

BLACK AND WHITE THINKING

When a mixed moment gets judged as a total win or a total failure.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Your mind offers two boxes: perfect, or ruined.

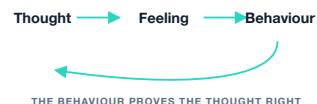
Most real moments are neither. They are mixed.

The giving up came from the label “ruined”, not from the chip.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Dichotomous thinking

A certainty shortcut. Sorting into two buckets is fast and costs the brain almost nothing, so a tired or stressed mind reaches for it first. It feels clean. What it removes is the middle — and the middle is where most of the truth lives.



HOW IT RUNS *One awkward work email*

	THE VERDICT	THE NEXT STEP
THOUGHT	“That reply was clumsy. I have damaged my reputation.”	“That reply was awkward. I can clarify one point.”
FEELING	Panic, then shame, then a wish to disappear.	Uncomfortable, but steady enough to act.
BEHAVIOUR	Re-read it. Avoid the person. Ruminates all day.	Send one short follow-up. Return to the task.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Catch the cue.** Circle the words always, never, ruined, perfect. They are the tell.
- 2 Name two truths.** “I slipped — and I can still take one useful step.” Both, not one.
- 3 Act for ten minutes.** The next email, the next task, the next repair. Not a grand restart.

A MUSLIM LENS

After a sharp exchange at the masjid, one moment becomes “I am a bad Muslim”, or the whole relationship is written off.

At wudū’ — Slow the body before the mind gets a verdict in.

In sujūd — Ask specifically for steadiness — not for the moment to be undone.

Then one repair — Salām, a calm message, or quiet ṣadaqah if pride needs softening.

The middle path is a discipline, not a compromise.

THIS WEEK Catch yourself saying “ruined” once. Write down the in-between version before you decide anything.

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PERSONALISATION

When someone else's mood gets read as something you caused.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

A face changes, and you assume you are the reason.

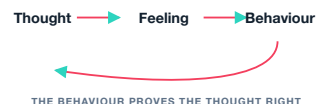
Most moods walking past you were built somewhere else.

You did not cause it. You just picked it up.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Personalisation

The mind is an explanation machine and it dislikes a gap. When a cause is missing it grabs the nearest candidate — and you were standing right there. Bad sleep, a sick child, traffic, a hard phone call: causes you will never see, quietly assigned to you.



HOW IT RUNS *Your manager walks past without speaking*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

"She is annoyed with me. I have done something wrong."

"She looked preoccupied. I do not know why yet."

FEELING

A tight stomach, then scanning the week for your mistake.

Mildly curious. Not braced for punishment.

BEHAVIOUR

Over-explain in the next email. Work late to compensate.

Carry on. Ask a plain question later if it matters.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Count the other causes.** Name three explanations that have nothing to do with you. There always are three.
- 2 Ask for the evidence.** What was actually said? Silence is not a sentence about you.
- 3 Put it down.** If it is not yours, you are allowed to stop carrying it.

A MUSLIM LENS

Someone is short with you after ṣalāh and by the car park you have decided the community has turned on you.

Ḥusn al-zann — Assume the better explanation. It is an obligation, not optimism.

In du'ā' — Ask for them by name before you ask about yourself.

Then one contact — A short greeting next week. Let reality answer instead of your guess.

Suspicion costs you a brother. A good assumption costs you nothing.

THIS WEEK Pick one mood you took personally. Name three other reasons it could have existed.

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'SHOULD' STATEMENTS

When a preference gets rewritten as a rule you are failing.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

“Should” sounds like motivation. It behaves like a judge.

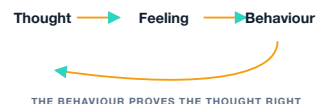
The task stays the same. Only the shame changes.

“I should be further along.” Further along than whom, by when, agreed with whom?

THE CLINICAL NAME

“Should” statements

A rule you never agreed to, enforced by a part of you with no authority to enforce it. The word imports an invisible standard and an invisible deadline, so falling short of a preference feels like breaking a law. Motivation drops; self-criticism rises; the work does not get done faster.



HOW IT RUNS Sunday night, comparing your career to a friend's

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

“I should own a home and run a team by now.”

“I would like more security. Here is this quarter's step.”

