(TRADITIONAL) COGNITIVE CONCEPTUALIZATION
DIAGRAM EXAMPLE

Name: ____________________________ Date: ____________ Diagnosis: ____________

RELEVANT LIFE HISTORY and PRECIPITANTS
Father leaves family when Abe is 11 years old. He never sees him again. Mom is
overburdened, criticizes when he can’t meet her unrealistic expectations. Precipitants to
current disorder: Abe struggles and then loses his job and undergoes divorce.

CORE BELIEF(S) (during current episode)
I’m incompetent/a failure.

INTERMEDIATE BELIEFS: ASSUMPTIONS/ATTITUDES/RULES (during current episode)
It’s important to be responsible, competent, reliable and helpful.
It’s important to work hard and be productive.

During Depression:
(1) If I avoid challenges, I’ll be okay, but if I try to do hard things I’ll fail.
(2) If I avoid asking for help, my incompetence won’t show but if I do ask for help, people will
see how incompetent I am.

COPING STRATEGIES (during current episode)
Avoids asking for help and avoids challenges.

SITUATION #1
Thinking about bills

AUTOMATIC THOUGHT(S)
What if I run out of money?

MEANING OF A.T.
I’m a failure.

EMOTION
Anxious

BEHAVIOR
Continues to sit on couch; ruminates about his failures

SITUATION #2
Thinking of asking son for help in revising resume

AUTOMATIC THOUGHT(S)
I should be able to do this on my own.

MEANING OF A.T.
I’m a failure.

EMOTION
Sad

BEHAVIOR
Avoids asking son for help

SITUATION #3
Memory of being criticized by boss

AUTOMATIC THOUGHT(S)
I should have tried harder.

MEANING OF A.T.
I’m a failure.

EMOTION
Sad

BEHAVIOR
Ruminates about what a failure he was

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