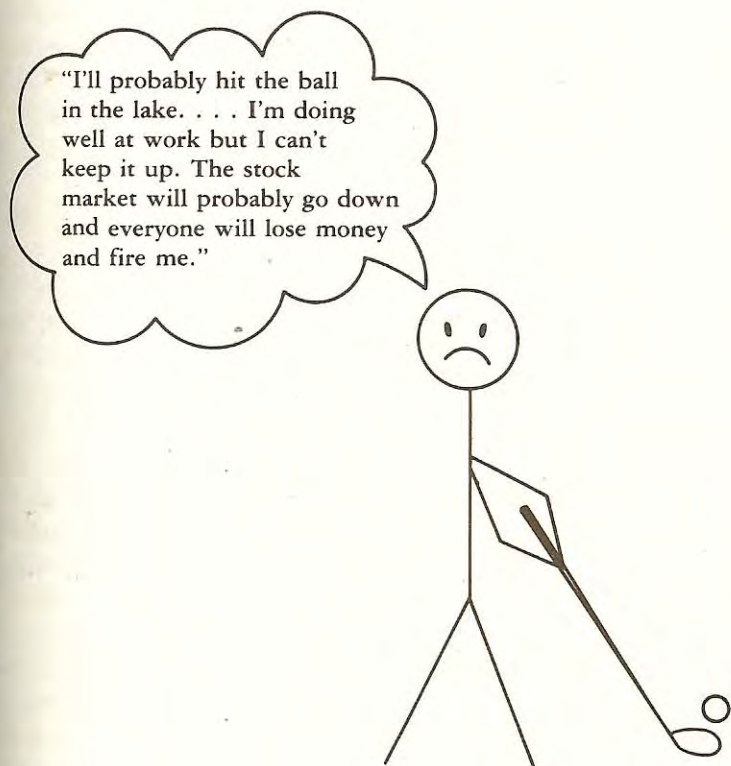
Another common mistake is to put descriptions of your feelings in the Automatic Thoughts column. Don't put "I feel hurt because my boss criticized me," because this is a situation ("My boss criticized me") and a feeling ("hurt"). Describe the situation at the top of the sheet and record your negative feelings. In the Automatic Thoughts column, put the thoughts that are associated with these feelings. Why do you feel hurt? Why was his criticism so upsetting to you? What are you telling yourself? You might be thinking, "He doesn't respect me" or "He's got no right to say that" or "I never do anything right" or "I'm about to get fired."

If you aren't sure what all your negative thoughts are, you can use the stick figure technique described earlier. When Jack was golfing with his friends, he suddenly felt very anxious and nervous. On the Daily Mood Log he recorded this Automatic Thought: "I shouldn't be feeling so nervous, since everything is going well for me." Jack is a stockbroker, and recently the market has been treating him well. He's been making lots of money and his clients are making lots of money. What is the main distortion in his Automatic Thought? Check the list of cognitive distortions on page 77 and put your ideas here:

Answer: Jack is making a "should statement," since he is telling himself he "shouldn't" feel anxious. He was able to come up with this Rational Response: "Human beings are not always perfectly rational. Some people do get nervous, even when things are going well."

This helped somewhat, because Jack was giving himself permission to feel nervous instead of condemning himself for being nervous.

However, Jack still hadn't identified all the thoughts that were making him feel nervous in the first place. Since he drew a blank, I asked him to draw a stick figure of a man very like himself, who was golfing and feeling nervous. I told him to make up some negative thoughts and to write them down in the bubble on top, to show what the stick figure was thinking. As you can see, the stick figure golfer was thinking, "This shot will probably go in the lake. . . .



Jack was upset while he was playing golf, but at first he didn't know why. When he wrote down the negative thoughts in the bubble over the stick figure's head, it became clear what he was worrying about.

I'm doing well at work but I can't keep it up. The stock market will probably go down and everyone will lose money and fire me." I asked Jack if his thoughts were at all similar to those, and he said, "Exactly!" I don't know why the stick figure technique is so effective, but it is! Use it any time you can't figure out what your Automatic Thoughts are.

Are my Rational Responses true and valid statements, or am I just rationalizing? Do they put the lie to my Automatic Thoughts? The purpose of the Daily Mood Log is to help you face reality. It won't be helpful if you deny your problems or try to cheer yourself up with phony rationalizations. After her boyfriend broke up with her, Linda felt guilty and depressed. She told herself she wasn't lovable and that everything was her fault. She felt there was something basically wrong with her personality, and she was terrified she'd never find a husband and end up a lonely old maid.

After talking about the problem with a friend, she decided that the fellow who rejected her was basically a jerk and that the problems in their relationship were actually his fault. This was simply a rationalization. Linda switched from "personalization" ("It's all my fault") to "blame" ("It's all his fault"). I don't think this is the most productive way to deal with the situation. I would prefer to see Linda pinpoint the specific problems in the relationship as fairly and objectively as possible so she can learn from the experience. Why did they break up? What did she do to contribute to the tension? What did he do? How could she deal with a similar problem differently in the future? If she confronts these issues without a loss of self-esteem, she won't get bitter or depressed and she can make her next relationship better.