FEELING

Flat, heavy, vaguely ashamed of the whole week.

Sober, but pointed at something specific.

BEHAVIOUR

Scroll. Compare. Plan a total life overhaul that never starts.

Write one action for Monday and close the laptop.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Swap the verb.** “I should” becomes “I would like to”. Say it aloud. The pressure drops.
- 2 Name the author.** Who set this rule? If nobody did, it is not a rule.
- 3 Shrink the deadline.** Not “by now”. By Friday, one step, written down.

A MUSLIM LENS

“I should be praying like so-and-so, reading like so-and-so” — and the weight of it stops you praying at all.

Istiḳāmah over intensity — The beloved deeds are the small and constant ones, not the heroic ones.

In sujūd — Ask for consistency, not for a transformation by Ramaḍān.

Then one act — Two rak'ah you will actually keep. Add later, from strength.

A standard you cannot sustain is not piety. It is a trap with a religious accent.

THIS WEEK Catch one “should”. Rewrite it as “I'd like to” and add a date you actually believe.

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CATASTROPHISING

When an open-ended moment gets followed straight to its worst ending.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

An ambiguous message arrives. Your mind writes the ending.

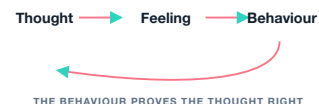
It picks the worst one, and then rehearses it.

"Can we chat tomorrow?" is a sentence, not a verdict.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Catastrophising

Threat forecasting. The brain treats a vivid imagined disaster as information worth preparing for, so the body responds as though it has already happened. You pay the full emotional cost of an event that has not occurred and usually will not. Most chats really are just chats.



HOW IT RUNS *A one-line message from your boss at 5pm*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

"I am being performance-managed. I will lose the house."

"Unclear message. Most likely a scheduling question."

FEELING

Dread all evening. Broken sleep. Rehearsing defences.

Slightly on edge, but present at dinner.

BEHAVIOUR

Draft resignation emails. Google your rights at 1am.

Prepare one page of notes. Go to bed.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Ask what is likely.** Not the worst case — the ordinary case. Say it out loud.
- 2 Give it a number.** Rate the odds honestly. Fear rounds everything up to certain.
- 3 Book the worry.** Ten minutes tomorrow at a set time. Not the whole night.

A MUSLIM LENS

Waiting on a result, the mind runs every ruin — and the du'ā' becomes a negotiation with a disaster you invented.

Tawakkul with the camel tied — Do your part properly, then genuinely hand the outcome over.

Dhikr for the loop — A fixed phrase, repeated, gives the rehearsing mind somewhere else to be.

Then sleep — Rest is worship when panic is calling it irresponsible.

Trust is not pretending nothing can go wrong. It is refusing to live it twice.

THIS WEEK When your mind jumps to the worst ending, write the most likely ending underneath it.

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MAGNIFYING

When one small event gets enlarged until it fills the whole frame.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

One clumsy moment becomes the whole evening.

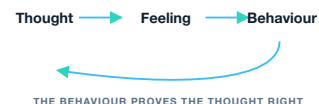
The camera in your head zooms in and will not pull back.

Everyone else forgot it that night. You are still hosting it.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Magnification

A scaling error. Attention acts like a lens, and whatever it settles on grows in apparent size and importance. The moment is not reassessed, only re-watched — and each replay adds weight to something that was, at the time, minor and largely unnoticed by anyone else.



HOW IT RUNS *You mispronounced a word during a work presentation*

	THE VERDICT	THE NEXT STEP
THOUGHT	"Everyone noticed. That is what they will remember."	"One stumble in twenty minutes of decent content."
FEELING	Hot-faced at 2am, replaying the clip.	A wince, then it passes.
BEHAVIOUR	Avoid the next presentation. Over-rehearse everything.	Note one improvement. Volunteer again.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Zoom out.** Will this matter in a month? If not, it was small the whole time.
- 2 Weigh the whole.** Name three parts of that event that went fine. They count too.
- 3 Stop the replay.** Rumination is not review. Review once, on paper, then close it.

A MUSLIM LENS

One error in recitation in front of others, and it grows until you stop volunteering to lead.

Perspective in ṣalāh — Standing before Allah shrinks the audience you were performing for.

