

How to Overcome the Catastrophizing Habit

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One of the most destructive daily habits I carried with me for a long time was the common thought habit of catastrophizing.

This is when you build up a nightmare scenario of how everything could go totally wrong in some situation and imagine a big catastrophe in your mind.

You may have a presentation tomorrow and your mind starts to pull up a scenario where you have left your notes at home, you make a fool of yourself, you are embarrassed in front the whole company and your boss yells at you for 20 minutes after the meeting.

Scary stuff for sure.

So how did I learn to handle this one?

Step 1: Loudly say stop to your inner critic.

The catastrophe that has started to brew in your mind comes from your inner critic.

He is telling you: "You will fail because it is what you always do."

Or that you have not prepared enough.

Or that the boss will not be pleased with your presentation for some reason or other.

Or all of that.

So stop the inner critic quickly. In your mind, as soon as these thoughts pop up, shout:

"NO, NO, NO!"

Or: "NOPE, we are not going down that path!"

This will disrupt that train of thought and help you toward feeling more level-headed again.

Step 2: Focus on your breathing.

Be still for a minute or two. Sit down if you can. Focus on just your in- and out-breaths. Nothing else.

This will calm your body down from the stress and it helps your mind to return to what is happening right now in this moment instead of being lost in future nightmares.

Step 3: Look to the past for the truth.

Think back to your past.

How many times in the past have these catastrophe scenarios that your mind throws at you actually become reality?

Never or very few times I would imagine. That has certainly been the case for me.

So remind yourself of the actual facts from the past to draw yourself back to the more level-headed and centered version of yourself.