

**COMMON LANGUAGE for PSYCHOTHERAPY (clp) PROCEDURES**  
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**TRIAL-BASED THOUGHT RECORD**

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Definition: A 7-column thought record created by a therapist and patient in a 'judicial trial' where a 'prosecutor', 'defence attorney', 'juror', etc weigh evidence for and against unrealistic beliefs in order to activate more realistic ones.

Elements: The therapist and patient fill in a Trial-Based Thought Record (TBTR) like that in Table 1 in one 50-minute session to show common cognitive-therapy techniques: downward arrow (TBTR column 1), examining the evidence (TBTR columns 2-3), defence attorney (TBTR column 3), thought reversal (TBTR column 5), upward arrow (in **Homework assignment** below TBTR), developing a positive belief (**Positive belief** below TBTR), and positive self-statement logs (Table 2).

Related procedures: cognitive restructuring, decisional balance, dialectical behavior therapy, downward arrow, upward arrow, imagery rescripting, describing & changing reciprocal role procedures, rational roleplay, writing therapy.

Application: Done individually and transdiagnostically to restructure beliefs, especially concerning oneself, e.g. "I'm imperfect" in the TBTR.

1st use? De Oliveira (2007).

References:

1. De Oliveira IR (2007) Trial-based thought records (TBTR). *Advances in Cognitive Therapy*, 9, 1-4.
2. De Oliveira IR (2008) Trial-Based Thought Record (TBTR): Preliminary data on a strategy to deal with core beliefs by combining sentence reversion and the use of an analogy to a trial. *Revista Brasileira de Psiquiatria*, 30, 12-18.
3. De Oliveira IR (2011) Kafka's trial dilemma: proposal of a practical solution to Joseph K.'s unknown accusation. *Medical Hypotheses*. *In press*.
4. De Oliveira IR, Powell VB, Wenzel A et al (2011) Efficacy of the Trial-Based Thought Record (TBTR), a new cognitive therapy strategy designed to change core beliefs, in social phobia: A randomized controlled study. *Submitted*.

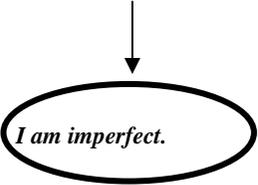
Case illustration: (De Oliveira, unpublished)

Ida, married, in her 30's, had for 3 years been anxious, angry and aggressive. She had difficulty dealing with subordinates (she was a manager in a company) and went on sick leave. Her depression worsened. Ida could not resume work and stopped her Master's-degree studies. She mutilated herself and made suicide attempts due to severe anxiety which did not reduce with antidepressants and high doses of benzodiazepines. Her benzodiazepines were tapered and replaced with quetiapine while she had weekly cognitive restructuring of beliefs such as "I'm a failure, incompetent, inadequate" by examining evidence for and against them. Though her anxiety decreased, external events re-activated her beliefs and she mutilated herself again.

6 months before the session yielding the Trial-Based Thought Record below, Ida started repeatedly verifying her wallet for hours daily, checking 13 items by touching

and reading each word in the documents and cards. Intensive exposure, ritual prevention, and cognitive restructuring therapy (2-3 weekly sessions to a total of 18 sessions) stopped her checking within 2 months. The TBTR illustrates attempted restructuring of beliefs during session no. 5, while Table 2 shows her homework diary.

Table 1 TBTR filled in during session 5 when Ida stopped herself completing a check.

