

When Your Brain Narrows the Story

Sometimes your brain becomes so focused on danger, certainty, or solving the problem that it stops noticing other possibilities. The problem is still real. And your brain may be shrinking the number of options you can see. People who have lived through criticism, rejection, instability, trauma, or chronic stress often become very good at predicting danger. The prediction can begin to feel like the only possible outcome. Notice when your brain stops looking for possibilities.

Situation	Brain story
Money is tight.	I'm going to end up homeless.
I have a lot to do.	I have to stay stressed.
Someone looked at me strangely.	Everyone is judging me.

1. Notice the story

What is my brain telling me? _____

If I believed this completely, what would become impossible to see? _____

2. Separate facts from predictions

- What do I actually know?
- What is my brain predicting?
- What meaning is my brain adding?

3. Look for the choices

I don't like my options my options is different from *I don't have options*.

- What choices have I already ruled out?
- Which choices feel uncomfortable?
- Which choices feel impossible?
- What choices are actually impossible?

4. What is my brain rejecting?

- ☐ There isn't a choice
- ☐ None of these will work
- ☐ I shouldn't have to
- ☐ It's not fair
- ☐ I already know what will happen
- ☐ I have to wait until someone else changes
- ☐ Other: _____

Why is my brain rejecting that option?

- ☐ It would be uncomfortable.
- ☐ It feels unsafe.
- ☐ It is against my values.
- ☐ It is truly unavailable.
- ☐ It is uncomfortable.
- ☐ It is uncertain.
- ☐ It is not my preferred option.
- ☐ Someone might be disappointed.
- ☐ I might fail.
- ☐ It isn't perfect.
- ☐ I can't know the outcome.
- ☐ It feels unfair.
- ☐ It won't solve everything.
- ☐ I'd have to tolerate guilt.
- ☐ I'd have to tolerate anxiety.
- ☐ I'd have to accept something I don't like.

5. Choose from a wider view.

Which choices are actually available? _____

What might each one cost? _____

What might each one give me? _____

Which choice best matches the person I want to be? _____

