Behavioral Experiments to Test Beliefs Worksheet

A behavioral experiment is a CBT technique that involves testing negative automatic thoughts and re-evaluating underlying beliefs and assumptions. This technique encourages people to view negative thoughts objectively rather than as absolute truths. First, therapist and client identify a belief they want to test. Then, a specific hypothesis is derived from this general rule, and an experiment is formulated to test this hypothesis.

This Behavioral Experiment worksheet includes 6 steps:

1. Clarifying the client’s original dysfunctional belief (e.g., “I can’t enjoy my life being single”), and rate how strongly he/she believes this will happen
2. Deriving a hypothesis from this belief to come up with an alternative belief (e.g., “I may be able to enjoy some things as a single person”), and rate how strongly he/she believes this will happen
3. Designing an experiment to test this alternative belief. To do this, consider what circumstances need to be in place for the hypothesis to be tested: where would the client need to go? What would they need to do or observe?
4. Carrying out the experiment
5. Recording your observations
6. Reflecting upon those observations. How did the dysfunctional belief hold up against the alternative belief?
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Worksheet

Original Belief
Believability rating (0-100%):

Hypothesis

Alternative Belief
Believability rating (0-100%):

Experiment
What needs to be in place for you to test your hypothesis?
Where would you need to go?
What would they need to do/observe?

Experiment
How did the original belief hold up against the alternative belief?

Believability rating (0-100%):