Sujūd as-sahw — The dīn builds in a correction for slips. Slipping was always expected.

Then step up again — Volunteer once more this month. Avoidance is what makes it grow.

Allah is not magnifying it. Only your attention is.

THIS WEEK Catch one replay. Ask whether you would still be thinking about it if a friend had done it.

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MINIMISING

When something genuinely good about you gets shrunk down to nothing.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

A compliment arrives and you delete it in real time.

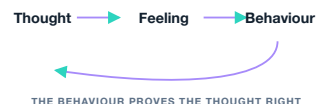
"It was nothing" — said about something.

You are allowed to let one good thing land.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Minimisation

The mirror image of magnification, applied to your own strengths. Often learned as modesty or as protection from disappointment. The cost is cumulative: evidence of competence never gets filed, so confidence has nothing to stand on and every new task starts from zero.



HOW IT RUNS *A colleague praises your report in a meeting*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"Anyone could have done it. They are being polite."	"I worked hard on that. It is fair that it was noticed."
FEELING	Squirming. Eager to change the subject.	Briefly warm. A little exposed, and fine.
BEHAVIOUR	"Oh, it was nothing." Redirect to someone else's work.	"Thank you." Full stop. Nothing after it.

THREE TOOLS

- Say thank you. Stop there.** No qualifier, no deflection, no returning the serve.
- Keep the receipts.** A note on your phone of things that went well. Read it before reviews.
- Separate humility from erasure.** Humility is accurate. Erasure is not.

A MUSLIM LENS

Deflecting every good word feels like modesty, but it can be a refusal to acknowledge a favour that was given to you.

Shukr is accuracy — Naming a blessing is gratitude to the One who gave it, not self-praise.

Al-hamdu lillāh, out loud — It lets the good land and still points it where it belongs.

Then use it — A gift acknowledged gets used. A gift denied stays buried.

Denying the ni'mah is not humility. Attributing it correctly is.

THIS WEEK Take one compliment with two words and nothing else. Notice the urge to add to it.

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MIND READING

When a guess about what someone thinks gets treated as a fact.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

You decide what is in their head, then respond to it.

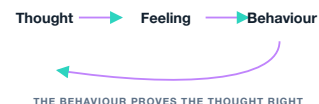
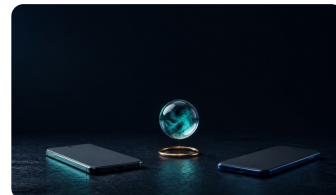
You are now reacting to your own writing.

Read at two, no reply by five. That is a timestamp, not a feeling.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Mind reading

An inference presented to yourself as a perception. The guess is generated instantly and arrives feeling like knowledge, so it is rarely tested. Because you then act on it — cooler, more distant, pre-emptively defensive — the other person responds to that, and the guess appears to confirm itself.



HOW IT RUNS *A friend leaves your message on read*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"They are annoyed with me. I have been too much."	"I do not know why they have not replied."
FEELING	Anxious, rejected, rehearsing an apology.	Mildly curious. Not yet a problem.
BEHAVIOUR	Go quiet to punish, or send three more messages.	Leave it. Ask plainly in a day if it still matters.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Label the guess.** Say "I am guessing" before the sentence. It changes its status.
- 2 Ask, do not audit.** One direct question beats three days of interpretation.
- 3 Watch the self-fulfilment.** Notice how your cooling off creates the distance you feared.

A MUSLIM LENS

Someone does not return your salām and you have already concluded what they think of you.

Avoid ḡann — Much suspicion is a sin precisely because it feels like knowledge.

Ask, do not investigate — The dīn forbids spying and prefers the plain question.

Then extend salām first — The greeting is the cheapest way to end a story you invented.

You were never given access to another person's heart. Stop acting as if you were.

THIS WEEK Catch one mind-read. Write it down as a guess, then find out what was actually true.

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FORTUNE TELLING

When an unknown outcome gets settled in advance, and settled badly.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

You have not tried yet, and the result is already in.

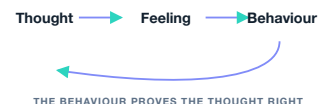
A prediction wearing the costume of a fact.

