

Self-Care and Clarity of Mind...a weekly column by Princess Lakshman (Sister Iqra)



Welcome to my weekly column on **Self-Care and Clarity of Mind**. If you're taking time out to read this, pat yourself on the back because you have shown commitment to taking care of your mind and body.

Today, In Shaa ALLAH, we will explore the topic: **Catastrophising**

Has anyone ever called you dramatic? Or a drama-queen? Or that you are blowing things out of proportion? Or that you are creating a mountain out of a molehill? If so, then it may be because you have interpreted a situation in an exaggerated manner whereby you perceived it to be worse than it actually was in reality.

So, how do you know if you are catastrophising? Well, next time you are in a situation which evokes a reaction in you to say "Oh No!" or "What if!!!", it may be that you are catastrophising.

Catastrophising is to present or perceive a situation to be a lot worse than it actually is. Often when people harbour unprocessed emotional pain or trauma, they may have a tendency to catastrophise events in their lives. The reality may not be as bad as they may perceive it to be, yet they become defensive and react to the situation with high caution.

For example, statements like the following:

"**Oh no**, I haven't received his/her text reply. Maybe he/she just doesn't care about me"

or

"He hasn't said much today...**what if** he's having an affair?"

or

"**Oh no!** I'm having a chest ache!...**what if** I'm having a heart attack"

All these statements have one thing in common - a negative thinking pattern known as "**unhelpful thinking styles**".

Identify Your Thinking Style

Think of a situation where you may have catastrophised.

Describe the situation	What were your thoughts at the time?	What were your feelings during this situation?

Strategies To Stop Catastrophising

Constant catastrophising zaps away all joy from your life. The following strategies may help overcome the habit of catastrophising.

1. **In any given situation, identify what is real.** Resist the temptation to exaggerate things in your mind. If you are confused about what is real, ask someone.
2. **Belly breathing** - the moment you feel the need to express “Oh no!” or “What if”, bring your awareness to your breathing. Take in slow, deep breaths and feel the movement of your belly as you inhale and exhale. This brings your awareness to the present moment.
3. **Focus on the situation at hand, NOT on a similar situation** that may have happened in the past or with someone you know. Every single situation has its unique set of reasons and deserves to be examined without comparison.
4. **Lie down** - whenever the feeling of “Oh no” or “What if” overwhelms you, lie down. Try to have a nap to relax the nervous system.
5. **Make wudu** - bring your awareness to make wudu with complete mindfulness. Perform each action with focus.

In Shaa ALLAH, next week we will explore the topic: **It's Never Too Late And You're Never Too Old**

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