

Managing Catastrophic Thoughts

When something unexpected happens or we are impacted intensely by an incident, we find ourselves constantly thinking about it. Getting the thoughts out of our head and putting the incident aside is near impossible. But the more we think about it, the more difficult putting it aside becomes. Before we know it, we are 'addicted' to thinking about it and 'cannot' stop. We catastrophise and become emotionally and mentally exhausted.

This is very unhealthy and can lead to burn-out and depression. There are things you can do to stop the cycle, but you need to be pro-active. Instead of thinking about the incident, turn your mind to the following thoughts:

- ◆ I am here now. I am present in my body. The incident is not happening now. All that is happening now is a thought about it. Just a thought.
- ◆ Look around at your surroundings. Note the objects – chairs, desk, kitchen sink, whatever is there. Take note of the colours and shapes. Touch something real. Note how that is real, but the thought is not.
- ◆ If 'it' happens again, I will cope with it. I am still here now, so I obviously coped with it last time. The sky won't fall in and life will go on. I *will* get through it.
- ◆ If the thought keeps coming back, actively say 'STOP' out-loud. Tell the thought 'off' as you would a naughty child who keeps doing something you've told them not to.
- ◆ Notice if you catastrophise other situations. Do you have over-the-top thoughts about other things that have happened or might happen? If so, practice nipping them in the bud also. Break the bad habit of expecting or assuming the worst.
- ◆ Always be aware that life is unpredictable. It throws the unexpected at us all the time. Be prepared that things won't always go to plan. Be ready to change tack and cope with whatever life brings. Be realistic in your expectations and you won't be disappointed.
- ◆ Remember to also keep in mind that outcomes can be positive too. So while being prepared for the unexpected, don't assume it. Also think about the best case scenario. Being prepared does not mean being pessimistic.
- ◆ Pay attention to your overall well-being. Ensure you get enough rest, good food, exercise, relaxation and time with friends. If your life is out of balance, you will get stressed more easily, making catastrophising an easier pitfall to fall into. Self-care should always be at the top of your list.

If you would like to know more, get in touch. Mindfulness therapy is especially helpful in taking charge of unwanted thoughts. We can show you how.

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