



Between Paths

I Am Stupid: The Truth Without the Attack

A guided reflection for self-criticism and harsh thoughts

This reflection is for moments when you have made a mistake, misunderstood something, forgotten something, or felt embarrassed, and the thought 'I am stupid' has appeared.

You do not need to complete this perfectly. You do not need the right words. Just write honestly.

The aim is not to make yourself feel better by pretending. The aim is to see what happened without attacking yourself.

Keep the truth. Remove the cruelty.

1. The harsh thought

Write the thought exactly as it showed up. Do not clean it up. Do not make it sound kinder. What did your mind say?

Example: I am stupid.

2. What happened?

Now write the actual situation. Try to keep this part plain and factual.

What happened? What did you do, forget, misunderstand, say, miss, avoid, or get wrong?

3. What feeling came with it?

The thought may be loud because the feeling underneath has not been heard yet.

You might have felt embarrassed, ashamed, disappointed, exposed, frightened, angry, small, foolish, judged, tired, overwhelmed, or something else.

4. Fact or attack?

Now look again. What part is fact?

For example: I made a mistake. I got confused. I forgot something. I misunderstood. I did not know what to do. I wish I had handled it differently.

Now write the attack.

For example: I am stupid. I always mess things up. I should have known better. There is something wrong with me.

5. Would you say this to someone you love?

Imagine someone you care about came to you with the same situation. They made the same mistake. They felt the same embarrassment. They said, 'I am stupid.'

Would you agree with them? What would you say to them instead?

6. What is more true?

Now write a more honest version. Not a positive version. Not a fake version. A truer version.

You might begin with: I feel embarrassed, but... I got this wrong, but... I am disappointed in myself, but... I may need to learn from this, but...

7. The Cognisance reframe

Now bring it together into one compassionate and honest reframe. You can use this example if it helps:

I am speaking to myself harshly because I feel embarrassed, ashamed, or disappointed. But making a mistake does not make me stupid. It makes me human. I can look at what happened without attacking myself.

8. What needs to happen now?

If there is nothing to do, you can leave it there. But sometimes there is a next step.

Do you need to apologise, ask a question, try again, rest, learn something, write it down, prepare differently next time, or let it go?

9. A line to take with you

Choose one sentence you want to remember.

Examples: I can be honest without being cruel. A mistake is something to look at, not something to become. I got something wrong. That does not make me stupid. I can learn without attacking myself.

Closing note

If this thought comes back, that does not mean this reflection failed. Some thoughts are old. Some thoughts are practised. Some thoughts arrive quickly because they have been used for years.

You do not have to defeat the thought in one go. You are learning to notice it. And noticing is already a different path.