Three Thoughts Anxiety Likes To Tell You

Anxiety has a small repertoire

It tells you the same three stories, dressed up to look new.
Naming the pattern is most of the work — the thought stops feeling like a fact.



Catastrophising

- Taking a small worry and running it to the worst possible end.
- Example: 'I forgot to send that email. I will be fired. I will lose the house.'
- **What to do:** Notice the runaway. Say to yourself: 'That is catastrophising.'

Then return to the next concrete task.



All-or-nothing

- Turning nuance into a binary.
- Example: 'If I cannot do this perfectly, there is no point trying.'
- **What to do:** Look for the grey.

'I cannot do this perfectly AND it is still worth doing imperfectly.



Mind-reading

- Assuming you know what someone else is thinking, usually the worst.
- Example: 'They looked at me oddly. They must think I am incompetent.'
- **What to do:** Notice the assumption. 'I am mind-reading.
- The most generous explanation is X.'

The de-fuse

Add one phrase to the front of any anxious thought:
'I am having the thought that...' or 'My mind is telling me...'
This creates a half-step of distance. You are not the thought.
You are the one noticing it.

When to Bring a Clinician In

If these patterns are running so often that they organise your day,
see a GP or counsellor. Cognitive-behavioural therapy
(CBT) works directly on these patterns.