Unhelpful Thinking Patterns

Our minds are constantly interpreting what's happening around us. To do that quickly, the brain relies on familiar thinking patterns. Sometimes those patterns are helpful. Other times, they can distort how we read a situation and make a threat feel bigger or more certain than it actually is.

Thinking Pattern	What It Sounds Like	What This Pattern Does
All-or-Nothing Thinking *(Black-and-White Thinking)*	"If I'm not perfect, I've failed."	It pushes you into extremes and blinds you to the middle ground the place where progress actually happens.
Catastrophising	"What if (insert worst case scenario)." "I won't cope if this happens."	It pulls you straight into the worst-case scenario, making discomfort feel like danger.
Overgeneralising	"I always mess this up." "Nothing ever works out for me."	It takes one moment and turns it into a rule about your entire life, creating a sense of hopelessness.
Mental Filtering	"I only see what went badly." "That one awkward moment ruined everything."	It zooms in on the negative and blocks out everything else, shrinking your sense of perspective.
Disqualifying the Positive	"They were just being nice." "I only did well because I got lucky."	It stops positive moments from landing, making it harder for your brain to register safety or success.
Mind Reading	"They probably think I'm annoying." "Everyone's judging me."	It fills in the blanks with threat, even when you have no real evidence.
Fortune Telling	"I'll definitely panic." "This will end badly."	It convinces you the future is already written and always in the worst direction.
Should Statements	"I should be over this by now." "I shouldn't need support."	It adds pressure and self-judgment, pulling you away from what you actually need in the moment.

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Labelling	"I'm just weak." "I'm terrible at this."	It turns a single moment into an identity, leaving no room for growth or nuance.
Emotional Reasoning	"I feel anxious, so something must be wrong." "I feel scared, so this is unsafe."	It treats emotions as facts, confusing internal activation with external threat.
Personalisation	"It's my fault they're upset." "This happened because of me."	It makes you responsible for things you were never meant to carry.
Jumping to Conclusions	"They didn't text back, they must be angry." "If I don't get this right, I'll be rejected."	It fills gaps in information with fear, narrowing your ability to see other possibilities.

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