SELF BLAME by Dear Eliza

When we feel strong emotions — such as fear, sadness, shame, or hopelessness — we have often just had an automatic thought. These thoughts can happen so quickly and efforrtlessly that we are not even aware we've had them. It can take practice to notice them as they arise. Automatic thoughts often feel convincing, but they are not always 100% accurate. They are often exaggerated, biased, distorted, or unrealistic.

There are different types of biases, which psychologists call cognitive distortions or unhelpful thinking styles. We all think in exaggerated ways sometimes, but it can become a problem if your thoughts are distorted very often or very strongly.

Self-blame describes a style of thinking where you blame yourself for things that are not your fault or responsibility. For example, you might self-blame for being a certain type of person, or for something that happened. Sometimes people blame themselves unfairly for understandable reasons — maybe you've been blamed by other people in the past, or perhaps it seems to protect your relationships.

> What happened is my fault.

> I've caused this.

> I must have made this happen.

> It was my mistake I'm so clumsy.

Self-blame is associated with a wide range of problems:

Anxiety · Depression · Guilt · Low self-esteem · OCD · Perfectionism · PTSD · Shame

Overcoming self-blame

Noticing and labeling

The first step in overcoming your self-blaming thoughts is to catch them. Practice self monitoring so that you get better at noticing your self-blame as it arises. When you notice it happen, say something to yourself like:

★ **"I'm blaming myself again."**
★ **"There's another 'self-blaming' thought."**

Weigh up the pros and cons

What are the advantages and disadvantages of blaming yourself for things? Take some time to think about the impact it has on you, other people, and your life ambitions. It might be automatic (for now), but is it helpful?

PROS
★ **Blaming myself makes me feel like I can do something about it.**

CONS
★ **Blaming myself makes me feel guilty and worthles**

Draw a pie chart

Pie charts can help you see that events have many causes. First, list all the things that may have contributed to what happened. Then, draw a pie chart and allocate a 'slice' of the pie to each factor. Make sure that the slice representing your contribution is added last.

★ **"It's my fault my brother died…"**
★ **"…Lots of things meant that he was unwel**

Evaluate your thinking

Remember, there are lots of ways of judging a situation. Practice putting your thoughts in perspective by asking yourself these questions:

★ "If a stranger observed what hap blame me entirely? Why not?"
★ "If a friend had this experience and blamed themselves, what would I say to them?"
★ "Are there other explanations for this event that I've missed or discounted?"
★ "If I was to blame, what were my intentions? Do I always behave in this way?"

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