<b>1. Inquiry / Establishing the accusation (belief):</b> What was going through your mind before you began to feel this way? What did these thoughts mean about you if they were true? The answer “ <i>If these thoughts were true, it means I’m a ...</i> ” is the <b>accusation</b> (belief)	<b>2. Prosecutor:</b>  What <b>supports</b> the accusation/belief in column 1.	<b>3. Defence attorney:</b>  What <b>does not support</b> the accusation/belief in column 1.	<b>4. Prosecutor’s answer to defendant:</b>  What thoughts discount positive evidence in column 3 (usually “yes, but...” thoughts)	<b>5. Defence attorney’s reply to prosecutor:</b>  Copy each thought of column 4 <b>first</b> , and <b>then</b> corresponding evidence in column 3, connecting them with BUT.	<b>6. Meaning of defence attorney’s reply to the prosecutor:</b>  What meaning do you attach to each sentence in column 5?	<b>7. Juror’s verdict.</b> Answer briefly: Who was more convincing? Who presented more evidence? Whose evidence was more based on facts? Who made fewer distortions? Who was more concerned about the defendant’s dignity?
<p><b>Downward arrow:</b>                      If the thoughts above were true, what would they mean about you?</p> 	<p><i>I’ve lost control of my whole life. <b>A</b></i></p> <p><i>I can’t absorb information quickly <b>C</b></i></p> <p><i>I’m slow at reasoning <b>C</b></i></p> <p><i>I don’t do well when interacting with people and controlling my environment <b>B, C</b></i></p>	<p><i>1. I don’t check my driver’s licence and I haven’t lost control.</i></p> <p><i>2. My OCD score fell today.</i></p> <p><i>3. I can remember some techniques without having to re-read the book.</i></p> <p><i>4. I’m completing the evidence chart.</i></p>	<p><i>1. BUT I check on other items <b>B</b></i></p> <p><i>2. BUT I’m not cured <b>B</b></i></p> <p><i>3. BUT I can’t remember them all <b>B</b></i></p> <p><i>4. BUT I still believe I’m imperfect <b>B</b></i></p>	<p><i>1. I check on other items BUT I don’t check my driver’s licence and haven’t lost control.</i></p> <p><i>2. I’m not cured, BUT my OCD score fell today.</i></p> <p><i>3. I can’t remember them all, BUT I can remember some of the techniques without having to re-read the book.</i></p> <p><i>4. I still believe I’m imperfect, BUT I’m completing my evidence chart.</i></p>	<p><b>It means that:</b></p> <p><i>1. I can stop myself checking.</i></p> <p><i>2. I can cure myself.</i></p> <p><i>3. I can learn.</i></p> <p><i>4. I see the other side of my imperfection (that I’m normal).</i></p>	<p><i>The prosecutor made errors: overgeneralization <b>A</b> discounting positives <b>B</b> and all-or-nothing thinking <b>C</b></i></p> <p><i>The defence attorney made no distortions, gave fairer and more consistent arguments.</i></p> <p><b>Verdict:</b> <i>The accused is innocent of the accusation.</i></p>
<p>Now, how much (%) do you believe you’re <i>imperfect</i>? <i>100%</i></p> <p>What does this belief make you feel? Anxiety</p> <p>How strong (%) is it? <i>100%</i></p>	<p>Now, how much (%) do you believe you’re <i>imperfect</i>? <i>100%</i></p> <p>How strong (%) is your anxiety now? <i>100%</i></p>	<p>Now, how much (%) do you believe you’re <i>imperfect</i>? <i>80%</i></p> <p>How strong (%) is your anxiety now? <i>80%</i></p>	<p>Now, how much (%) do you believe you’re <i>imperfect</i>? <i>90%</i></p> <p>How strong (%) is your anxiety now? <i>90%</i></p>		<p>Now, how much (%) do you believe you’re <i>imperfect</i>? <i>70%</i></p> <p>How strong (%) is your anxiety now? <i>70%</i></p>	<p>Now, how much (%) do you believe you’re <i>imperfect</i>? <i>55%</i></p> <p>How strong (%) is your anxiety now? <i>55%</i></p>

**Homework assignment.** Prepare for the appeal: If the defence attorney’s pleas are true, what does it mean about you? (**upward arrow** technique)

**Positive belief: *I am normal*** How much (%) do you believe in this new belief, daily, after writing down at least 3 pieces of evidence that support it?

A, B and C are the cognitive distortions defined in column 7.

Table 2 Homework diary: To prepare for the appeal, give 1-3 pieces of evidence daily showing that the positive belief “*I am normal*” is true.

<i>Date:</i> .....	(60%)	<i>Date:</i> .....	( %)
1. I woke up early and exercised.		1.	
2. I had breakfast with my husband.		2.	
3. I helped Mary with her homework.		3.	etc.