

Conduct a Behavioral Experiment

Objective

To examine a strongly held belief and change your behavior by conducting an experiment.

What to Know

Your thoughts and beliefs determine how you feel and act at any given moment. Even though thoughts can be irrational—or you lack evidence to support them—they can negatively impact your mood, choices, and behavior. A behavioral experiment is a cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) tool for testing thoughts and beliefs and replacing irrational and harmful ones with healthy alternatives. Behavioral experiments are powerful because you can challenge your beliefs in the real world instead of just hypothetically. They are often used for anxiety disorders that involve catastrophic thinking.

Behavioral experiments involve trying new behaviors or activities to gather data on whether your beliefs or assumptions hold true. Here are the steps for conducting a behavioral experiment:

1. Identify the belief to be tested.
2. Rate the strength of the belief.
3. Plan an experiment that could test the belief.
4. Identify any obstacles that could make it challenging to carry out the experiment.
5. Conduct the experiment.
6. Record the results.
7. Reflect on the results.

This experiment can help you recognize if your beliefs or assumptions are accurate. If they are not, you can replace them with healthy alternatives.

This worksheet is designed to guide you through creating and conducting your own behavioral experiment. Note: When planning the experiment, be sure it is realistic so you are more likely to follow through.

What to Do

Step 1: Identify the Belief

Describe the belief or assumption you want to test. Write your belief clearly and precisely.

How does this belief affect your emotions, thoughts, choices, or behaviors? Be specific!

Where and how did this belief originate?

Step 2: Rate the Strength

Rate the strength of this belief from 1 to 10, where 1 = this belief is weak and can be easily changed, to 10 = I believe this so strongly it would be impossible to change the belief: _____

Step 3: Planning the Experiment

What do you want to find out or prove through this experiment?

Describe the specific actions you will take to test your belief.

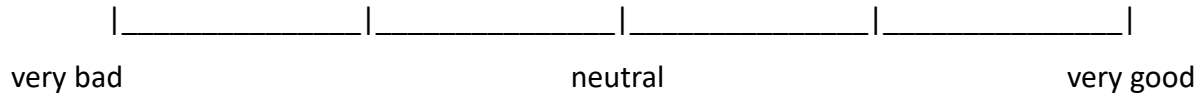
List any items or preparations needed to carry out the experiment.

When and where will you run the experiment?

What do you think will happen during the experiment?

What do you predict will happen if you act or behave contrary to your belief?

How do you expect to feel after the experiment?



Step 4: Identify Obstacles

Potential challenges or obstacles	How you will address them

Step 5: Conduct the Experiment

Record the date and details of how you implemented the experiment.

Step 7: Reflect on the Results

Did the results align with your hypotheses? What was the difference? Be honest!

What did you learn about your belief? Was it accurate, or does it need to be changed? Explain.

Now, rate the strength of this belief from 1 to 10, where 1 = this belief is weak and can be easily changed, to 10 = I believe this so strongly it would be impossible to change the belief: _____

Based on what you learned, what will you do next?

How did you feel before, during, and after the experiment?

Did any other insights or thoughts come up during the process? If yes, explain.

What would you do differently if you were to conduct this experiment again?

Given the evidence from the experiment, did your belief change? How will this impact your choices or behaviors?

Reflections on This Exercise

Did anything surprise you about this activity? If so, describe.

How helpful was this exercise? _____
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
