

LABELLING

When one action gets converted into a permanent verdict on the person.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

You forgot a name. That is the event.

"I am an idiot" is not a description of it.

Commentate, do not judge. Name what happened and stop there.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Labelling

Collapsing a behaviour into an identity. A verb becomes a noun, and a noun feels fixed. Because identities do not respond to evidence the way actions do, the label survives every counter-example — and it applies to the whole person, including the parts that had nothing to do with what happened.



Thought → Feeling → Behaviour

THE BEHAVIOUR PROVES THE THOUGHT RIGHT

HOW IT RUNS *You blank on a colleague's name at an event*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

"I am an idiot. I am terrible with people."

"I forgot a name. It happens under pressure."

FEELING

Burning shame, out of all proportion to the moment.

Briefly awkward, then over it.

BEHAVIOUR

Withdraw from the room. Avoid them next time.

"Sorry — remind me?" Carry on talking.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Describe the verb.** "I forgot a name", not "I am forgetful". Keep it an action.
- 2 Ask if it generalises.** Would you call a friend an idiot for this? Then it is not an idiot-level event.
- 3 Give it a size.** Name the actual consequence. It is usually about ten seconds long.

A MUSLIM LENS

One missed fajr and the verdict is "I am a hypocrite" — a label the dīn does not hand out that easily.

Tawbah addresses acts — Repentance is built around deeds, precisely because deeds are changeable.

Do not name yourself — Declaring yourself ruined presumes a judgement that is not yours to issue.

Then the next prayer — The response to a missed one is the next one, on time.

You are not your worst action, and the door was never described as closed.

THIS WEEK Catch one label. Rewrite it as a sentence about what happened, not about who you are.

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