You do not know. Send the thing and let the future have a say.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Fortune telling

Forecasting with false confidence, usually in the service of avoidance. Declaring the outcome removes the discomfort of uncertainty and, conveniently, the need to act. The prediction is then never tested, so it is never disproved — and the untested prediction becomes evidence for the next one.



HOW IT RUNS *A job posting you are almost qualified for*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"There is no point. They will not pick me."	"I do not know the odds. I know the cost of not applying."
FEELING	Flat and defeated before anything has happened.	Nervous, and moving anyway.
BEHAVIOUR	Close the tab. Tell yourself you were realistic.	Apply. Spend forty minutes, not four weeks.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Mark it as a forecast.** Write the prediction down with a date. Check it later. You will be wrong often.
- 2 Cost the inaction.** What does not trying definitely cost, versus what trying might?
- 3 Do the smallest version.** Send one application, one message, one enquiry.

A MUSLIM LENS

"It will not happen for me" gets said with the calm of wisdom, but it is a claim about the unseen.

Al-ghayb is not yours — Only Allah knows the outcome. Certainty about it is a kind of overreach.

Istikhārah, then move — The prayer is asked for before an action, not instead of one.

Then take the means — Effort is worship. The result was never your department.

Despair of good is not humility. It is a claim you were never in a position to make.

THIS WEEK Write down one prediction you are treating as certain. Do the thing anyway and check the result.

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OVERGENERALISATION

When one instance gets turned into always, everyone, or never.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

One event becomes a pattern. The pattern becomes a rule.

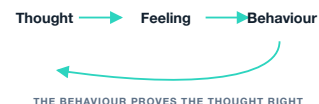
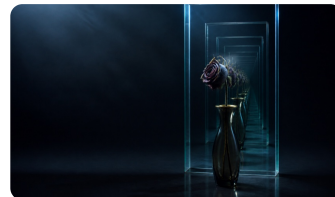
The rule then decides what you try next.

One bad date is data. It is not a forecast for the rest of your life.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Overgeneralisation

A sample of one, treated as a law. It is efficient — learning from a single burn is usually adaptive — but applied to social and personal outcomes it hardens quickly. The words always and never are the audible edge of it, and they close down options long before the evidence justifies it.



HOW IT RUNS *A first date that went nowhere*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

"This always happens. I will be on my own forever."

"That one did not work. It was one evening."

FEELING

Hopeless, and oddly certain about the future.

Disappointed. Still in the game.

BEHAVIOUR

Delete the apps. Tell friends you are done with it.

Take a week off. Then say yes to one more.

THREE TOOLS

- Hunt the exception.** One counter-example breaks an "always". Find it deliberately.
- Count the actual sample.** How many times, really? Usually fewer than it feels.
- Date the claim.** "This month has been rough" is true. "Forever" is not.

A MUSLIM LENS

One hard year and you conclude that du'ā' is not answered for you — a rule built from a season.

With hardship, ease — The promise is paired and repeated. It describes a pattern, not a one-off.

Recall the answered ones — Keep a list. Overgeneralisation survives on a short memory.

Then ask again — Persistence in du'ā' is itself the act being asked of you.

A season is not a sentence, and one refusal is not a verdict on the door.

THIS WEEK Catch one "always" or "never". Find a single exception and write it next to it.

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DISCOUNTING THE POSITIVE

When the things that went right get struck from the record.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Ten things went well. One did not.

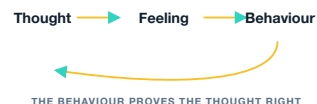
Guess which one follows you into the shower.

It is not that you did not notice. It is that you overruled it.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Discounting the positive

Not merely overlooking the good, but actively disqualifying it — it does not count, it was luck, they were being kind. This is more corrosive than a negative filter, because the evidence is examined and then thrown out. Self-esteem cannot build when every deposit is voided on arrival.



HOW IT RUNS A performance review with nine positives and one development point

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

"The praise is padding. The criticism is the real message."

"Nine things are working. One thing needs attention."

FEELING

Deflated. Convinced you are barely holding on.

Steady, with something specific to improve.

BEHAVIOUR

Fixate on the one line. Mention it for weeks.