In order to make you feel better, the statements in the Rational Response column must not only be valid, but they must also put the lie to your Automatic Thoughts. Suppose you meet an old school friend who is more attractive, more intelligent, more successful, and more popular than you. You might have the Automatic Thought, "Gee, I'm not as worthwhile as she is." This thought will make you feel insecure and inferior. You could come up with the Rational Response, "But I'm a better cook." While this might be absolutely true, it's not likely to give your self-esteem much of a boost! For example, your friend might be so successful that she flies to Paris in a Concorde jet and eats in five-star restaurants. Can you think of a Rational Response that would be more effective?

I don't want to create the impression that the solution to your problems will always be easy or magical. The successful application of these techniques can sometimes require persistent work over a period of time. If you want good results, I would recommend using the Daily Mood Log for ten to fifteen minutes per day, five days per week, for at least a month. This regular practice will help you get in shape emotionally, in much the same way that an athlete builds his strength and conditioning through daily workouts. Sometimes it will be easy to change your thoughts and feelings, but at other times it will be difficult because your negative thoughts will seem so powerful and convincing. It's a challenge for me sometimes, and I wrote the book! But if you work at it with determination, you'll get the job done.

Don't go to the other extreme of thinking that this will be too difficult for you. This method is within the reach of the average individual. In a study reported in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, Dr. Ivy Blackburn and her associates at the University of Edinburgh found that these techniques were very effective for working-class people. This proves that you do not have to be psychologically sophisticated to make cognitive therapy work for you. In a recent study in the journal *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, Dr. Jacqueline Persons and I reported the results of our research, which showed that these methods work equally well for patients with different levels of education and with a wide variety of income levels and cultural backgrounds. We discovered that regardless of whether you're rich or poor, brilliant or of average intelligence, old or young, a change in your thoughts and attitudes will have an enormous impact on the way you feel.

The four steps to happiness are summarized on page 92. Part of the beauty of this approach is that you can apply it to all kinds of problems. You can use it to break out of virtually any kind of bad mood—worry, sadness, anxiety, stress, frustration, guilt, anger. You can use it when you're having problems in your personal relationships, in your career, or in your attempts to modify a bad habit like drinking too much. For your convenience, I've included an additional Daily Mood Log (pages 93 to 96).

Coming up with believable, effective Rational Responses that successfully disprove your Automatic Thoughts takes practice. In the next chapter, I will describe many techniques that will help you develop more positive attitudes and greater self-esteem.

THE FOUR STEPS TO HAPPINESS*

STEP ONE—Identify the upsetting situation. Describe the event or problem that's upsetting you. Who (or what) are you feeling unhappy about?

STEP TWO—Record your negative feelings. How do you feel about the upsetting situation? Use words like sad, angry, anxious, guilty, frustrated, hopeless. Rate each negative feeling on a scale from 1 (for the least) to 100 (for the most).

STEP THREE—Use the triple-column technique. Tune in to the negative thoughts that are associated with these feelings. What are you saying to yourself about the problem? Write these thoughts in the Automatic Thoughts column and record how much you believe each one between 0 (not at all) and 100 (completely). After you identify the distortions in these thoughts, substitute Rational Responses in the right-hand column and record how much you believe each one between 0 (not at all) and 100 (completely). Make sure that your Rational Responses are convincing, valid statements that put the lie to your Automatic Thoughts.

STEP FOUR—Outcome. Indicate how much you now believe each Automatic Thought between 0 and 100. Once your belief in these thoughts are greatly reduced, indicate how much better you feel.

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THE DAILY MOOD LOG*

STEP ONE: DESCRIBE THE UPSETTING EVENT _____

STEP TWO: RECORD YOUR NEGATIVE FEELINGS—and rate each one from 0 (the least) to 100 (the most). Use words like sad, anxious, angry, guilty, lonely, hopeless, frustrated, etc.

Emotion	Rating	Emotion	Rating	Emotion	Rating
1.		3.		5.	
2.		4.		6.	

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Automatic Thoughts	Distortions	Rational Responses
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THE DAILY MOOD LOG* (continued)

Automatic Thoughts	Distortions	Rational Responses

STEP FOUR: OUTCOME—Re-rate your belief in each Automatic Thought from 0 to 100 and put a check in the box that describes how you now feel:

not at all better somewhat better quite a bit better a lot better

CHECKLIST OF COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS*

1. All-or-nothing thinking: You look at things in absolute, black-and-white categories.
2. Overgeneralization: You view a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
3. Mental filter: You dwell on the negatives and ignore the positives.
4. Discounting the positives: You insist that your accomplishments or positive qualities "don't count."
5. Jumping to conclusions: (A) Mind reading—you assume that people are reacting negatively to you when there's no definite evidence for this; (B) Fortune-telling—you arbitrarily predict that things will turn out badly.
6. Magnification or minimization: You blow things way up out of proportion or you shrink their importance inappropriately.
7. Emotional reasoning: You reason from how you feel: "I *feel* like an idiot, so I really must be one." Or "I don't *feel* like doing this, so I'll put it off."
8. "Should statements": You criticize yourself or other people with "shoulds" or "shouldn'ts." "Musts," "oughts," and "have tos" are similar offenders.
9. Labeling: You identify with your shortcomings. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you tell yourself, "I'm a jerk," or "a fool," or "a loser."
10. Personalization and blame: You blame yourself for something you weren't entirely responsible for, or you blame other people and overlook ways that your own attitudes and behavior might contribute to a problem.

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