

Behaviour Experiment — Worksheet

Test your thoughts. Learn from experience.

Sometimes we can understand a more balanced thought intellectually but still not believe it emotionally. A behavioural experiment is a CBT technique that helps you test a prediction in real life and gather new information from what actually happens.

The purpose is curiosity, not proving yourself wrong

A useful experiment begins with a genuine question: *What happens if I try this?* You are collecting evidence rather than forcing a particular result.

Examples

- “If I ask a question, everyone will think I am stupid.” → Ask one appropriate question and observe the response.
- “If I do not check this again, something terrible will happen.” → Where safe and appropriate, reduce an unnecessary re-check and observe what happens.
- “If I say no, the person will reject me.” → Set one reasonable boundary and notice the actual response.
- “If I make a small mistake, I will not cope.” → Allow a harmless imperfection and observe how you manage it.

Keep experiments safe

Behavioural experiments should not involve genuine danger, stopping prescribed medication, ignoring medical advice, unsafe driving, illegal activity, deliberately provoking abuse, or exposing yourself to serious harm. The experiment should test an anxious or unhelpful prediction safely.

Plan My Behaviour Experiment

1. The thought or belief I want to test

2. My prediction

If I do _____, I predict that:

3. How strongly do I believe this prediction?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100%

4. What exactly will I do?

Make the experiment specific enough that you will know whether you completed it.

5. When and where?

Date/time: _____ Place: _____

6. What outcome would support my prediction?

7. What outcome would suggest a different possibility?

Notice Safety Behaviours

A safety behaviour is something you do to prevent the feared outcome or make yourself feel safer. Some supports are genuinely necessary. Others can make it difficult to discover whether the feared prediction would have happened without them.

Possible safety behaviour	Do I use this?	Can I safely reduce it?
Repeated reassurance	■	Yes / No / Not relevant
Checking repeatedly	■	Yes / No / Not relevant
Over-preparing / rehearsing	■	Yes / No / Not relevant
Avoiding eye contact / speaking	■	Yes / No / Not relevant
Taking someone only for reassurance	■	Yes / No / Not relevant
Escaping as soon as anxiety rises	■	Yes / No / Not relevant
Distracting myself constantly	■	Yes / No / Not relevant
Other: _____	■	Yes / No / Not relevant

My experiment plan

I will: _____

I will try not to: _____

The support I genuinely need is: _____

Before I begin

Anxiety: ____ /10 Confidence I can try this: ____ /10

Do It — Observe What Happens

Try to observe rather than judge yourself while the experiment is happening.

What actually happened?

Describe observable facts rather than only your interpretation.

What did other people actually do or say?

What happened to my anxiety?

Before: ____ /10 Peak: ____ /10 Afterwards: ____ /10

Did I use safety behaviours?

☐ No ☐ A little ☐ A lot

Which ones? _____

Did the feared outcome happen?

☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐ Something different happened

If something difficult happened, how did I cope?

What surprised me?

Learn From the Experiment

Compare your original prediction with the evidence you gathered.

Before	After
I predicted: _____	What happened: _____
Belief: _____ /100	Belief now: _____ /100
I feared I would not cope because: _____	What I learned about coping: _____
I thought other people would: _____	What I actually observed: _____

My new learning

What does this experiment suggest?

A more balanced belief

What would make the learning stronger?

- Repeat the same experiment
- Try it in a different setting
- Reduce another safety behaviour
- Make the experiment slightly more challenging
- Gather more evidence over time
- Other: _____

Quick Behaviour Experiment Record

Thought / prediction	_____
Belief before	_____ /100
Experiment	_____
What I did	_____
What happened	_____
What I learned	_____
Belief afterwards	_____ /100
Next experiment	_____

A Message From Me

Sometimes we can spend a long time trying to think our way out of a belief that was built through experience.

A behaviour experiment gives you a different opportunity: to gently test what your mind is predicting and see what real life tells you.

The result does not have to be perfect. Your anxiety may still rise. Somebody may not respond exactly as you hoped. You may make a mistake. The important part is noticing the whole outcome — including what you managed, what did not happen, and what you learned about your ability to cope.

Start small enough that you are willing to try.

Be curious rather than critical. One experiment gives you information. Repeating it can help new learning become stronger.

Small steps can create big insights.

Space to Breathe Therapy

This worksheet is for psychoeducation and self-reflection. Behavioural experiments should be safe and appropriate and should not involve ignoring medical advice or exposing yourself or others to genuine danger. Seek qualified professional support where needed.