Action the one point. Let the nine stand.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Let one thing count.** Tonight, name one thing that went well and do not add a "but".
- 2 Ban the disqualifiers.** Luck, easy, they were being nice — retire all three for a week.
- 3 Write it down.** Memory will not keep the good. Paper will.

A MUSLIM LENS

Counting only what is missing, while the ni'am you are standing in go unremarked.

Shukr increases — Gratitude is described as the thing that grows what you have.

Name three after ṣalāh — Specific ones. Health, a person, a provision — not "everything".

Then say it to someone — Spoken gratitude is harder to disqualify than silent gratitude.

Overlooking a blessing does not make you humble. It makes you inaccurate.

THIS WEEK Each night, one line: something that went well today. No qualifiers allowed.

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FILTERING

When a whole day gets remembered through its single worst moment.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Nineteen kind comments. One critic.

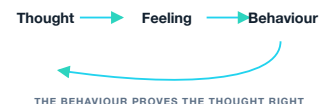
Your mind screenshots the critic.

Ask what your filter left out today. There is usually something decent in the bin.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Mental filtering

Selective attention with a negative bias. The mind is not inventing anything — the critical comment is real — but it is sampling unrepresentatively and then treating the sample as the whole. The result is an accurate detail assembled into a false picture, which is far harder to argue with than an obvious distortion.



HOW IT RUNS *A post with nineteen supportive replies and one harsh one*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"People think this is rubbish."	"One person disliked it. Nineteen did not."
FEELING	Exposed and stupid for having posted.	Stung, but not reconsidering the whole project.
BEHAVIOUR	Reread the criticism. Consider deleting the post.	Read the supportive replies properly. Post again.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Count, do not feel.** Actual numbers break the filter faster than reassurance does.
- 2 Read the rest properly.** You skimmed the good ones. Go back and read them at the same speed.
- 3 Ask what got binned.** End the day by naming one good thing your filter dropped.

A MUSLIM LENS

One person's remark after the khuṭbah outweighs a whole community that has been good to you.

Husn al-ẓann to the many — Extend to the nineteen the assumption you are giving the one.

Du'ā' for the critic — It is hard to keep re-reading the words of someone you just prayed for.

Then return — Attend again. Avoidance narrows the sample even further.

Seeing only the flaw is not discernment. It is a narrow lens with confidence.

THIS WEEK One evening, list what actually happened today — the whole day, not the highlight of the worst part.

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LABELLING

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

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

You forgot a name. That is the event.

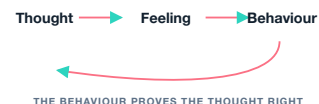
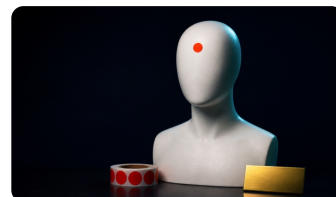
"I am an idiot" is not a description of it.

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.



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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BLAMING

When responsibility gets parked entirely outside your own reach.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

It is their fault. It may well be.

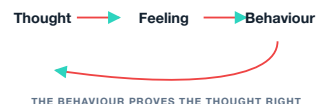
It still leaves you with nothing to do.

Find the ten percent you can actually steer, and steer that.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Blaming

Externalising cause completely. Often accurate about the past and disastrous for the present: if the entire cause sits outside you, so does the entire remedy, and you must wait for someone else to change before anything improves. The relief is immediate and the cost is agency.



HOW IT RUNS *A manager who genuinely is difficult*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"If he were not like this, I would not be like this."	"He is difficult. Here is the part that is mine."
FEELING	Resentful, stuck, waiting for him to change.	Still frustrated, but with something to do.
BEHAVIOUR	Vent for months. Change nothing. Stay.	Set one boundary. Update the CV. Decide by a date.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Find your ten percent.** Not the blame — the leverage. What part responds to you?
- 2 Separate cause from remedy.** They can be the cause and you can still be the one who acts.
- 3 Set a decision date.** Waiting is a choice. Give it a deadline so it stops being invisible.

A MUSLIM LENS

The wrong done to you is real, and it can still become the thing you organise your whole life around.

Everyone is a shepherd — The question asked of you is about your own flock, not theirs.

'Afw where you can — Pardon is described as releasing you, not excusing them.

Then act — Justice may be sought. Paralysis is not one of the options.

Their account is with Allah. Yours is still open, and still yours.

