**CBT Rationale:**

We will work to change thoughts and behaviors that are feeding the negative feelings you’ve been experiencing. For example, if you feel depressed, you will likely have many negative thoughts, possibly about yourself or others or about your life in general. Also, when you’re depressed, you’re more likely to act in ways that only feed your negative thoughts and sadness. These behaviors may include withdrawing socially, avoiding tasks, and poor self-care. In CBT, you will learn skills to change unhelpful thought and behavior patterns, which will help you feel better emotionally.

**Negative Automatic Thoughts: How to Identify**

1. When you’re depressed, people frequently overlook their negative thoughts, or cognitions and assume what they are thinking is truth or reality. In CBT, we work to question the reality created by depressive thoughts. The first step in doing this is learning to catch or identify *automatic thoughts*. An automatic thought are thoughts that pop into our heads and most of the time, happen automatically and outside of our awareness. We are usually more aware of the emotion these thoughts make us feel, such as sad or depressed, and we do not question what we are thinking. But, often the thoughts we are having are distorting reality in some way. Before we can even start questioning our thoughts, we have to slow down our thoughts and know what may be fueling our sadness. One way to do this is to systematically write down moments we feel a negative emotion, and identify what thoughts we were having during those moments.
2. As you get better at identifying your automatic thoughts, you will see that these negative thoughts that flood your mind can fuel your sadness and depression. These thoughts are what keep you lethargic and make you feel inadequate. Finding ways to noticing and evaluating the accuracy of your negative thoughts is key to feeling better.
3. When we look at your thoughts, sometimes they are true, not true, or have a grain of truth. We will teach you how to evaluate the accuracy of your thoughts by looking at the evidence. What evidence is there that the thought is true? What evidence is there that the thought is not true?

**Negative Automatic Thoughts: Tracking**

1. Because your automatic thoughts are so quick, they are hard to notice or remember, we want to practice identifying them by writing them down on what we call a *Thought Record.* We usually notice how we’re feeling before we notice what we’re thinking. I want you to notice moments when you feel a negative emotion and write down on the Thought Record what the situation was, what emotions you were feeling, and then what thoughts you had when the event or situation happened.
2. It is crucial to write down your automatic thoughts. Writing them down forces you to look at it more objectively. It also helps you see if there are any patterns or mistakes in your thoughts.

**Negative Automatic Thoughts: Cognitive Distortions**

There are many common mistakes, or *cognitive distortions*, people make in their thinking. By figuring out what cognitive distortion you are doing, you can respond to the thought better. One cognitive distortion is called *all or nothing thinking,* where you see things in very black and white terms. For example, if you were feeling depressed and unable to finish your homework, you would think that you were a failure and will always be a failure forever.

**Behavioral Experiments: Rationale**

1. Earlier we talked about finding evidence for your automatic thoughts. Doing a *behavioral experiment* is one way to find evidence. You will act out your automatic thought and see what happens. For example, if you think you cannot get out of bed because you feel so sad, we will see if you can. If you can get out of bed, you now have evidence that you can do it. If you cannot, that is ok—we will talk about how to respond so you do not feel even worse.

**Behavioral Experiments: Hypotheses Testing**

1. When we do behavioral experiments, we will create *hypotheses* to test. In *hypotheses testing*, we challenge unhelpful behaviors and thoughts by testing out alternative ways of responding. We do this by developing a behavioral experiment to test if your new way of thinking or new behavior makes you feel better than your current thoughts and behaviors. We then “collect data” as you run the experiment. For example, you know that lying in bed is unhelpful for your depression. You have the hypothesis that getting out of bed and taking a shower as soon as you wake in the morning will be helpful to your mood. You then test out this hypothesis and collect data by monitoring your mood on days you did wake up and take a shower compared to the days you laid in bed all day. Once you’ve collected the data, we would evaluate the benefits of the new behavior.
2. Doing these behavioral experiments is difficult and can bring up many emotions. To help better understand how intensely you are feeling these emotions, we will teach you to use a rating scale called the subjective units of distress scale (SUDS). Using the SUDS, your emotions will range in intensity from 0 or not noticeable to 100 or at the highest extreme. The SUDS will help you communicate what you are feeling more accurately and in an understandable way to both of us. As you become more skilled at using the SUDS, you will feel clearer about your feelings and more able to make decisions about what you would like to try to do in therapy.

**Case Study of CBT**