

Low Self-Esteem Self-Monitoring Record

Despite our mistakes and less helpful personality traits, we all want to feel good about ourselves. However, if you struggle with low self-esteem, you probably judge yourself as being all bad, not good enough, or worthless.

Low self-esteem can bias your thinking. For instance, you might:

- Focus on your flaws while ignoring your strengths and achievements.
- Always expect the worst to happen.
- Set standards for yourself that are extreme or unrealistic.

One way to learn more about your self-esteem is to use a *Self-Monitoring Record*. It's like a diary that shows you when a problem tends to happen, as well as other important details about how it works.

The image shows a sample of the 'Low Self-Esteem - Self-Monitoring Record' form. It is a table with three main columns: 'Situation', 'Thoughts', and 'Emotions & body feelings'. Each column has a header with a brief description of what to record. The 'Situation' column header says 'Describe the situation that triggered your anxiety or self-criticism'. The 'Thoughts' column header says 'What were you predicting/expecting? What are you saying to yourself?'. The 'Emotions & body feelings' column header says 'What did you feel? How strong were those feelings? (Rate them on a scale from 0 to 100%)'. Below the headers, there are three empty rows for recording. At the bottom left of the form, there is a small note: 'How were you coping? What were you doing? What were you thinking? What did it trigger? What did it lead to?' and the 'PSYCHOLOGYTOOLS' logo.



How could this tool help me?

- It can help you identify the situations that trigger your anxiety, low mood, or self-criticism.
- It can help break 'big' or complex emotional experiences into smaller parts that you can work with (e.g., your thoughts, feelings, and responses to particular situations).
- It can help you and your therapist learn more about what contributes to your low self-esteem, and how you can overcome it.



How should I use it?

To start, you will need to choose a prompt – the thing that will remind you to complete the self-monitoring record. It's often helpful to choose a particular type of situation that you want to monitor. For example, "times when I expect something bad will happen" or "times when I feel bad about myself".

Each column will prompt you to record a different part of your experience.

- **Situation.** What was happening just before you experienced anxiety, low mood, or self-criticism? What might have triggered it? Your triggers might include people, places, objects, smells, thoughts, feelings, or other sensations.
- **Thoughts.** What were you predicting? What was running through your mind? What were you saying to yourself?
- **Emotions and body feelings.** What did you feel? How strong were those feelings? (Rate them on a scale from 0 to 100%)
- **Responses.** What did you do? How did you cope with those feelings?
- **Consequences.** How did responding in that way make you feel (immediately, later on)? What was helpful or unhelpful about responding in that way?



Helpful tips

- If possible, practice completing the record with your therapist at least once.
- Try to fill the record in as soon as possible after your experience, while your memory of what happened is still clear.
- Self-monitoring takes time to master: the more you practice, the easier and more helpful it will become.

Low Self-Esteem – Self-Monitoring Record

Situation Describe the situation that triggered your anxiety or self-criticism	Thoughts What were you predicting would happen? What are you saying to yourself?	Emotions & body feelings What did you feel? How strong was that feeling? (0–100%)	Responses What did you do? How did you cope with those feelings?
Who were you with? What were you doing? Where were you? When did it happen?	If it was an image or memory, what did it mean to you?		

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monday 3:00pm made a typo in an email.	my boss will think I'm stupid. I'll get fired.	Anxious	Apologize to my boss. Seek reassurance.
wednesday 8:00pm I told a secret that wasn't mine to tell and I got found out.	She'll never speak to me again. I'm so horrible that I don't deserve her friendship.	Ashamed worried Low	Put myself down. Drink to cope with how I am feeling. Don't try to make amends.
Friday 10:00am meeting with a customer at my house.	He'll see my hands shake and think that I'm crazy. He'll not want to do business with us again.	Nervous Anxious Embarrassed	Offered him a drink, but didn't have one myself in case he saw the cup shake in my hand.
Who were you with? What were you doing? Where were you? When did it happen?	If it was an image or memory, what did it mean to you?		

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monday 3:00pm made a typo in an email.	my boss will think I'm stupid. I'll get fired.	Anxious	Apologize to my boss. Seek reassurance.	Boss said he makes mistakes too, which made me feel better, but I also worried that my boss thinks I'm too fragile.
wednesday 8:00pm I told a secret that wasn't mine to tell and I got found out.	She'll never speak to me again. I'm so horrible that I don't deserve her friendship.	Ashamed Worried Low	Put myself down. Drink to cope with how I am feeling. Don't try to make amends.	Drinking helped me forget it for a little while, but I couldn't escape it and I felt worse afterwards.
Friday 10:00am meeting with a customer at my house.	He'll see my hands shake and think that I'm crazy. He'll not want to do business with us again.	Nervous Anxious Embarrassed	Offered him a drink, but didn't have one myself in case he saw the cup shake in my hand.	Helpful because I didn't have to worry so much about my hands. I still felt nervous for the whole time he visited.
Who were you with? What were you doing? Where were you? When did it happen?	If it was an image or memory, what did it mean to you?			