THIS WEEK Name one situation you blame someone for. Write the one action that is available to you regardless.

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THE FULL SERIES

EMOTIONAL REASONING

When a feeling gets accepted as evidence of what is true.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

"I feel like a burden, so I must be one."

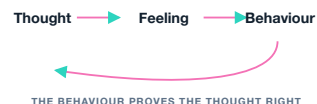
There is a trapdoor in the middle of that sentence.

A feeling is weather, not a verdict.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Emotional reasoning

Treating an internal state as a measurement of external reality. Feelings are real and informative about you; they are not readings of facts about the world. In low mood the inference runs constantly and self-confirms, because the resulting withdrawal produces exactly the isolation the feeling predicted.



HOW IT RUNS *A low week, and friends have not been in touch*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"I feel like a burden, so I am one. They tolerate me."	"I feel like a burden. That is the mood, not the evidence."
FEELING	Lonely, ashamed, certain of being unwanted.	Low, but not treating it as a fact.
BEHAVIOUR	Cancel plans. Go quiet. Prove the theory right.	Go anyway. Send one message. Test it.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Change the verb.** "I feel" rather than "I am". It restores the gap that the trap closed.
- 2 Ask for the external evidence.** What would someone outside your head actually observe?
- 3 Act against the forecast.** Go to the thing. Behaviour tests the belief; thinking does not.

A MUSLIM LENS

Feeling far from Allah gets taken as proof that you have been abandoned, and so you pray even less.

Īmān fluctuates — Rising and falling is described as normal, not as evidence of rejection.

Pray the state, not the feeling — Ṣalāh performed without sweetness still counts. Especially then.

Then tell one person — Isolation is how the feeling protects itself from being tested.

The distance you feel is not a measurement of the distance that exists.

THIS WEEK Catch one "I am" that is really an "I feel". Say the corrected version out loud.

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THE FULL SERIES

ALWAYS BEING RIGHT

When being correct gets valued above staying connected.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Forty minutes in, and it stopped being about the dishes at minute five.

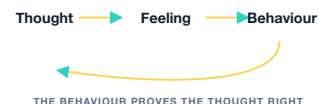
You can win this and still lose the evening.

Do you want to be right here, or do you want to be close?

THE CLINICAL NAME

Always being right

Correctness recruited into the defence of the self. Once the argument is about worth rather than facts, conceding feels like a threat to identity, so evidence stops changing anything. The relational cost accumulates quietly: people stop raising things, and the arguments you win get fewer because the conversations stop.



HOW IT RUNS *A long-running disagreement with your partner*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

"If I concede this, I am admitting I am the problem."

"I could be partly wrong here and still be fine."

FEELING

Braced, adrenalised, unable to let it go.

Uncomfortable, but still in the room with them.

BEHAVIOUR

Re-litigate. Bring receipts. Win. Sleep badly.

"You have a point." Ask what they actually need.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Name the real stake.** Is this about the facts, or about what being wrong would mean?
- 2 Concede one point genuinely.** Not tactically. Watch what happens to the temperature.
- 3 Ask the better question.** "What do you need?" gets further than "what actually happened?"

A MUSLIM LENS

The argument after the meeting is about the ruling, and somewhere in it, it stopped being about the ruling.

The house in Paradise — It is promised for leaving an argument you could have won.

Kibr is the tell — Rejecting the truth and belittling the person — that is the definition to check yourself against.

Then repair first — Whoever greets first is described as the better of the two. Be that one.

Winning the point and losing the person is not a victory anyone recorded as one.

THIS WEEK In one disagreement, concede a single point you actually believe. Notice what it costs. It is less than you think.

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SELF-SERVING BIAS

When wins get claimed as character and losses get blamed on circumstance.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

When you win it is talent. When you lose the referee was blind.

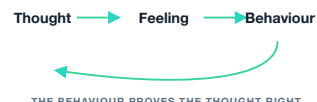
Everyone runs this. It is very hard to see from inside.

Own one small mistake this week. Just one. It is oddly freeing.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Self-serving bias

Asymmetric attribution that protects self-esteem in the short term and blocks learning in the long term. Because success is filed under ability and failure under circumstance, feedback never reaches the part of you that would act on it — and the same mistake is available to be made again, blamelessly.



