CBT Tools for Dissertation Success

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WEEK 4 — WORKSHEET EXERCISES

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⭐ **WEEK 4 — WORKSHEET ACTIVITIES**

Theme: Stress Management, Resilience, and Emotional Regulation in Doctoral Work

🔵 TOPIC 1: Recognizing Stress and Its Impact

Exercise 1 — Stress Identification

Topic Addressed: Recognizing Stress

List three moments this week when you felt stressed about your dissertation. For each, describe:

Situation	Physical / Emotional Response	Cognitive Distortion (if any)

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Exercise 2 — Stress Scale

Topic Addressed: Recognizing Stress

Rate each of the following situations on a scale of 1–5 (1 = low stress, 5 = extreme stress):

1. Preparing a literature review draft
2. Receiving feedback from advisor
3. Meeting dissertation deadlines
4. Presenting research ideas to peers
5. Scheduling research tasks around personal obligations

Write one **reflection sentence** on why the highest-rated stressor is particularly challenging.

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🔵 TOPIC 2: Emotional Regulation Strategies

Exercise 3 — ABC Model of Emotional Response

Topic Addressed: Cognitive Behavioral Emotional Regulation

Use the ABC model:

- **A = Activating Event**
- **B = Belief / Thought**
- **C = Consequence (Emotional / Behavioral)**

Complete the table for three recent stressful events:

Activating Event (A)	Belief / Thought (B)	Emotional / Behavioral Consequence (C)	Reframe / Alternative Thought

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Activating Event (A)	Belief / Thought (B)	Emotional / Behavioral Consequence (C)	Reframe / Alternative Thought

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Exercise 4 — Breathing & Mindfulness Practice

Topic Addressed: Emotional Regulation

1. Set a timer for **5 minutes**.
2. Practice **deep belly breathing**: inhale 4 sec, hold 2 sec, exhale 6 sec.
3. Write a reflection:
    - How did your body feel before and after?
    - Did your mind become calmer?

Optional: Repeat during a particularly stressful dissertation task.

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🔵 TOPIC 3: Building Resilience

Exercise 5 — Resilience Reflection

Topic Addressed: Academic Resilience

Answer the following:

1. Recall a past academic challenge you overcame. What strategies helped you succeed?
2. How can you apply these strategies to your current dissertation work?
3. What is one small goal for the next week that demonstrates resilience?

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Exercise 6 — Resilience Action Plan

Topic Addressed: Building Resilience

Create a 7-day resilience plan:

Day	Potential Stressor	Strategy to Build Resilience	Reflection at Day End
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

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🔵 TOPIC 4: Coping with Academic Pressure

Exercise 7 — Identifying Pressure Sources

Topic Addressed: Academic Pressure

List sources of academic pressure in your dissertation journey. For each, identify:

- Whether the pressure is **internal** (self-imposed) or **external** (advisor, program requirements)
- One CBT-based strategy to cope

Pressure Source	Internal / External	Coping Strategy

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Pressure Source	Internal / External	Coping Strategy

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Exercise 8 — Problem-Solving Skills

Topic Addressed: Coping and Action Planning

Scenario:
You have one week to submit a chapter draft, but unexpected personal obligations reduce your writing time.

1. List three **possible solutions**.
2. Evaluate each solution (feasible, effective, least stressful).
3. Select one solution and outline an **action plan**.

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Exercise 9 — Daily Stress Log

Topic Addressed: Emotional Regulation & Coping

Track your stress for one week:

Day	Stress Event	Intensity (1–5)	Coping Strategy Used	Reflection / Outcome
Mon				
Tue				
Wed				
Thu				
Fri				
Sat				
Sun				

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🔵 TOPIC 5: Integrating CBT & Mindfulness for Dissertation Success

Exercise 10 — Thought-Action Replacement

Topic Addressed: CBT Integration

For three negative or self-critical thoughts from the past week, write:

- Original Thought
- Distortion Type
- Alternative CBT Thought
- Corresponding Action to Reduce Stress

Original Thought	Distortion Type	Alternative Thought	Action

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Exercise 11 — Mindful Writing Session

Topic Addressed: Mindfulness in Academic Work

1. Set a **25-minute timer**.
2. Write continuously on a dissertation section, **not worrying about errors**.
3. After writing, reflect on:
    - How your focus shifted
    - Whether anxiety decreased
    - What you learned about your workflow

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