



Syracuse Integrative Psychiatry

Comprehensive care. Transformative outcomes.

## Week 5: Automatic Thoughts

*Catching the "Hot Thoughts"*

**What are Automatic Thoughts?** They are the quick, fleeting thoughts that pop into our minds spontaneously throughout the day. We often don't even notice them, but they have a huge impact on how we feel.

They are like a running commentary on our lives. When we are depressed or anxious, this commentary tends to become negative, critical, and biased.

### Characteristics of Automatic Thoughts

- **Spontaneous:** They just pop up; you don't try to think them.
- **Specific:** "I messed up that email" (not just "I'm bad").
- **Believed:** We usually accept them as 100% true facts, even if they aren't.
- **Condensed:** Often just a word or image ("Loser," "Disaster").

## How to Catch Them

The key is to notice when your mood changes. Ask yourself:

**"What was just going through my mind?"**

## Week 5 Homework: The 3-Column Record

This week, your only job is to **catch** the thoughts. Don't try to change them yet. Just write them down.

Situation Who, what, where, when?	Emotion What did you feel? (0-100)	Automatic Thought What went through your mind?
Example: Saw a group of friends laughing.	Sad (80%), Insecure (90%)	"They are probably laughing at me. I don't fit in anywhere."

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