HOW IT RUNS *A pitch that did not land*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"Bad room, bad brief, wrong day. Nothing I could do."	"Tough room — and my opening was weak."
FEELING	Defensive. Quietly certain you were unlucky.	A bit exposed, and clearer about what to change.
BEHAVIOUR	Repeat the same pitch. Get the same result.	Rewrite the opening. Ask one person for feedback.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Split the causes honestly.** For any outcome, name one thing that was you and one that was not.
- 2 Ask someone who will say it.** Pick the person who tells you the truth, not the kind one.
- 3 Own one thing out loud.** Naming it to another person is what makes it stick.

A MUSLIM LENS

Success attributed to your own excellence, difficulty attributed to everyone else — an accounting error with spiritual consequences.

Attribute the good upward — Whatever good reaches you is from Allah. That is the correction, said daily.

Muḥāsabah — Take your own account before it is taken. Specific, written, unflattering.

Then own one to a person — Admitting it aloud is the part the ego actually resists.

Taking full credit is the same error as taking no blame, pointed the other way.

THIS WEEK Take one setback. Write the part that was genuinely yours, and act on that part only.

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HEAVEN'S REWARD FALLACY

When sacrifice gets treated as an invoice the world has agreed to pay.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Keep saying yes, keep going last, and one day it pays off.

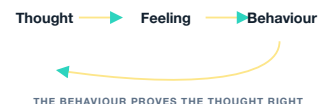
Nobody signed that contract but you.

If it quietly needs paying back, it was not a gift. It was a loan.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Heaven's reward fallacy

An implicit ledger in which self-denial accrues a debt owed by others or by life. It sustains long periods of over-giving and ends in a particular kind of bitterness, because the counterparty never agreed to the terms and does not know a balance is outstanding.



HOW IT RUNS *Years of covering for everyone at work and at home*

	THE VERDICT	THE NEXT STEP
THOUGHT	"After everything I have done, someone should notice."	"I chose to give. I can also choose to ask."
FEELING	Exhausted, unappreciated, quietly resentful.	Tired, but not owed. Freer to say no.
BEHAVIOUR	Give more. Hint. Wait. Grow bitter.	Ask directly for one thing you need.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Audit the ledger.** Who agreed to owe you? If nobody, it is not a debt.
- 2 Ask out loud.** Hinting is how the invoice stays unpaid. Make one direct request.
- 3 Give freely or not at all.** If it needs repaying, either negotiate it or decline it.

A MUSLIM LENS

Serving the community for years while waiting for the community to recognise it — and the intention drifts without you noticing.

Check the niyyah — Deeds are by intentions. Ask honestly who the reward is being invoiced to.

Ikhlās, in private — Give one thing nobody will ever know about. It resets the ledger.

Then set a limit — Sustainable service outlasts heroic service. Say no to one thing.

The account is with Allah, and it is not in arrears. It is just not settled here.

THIS WEEK Name one thing you are quietly owed. Either ask for it plainly, or release it.

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FALLACY OF CHANGE

When your own peace gets made conditional on somebody else changing.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

"I would be happy if they would just change."

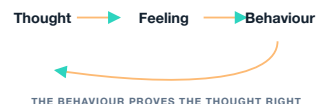
How long have you been waiting now?

Change the one person in the room you can actually control. That is taking the keys back.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Fallacy of change

Locating the control for your wellbeing in another person's behaviour. Effort goes into pressure, persuasion and management rather than into anything you can complete alone. The relationship strains under being asked to do a job it cannot do, and the wait continues.



HOW IT RUNS *Waiting years for a family member to soften*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"Once he apologises, I can move on."	"He may never apologise. What do I do with that?"
FEELING	Stuck, hopeful, disappointed on a cycle.	Sad, and no longer waiting on a signature.
BEHAVIOUR	Drop hints. Test him. Rerun the same conversation.	Decide your own boundary and live inside it.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Name the wait.** How many years have you given this? Say the number out loud.
- 2 Take back one key.** One thing your happiness currently depends on them for. Reclaim it.
- 3 Ask once, plainly.** Then stop asking. Requests work; campaigns do not.

A MUSLIM LENS

Waiting for a relative to become who you need before you will let the relationship, or yourself, breathe.

