

# 45 Therapy Journal Prompts: CBT, DBT, and EMDR Exercises

## **CBT Journal Prompts for Cognitive Reframing**

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy focuses on the link between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Use these cbt journal prompts to challenge "stuck" thinking.

1. Describe a recent situation that caused you distress. What was the very first thought that popped into your head?
2. What cognitive distortion (e.g., all-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing) is present in that thought?
3. What evidence do you have that contradicts this negative thought?
4. How would you reframe this situation in a way that is more balanced and realistic?
5. If you believed the new, balanced thought, how would your feelings change?
6. Identify a "core belief" you hold about yourself (e.g., "I am not enough"). Where did this belief come from?
7. Write down three times this week that your negative core belief was proven wrong.
8. What is a "safety behavior" you use to avoid anxiety, and what would happen if you didn't do it?
9. Describe a recent "win" in your behavior. What thoughts led to that positive outcome?
10. How can you practice "behavioral activation" today by doing one thing you've been avoiding?
11. What is one thing you are worried about, and what is the actual mathematical probability of it happening?
12. If your best friend had this negative thought, what would you tell them?

## **DBT Journal Prompts for Emotional Regulation & Mindfulness**

Dialectical Behavior Therapy is designed to help with intense emotions and interpersonal conflict. These dbt journal prompts focus on distress tolerance.

13. Describe your current emotional state using the "Observe and Describe" technique (no judgment).
14. What "vulnerability factors" (e.g., lack of sleep, hunger, stress) made it harder to manage your emotions today?
15. Use the "STOP" skill: Describe a moment today you wanted to react impulsively but chose to pause instead.

16. Write about a situation where you practiced "Radical Acceptance." How did it change your physical tension?
17. What does your "Wise Mind" (the balance of your emotional and logical mind) tell you about your current problem?
18. List five things you can see, hear, and touch right now to practice "Mindfulness of Current Moment."
19. How did you use "Opposite Action" today (e.g., being kind when you felt like being angry)?
20. Describe a recent conflict. How could you have used the "DEAR MAN" skill to express your needs more clearly?
21. What is a "self-soothing" activity that involves all five of your senses?
22. How can you practice "distress tolerance" the next time you feel an emotional "10 out of 10"?
23. Write about a time you felt "effective" in a social situation. What did you do differently?

## EMDR Journal Prompts for Processing Past Memories

EMDR is used to process traumatic memories by focusing on physical sensations and beliefs. Use these emdr journal prompts carefully as a supplement to professional care.

24. Describe your "Safe Place" in vivid detail. What do you see, hear, and smell there?
25. When you think of a difficult (but not overwhelming) memory, where do you feel it in your body?
26. What is the "negative cognition" (e.g., "I am in danger") associated with that memory?
27. What is the "positive cognition" (e.g., "I am safe now") you would like to believe instead?
28. On a scale of 0 to 10, how true does that positive belief feel right now?
29. Describe any "floatback" memories—other times in your life you felt this same physical sensation.
30. What "container" can you visualize to hold your difficult thoughts until your next therapy session?
31. Write about the "Future Template": Imagine yourself handling a future trigger with calm and confidence.
32. What is one resource (a person, a strength, a memory) you can "install" to feel more resilient today?

# Narrative Therapy Journal Prompts for Personal Empowerment

Narrative therapy helps you externalize your problems so they don't define you. Use these narrative therapy journal prompts to reclaim your story.

33. Give your problem a name (e.g., "The Cloud of Anxiety"). How does this "character" try to influence your day?
34. When has "The Cloud" been less powerful? What were you doing differently in those moments?
35. What are the "untold stories" of your life—the times you were brave or kind that you usually forget?
36. If your life was a book, what would the current chapter be titled?
37. How has your past "trauma" or "struggle" given you unique skills or wisdom?
38. Write a letter from your "Future Self" to your "Current Self" offering encouragement.
39. What values are most important to you, and how did you honor them today?
40. If you were the author of your next chapter, what is the first plot twist you would write?

## Cognitive Journaling Prompts for Daily Reflection

41. What was the most significant "thought-feeling" connection you noticed today?
42. How did your physical state (e.g., fatigue) impact your mental clarity today?
43. What is one "cognitive goal" you have for tomorrow (e.g., "I will catch myself catastrophizing")?
44. List three things that prove you are more resilient than you feel.
45. What is the one truth you want to carry with you into sleep tonight?