

Catch it. Check it. Replace it.

Three steps for the moment a bad thought shows up. Not positive thinking. Fact-checking your own brain.

1 Catch it

Don't argue with the thought. Put a name on it first.

Catastrophizing

The worst thing that could happen becomes the only thing that could happen.

"Let's talk tomorrow" → "I'm getting fired."

Mind-reading

You decide what someone else is thinking, with no actual evidence.

"They didn't reply, so they're annoyed with me."

All-or-nothing

One slip-up becomes a verdict on who you are.

"I missed one workout, so I have no discipline."

2 Check it

Run the same check you'd run on a suspicious headline.

1. What is this thought trying to get me to do?

Panic? Pull away? Quit? Send the apology text at midnight? Every one of these thoughts has a job.

2. What's the actual evidence?

Only what you could show to another person. Not a feeling. Something you can point at.

3. What's the boring explanation?

There almost always is one, and it is almost always more likely than the story you wrote.

3 Replace it

Not a nicer thought. A more accurate one. Two parts.

Part one

What actually happened, said plainly. No spin in either direction.

Part two

The next thing you can actually control.

AUTOMATIC

"I have zero discipline. I always blow it."

FORCED POSITIVE

"I am unstoppable." (bounces right off)

ACCURATE

"I skipped today because I was exhausted. One day is one day. Back at it tomorrow at six."

It won't make you feel amazing. It makes you feel accurate, and accurate is what your brain will accept.

The two-minute drill

End of the day. One entry. Three parts. You're not fixing anything in the moment. You're practicing when nothing's at stake, so the steps are there when something is.

WHAT HAPPENED + THE THOUGHT	WHICH OF THE THREE	THE ACCURATE SENTENCE
Text on "Read" 6 hrs. <i>"They're annoyed with me."</i>	Mind-reading	They opened it. That's all I know. I'll check in tomorrow if I still care.



SCAN TO WATCH THE VIDEO

How to Stop Catastrophizing

allenstafford.com • Think Sharper. Stay Sovereign.

Sources: Lieberman et al. 2007 • Kircanski, Lieberman & Craske 2012 • Beck 1976
/ Burns 1980 • Wood, Perunovic & Lee 2009

See the wires.