Guidance is not yours to give — You are not the one who turns a heart. That was never your role.

Şilat ar-raḥim regardless — Maintain the tie without conditions attached to their behaviour.

Then du'ā' instead of pressure — Ask for them in private. It is the one lever that was actually offered.

You were made responsible for your conduct, not for their transformation.

THIS WEEK **Name one thing you are waiting on someone else for. Do the version of it that needs only you.**

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FALLACY OF FAIRNESS

When fairness gets expected as a law rather than held as a value.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

“But that is not fair.” You are right.

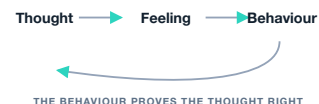
And here we are anyway.

Fairness is a value for how you treat people — not a prediction of how life behaves.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Fallacy of fairness

Treating a moral standard as a description of how events must behave. Fairness is a genuine value and a reasonable demand of people and institutions; it is not a property of outcomes. When the two are confused, every unfair result reads as a violation, and the energy goes into protest rather than response.



HOW IT RUNS *A colleague promoted ahead of you on worse work*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT

“This is not right. It should not be allowed to happen.”

“It is not fair. It is also what has happened.”

FEELING

Indignant, ruminating, unable to settle.

Angry, and able to think about next steps.

BEHAVIOUR

Relitigate it with everyone. Stall your own work.

Raise it once properly. Then plan your next move.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Separate the value from the forecast.** Hold fairness as a standard. Stop expecting it as a guarantee.
- 2 Protest once, properly.** Say it to the person who can act. Once, on the record.
- 3 Then answer the question.** “Given that this happened, what now?” It is the only question that moves.

A MUSLIM LENS

The wrong was real, the outcome was unjust, and the demand for it to be corrected here becomes its own kind of prison.

The scales are exact — Nothing the weight of an atom is missed. The accounting is simply not finished.

Ṣabr is active — Patience described in the dīn is endurance with action, not resignation.

Then be the fair one — Uphold justice even against yourself. That is the part you were given.

You were commanded to be just. You were not promised the world would be.

THIS WEEK

Name one unfairness you keep re-arguing. Say what you will do about it, or say you are letting it go.

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CONTROL FALLACY

When control gets read as total or none, with nothing in between.

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Either everything is your fault, or none of it is.

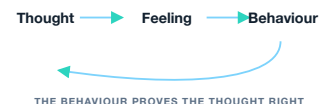
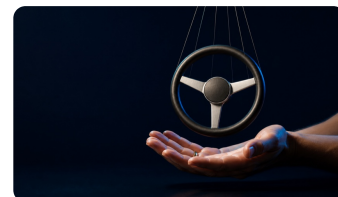
Both feel true. Both are wrong.

Ask what is genuinely yours here. Do that part, and let the rest go.

THE CLINICAL NAME

Control fallacy

Two mirrored errors sharing one root. Excessive internal control produces guilt for outcomes that were never yours; excessive external control produces helplessness about outcomes you could influence. Both avoid the harder work of locating the actual, partial, unglamorous share of control you hold.



HOW IT RUNS *A team project that failed*

THE VERDICT

THE NEXT STEP

THOUGHT	"I should have carried it all." or "Nothing I did mattered."	"My part was the timeline. That is what I own."
FEELING	Crushing guilt, or flat powerlessness.	Accountable for a defined piece, and not for the rest.
BEHAVIOUR	Take on everything, or disengage entirely.	Fix your piece. Name clearly what was not yours.

THREE TOOLS

- 1 Draw the circle.** List what is yours, what is influenced, what is neither. Three columns.
- 2 Do the yours column.** Fully and properly. That is the whole job.
- 3 Release the third column out loud.** Naming what is not yours is what stops you carrying it.

A MUSLIM LENS

Either you are responsible for everything that befell your family, or nothing you do matters — and both stop you acting.

Tie the camel, then trust — The instruction contains both halves. Neither one alone was offered.

Qadar is not passivity — Belief in decree sits alongside taking the means, never instead of it.

Then du'ā' for the rest — The part outside your hands still has somewhere to be taken.

Your share is real, limited, and enough. The rest was never on your account.

THIS WEEK Take one situation. Write the three columns. Act only on the first.

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