Task Review and Planner

Version 1.0

One of the key features of CBT is the use of “between session interventions” which are commonly known as homework. An important step in the use of any exercise or task is to complete the loop: review what was attempted, whether there were any difficulties in implementing the plan, reflect on what happened, summarize any key learning, and then plan any changes. While there is not a large evidence base, review of homework is supported

Here are few references supporting homework, and importantly the review of homework. There are many reviews of homework in CBT; most lead to similar conclusions.

Importantly, Kazantzis et al. (2016) reviewed the empirical evidence and concluded that both quantity and quality of homework produced similar effect sizes in adherence-outcome relations: more homework and better quality homework led to better outcomes.

Cronin et al. (2015) frame the importance of reviewing between session/home-work tasks within the broader context of the therapeutic relationship and case conceptualization/formulation in an article oriented toward clinicians. They also illustrate their argument with case examples.

Although we do not as yet have much direct evidence that therapist review of homework leads to better outcome, there are a few studies that show that better reviewing leads to better compliance. These types of study are typically very hard to do as they involve long mediational chains, are very hard to conduct, are rarely directly funded and so are either observational or secondary analyses of other studies. Given they are very resource intensive and generally unfunded, they are typically underpowered. However, there are a few:

Bryant et al. (1999) reported that “Patients who were more compliant with homework exhibited significantly greater treatment response…. Homework compliance was most strongly predicted by therapists' reviewing homework assigned previously...”

Weck et al. (2013) reported that “a specific therapeutic competence (i.e., competence in reviewing homework) is associated with patient compliance with homework”.

Zelencich et al., (2020) concludes that “greater therapist competence in homework review… significantly associated with higher levels of homework engagement”

So, on balance there is a good evidence base that better homework engagement leads to better outcome, there are sound therapeutic reasons that support the role of homework review, and some limited evidence that better review by therapists leads to better engagement with homework (and so should lead to better outcomes). The following worksheet is one way to do this by supporting therapists and clients to ask a series of questions that build on each other and lead to a conclusion and a plan. Other ways may be equally or more effective.

Bryant, M. J., Simons, A. D., & Thase, M. E. (1999). Therapist skill and patient variables in homework compliance: Controlling an uncontrolled variable in cognitive therapy outcome research. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 23(4)*, 381-399.

Cronin, T. J., Lawrence, K. A., Taylor, K., Norton, P. J., & Kazantzis, N. (2015). Integrating between-session interventions (homework) in therapy: The importance of the therapeutic relationship and cognitive case conceptualization. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 71(5),* 439-450.

Kazantzis, N., Whittington, C., Zelencich, L., Kyrios, M., Norton, P. J., & Hofmann, S. G. (2016). Quantity and quality of homework compliance: a meta-analysis of relations with outcome in cognitive behavior therapy. *Behavior Therapy, 47(5)*, 755-772.

Weck, F., Richtberg, S., Esch, S., Höfling, V., & Stangier, U. (2013). The relationship between therapist competence and homework compliance in maintenance cognitive therapy for recurrent depression: Secondary analysis of a randomized trial. *Behavior Therapy, 44(1)*, 162-172.

Zelencich, L. M., Kazantzis, N., Wong, D., McKenzie, D. P., Downing, M., & Ponsford, J. L. (2020). Predictors of Homework Engagement in CBT Adapted for Traumatic Brain Injury: Pre/post-Injury and Therapy Process Factors. *Cognitive Therapy and Research, 44(1)*, 40-51.

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An important step is to complete the loop: review what was attempted, whether there were any difficulties in implementing the plan, reflect on what happened, summarize any key learning, and then plan any changes. The boxes will expand.

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| 1. | **What was the planned task?**  Be as specific as possible: what, how much, how often, etc. |
| 2. | **What did you attempt?**  Be as specific as possible: how much, how often, etc. |
| 3. | **Were there any difficulties? What got in the way?**  If so, were you able to get around them? |
| 4. | **What did you complete?**  Be as specific as possible: how much, how often, etc.? |
| 5. | **What did you find out?**  Was this expected? If so, what do you make of this?  Was this unexpected? If so, what do you make of this? |
| 6. | **What is the conclusion to date?** |
|  | **What is the next step?**  Do I need to do it differently? If so, how?  Do it again? If so, how much?  Move onto something new? If so, why? What? |