

EXERCISE: Mood-and-Control Record

Over the next week, take note of times of significant positive or negative mood. In the column on the left, indicate whether it was a positive mood or a negative mood, and rate its intensity. In the column on the right, rate the extent that your mood was due to a conscious effort to suppress, inhibit, or direct attention away from your thoughts. If you need more space, visit www.overcoming.co.uk to download other copies of this mood-and-control record.

Mood-and-Control Record

Mood State (Label whether mood positive or negative; rate mood intensity from 1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = strong.)	Rate Mental-Control Effort (0 = no effort, 1 = slight effort, 2 = moderate effort, 3 = strong effort)
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

If you kept a mood-and-control record over the last week, congratulations! Rarely do we systematically test our beliefs about the mind. Instead, we tend to assume we know what affects our thoughts and feelings.

So what did you learn about the effects of mental-control effort on your mood fluctuations? Respond to these questions:

1. What's the relationship between your mood state and how much you try to control your thoughts? Did you only feel good when your mental-control effort was high and worse when mental-control effort was low?

2. How effective were you at changing your mood state by exerting greater mental-control effort?

3. Did a calm or positive mood ever happen without conscious effort on your part?

4. Did you have spontaneous positive thoughts or daydreams that made you feel good without any effort on your part?

5. How often did you feel like you had strong mental or emotional control without much conscious effort on your part?

Intuitively, we all believe that more self-control is better. But greater control effort is not always the answer to better mood. Recall the life experiences you noted at the beginning of this chapter. Often, greater control effort is associated with more distress, whereas letting go of mental-control effort can have beneficial effects on your mood state.