

10 Waswas Distortions – Challenge with Spiritual Wisdom

A CBT and Islamic guide to recognising and rebalancing thinking patterns

THE DISTORTION	HOW TO UNTWIST IT	ISLAMIC FRAMING
<p>1. All-or-Nothing Thinking</p> <p>Seeing things in extremes. Either perfect or total failure, with no middle ground.</p>	<p>Practise thinking in shades, not extremes. Ask: "Is there a middle position here? What would I call this if it were not 100% or 0%?" Most of life lives in the in-between.</p>	<p>Allah describes the believers as those who walk a balanced path. "Thus We have made you a justly balanced nation." (Al-Baqarah 2:143).</p>
<p>2. Overgeneralisation</p> <p>Treating one negative event as proof everything is or will always be bad. "I failed once, so I always fail."</p>	<p>Notice the words always, never, everyone, nobody. Replace with specifics: "This particular thing did not go well today." One event is data. It is not destiny.</p>	<p>Ya'qub (peace be upon him) lost two sons and still said, "Perhaps Allah will bring them all back to me." (Yusuf 12:83).</p>
<p>3. Mental Filtering</p> <p>Focusing only on the negative and filtering out the positive. Ten good things happen, the mind clings to the one bad.</p>	<p>Ask: "What am I leaving out?" Deliberately list what went well, what is still working, and what blessings you are not crediting. The whole picture is bigger.</p>	<p>"And if you should count the favours of Allah, you could not enumerate them." (Ibrahim 14:34). Filtering for blessings is shukr.</p>
<p>4. Discounting the Positive</p> <p>Dismissing the good. "That does not count. Anyone could have done that. It was just luck."</p>	<p>When you dismiss something good, pause. Ask: "Would I let a friend dismiss this about themselves?" Receive the good without explaining it away.</p>	<p>"And as for the favour of your Lord, proclaim it." (Ad-Duha 93:11). Honouring Allah's gifts is gratitude, not arrogance.</p>
<p>5. Jumping to Conclusions</p> <p>Assuming you know what others are thinking (mind-reading) or what will happen (fortune-telling), without evidence.</p>	<p>Ask: "What evidence do I actually have? Is there another possible explanation?" Treat your conclusion as a hypothesis, not a fact. Check it where you can.</p>	<p>"O you who believe, avoid much suspicion. Indeed, some suspicion is sin." (Al-Hujurat 49:12). Husn al-zann is the Islamic default.</p>
<p>6. Magnification (Catastrophising)</p> <p>Imagining the worst possible outcome and treating it as the most likely. A small mistake becomes a disaster.</p>	<p>Ask: "What is the most likely outcome? What would I tell a friend in this position?" Imagine the realistic scenario. Plan for what is probable.</p>	<p>Hasbun-Allahu wa ni'mal-wakeel. "Allah is Sufficient for us, the Best Disposer of affairs." (Al-Imran 3:173).</p>
<p>7. Emotional Reasoning</p> <p>Believing that because you feel something strongly, it must be true. "I feel guilty, so I must have done wrong."</p>	<p>Feelings are real but not always accurate. Ask: "Is this a feeling, or is it a fact? What is the evidence outside of how I feel?" Notice the feeling. Do not obey it blindly.</p>	<p>The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The heart is named qalb because it turns." (Musnad Ahmad 19690). Hearts change. Truth does not.</p>
<p>8. Should Statements</p> <p>Holding yourself or others to rigid expectations. "I should never get tired. They should know what I need."</p>	<p>Replace shoulds with softer language: "I would prefer to... I would like to... It would be helpful if..." Honour your limits. Allow others to be human.</p>	<p>"Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear." (Al-Baqarah 2:286). If Allah does not burden you that way, why are you?</p>
<p>9. Labelling</p> <p>Attaching harsh global labels to yourself or others. "I am a failure. I am worthless. He is a bad person."</p>	<p>Describe the behaviour, not the person. Instead of "I am a failure," say "I did not succeed in this task." You are more than the worst moment you have had.</p>	<p>Every soul carries the karamah Allah granted it. "We have certainly honoured the children of Adam." (Al-Isra 17:70).</p>
<p>10. Personalisation</p> <p>Blaming yourself for things not entirely (or at all) your fault. "This happened because of me. If only I had been better."</p>	<p>List all the factors that contributed to the situation. Many were outside your control. You are responsible for your part. You are not responsible for everything.</p>	<p>The believer trusts in qadr. "Say, nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us." (At-Tawbah 9:51).</p>