

LIFE LESSONS, COFFEE RECIPES &
SOULFUL REFLECTIONS TO SAVOR

COFFEE CHATS



MARYAM K USMAN

Copyright Page

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This is a work of creative nonfiction. While inspired by real reflections, stories, and cultural references, certain names, recipes, and situations have been altered for narrative flow, clarity, or privacy.

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This Book is dedicated to

My mom, whose strength taught me softness,

My dad, whose ambition taught me courage,

My brothers, who've always reminded me I am loved, exactly as I am,

*My aunt, whose wisdom taught me to see the world with sunshine and
grace.*

This book is my heart poured: a coffee chat with you, the reader.

May it warm your hands when the world feels cold.

A Note on the Journey ~

*Several chapters from this book were removed
so that every remaining sentence is intentional and heartfelt*

Each chapter closes with "Reflection + Sip":

*a coffee recipe to stir the senses,
and a journaling prompt to stir the soul.*

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Introduction

This book is a heartfelt reflection of a journey, one filled with growth, falling down, getting back up, and finding purpose along the way. The past few years have been incredibly transformative, and I'm deeply grateful for the new worldview I've gained. It all began with a challenge, and I've come to believe that every challenge in life is meant to build us and teach us lessons no other experience could. That, to me, is the essence of being human: falling, rising, and growing stronger each time, with the ultimate goal of moving closer to our Purpose.

This period of my life wasn't perfect, but it was the one I learned the most from. It was the season in which I truly learned to feel with grace. There was so much to express, yet identifying what I was feeling was incredibly difficult. It was like feeling everything and nothing all at once numb, yet overwhelmed. In the midst of the chaos, the only things that gave me clarity were writing and Remembrance. These two anchors kept my heart steady and my mind grounded. They were my safe space from the noise in my head.

There was so much I wanted to express, and so many lessons I wanted to document for the future. It felt like if I didn't write down the life lessons I was learning, they would slowly slip away, despite the magnitude and impact they had on me. I had reached a point of spiritual and emotional awakening, and the feelings were so rich that I couldn't bear to lose them. So, I picked up my pen, poured an iced latte, and began to write.

I wrote about the feelings and life lessons I wanted to carry with me into the future. After months of pouring my heart onto the page, I realized what I had created was something I felt ready to share with the world. I wanted others to gain the life-changing worldview I had discovered, because it truly made my life better and richer. I felt like I had found meaning and Purpose with my Creator. That realization felt like a gift, one I couldn't keep to myself. So I revised, refined, and polished the words until they became this book: a collection of deeply personal reflections and life-changing insights that I believe others can connect with too.

But there was one element I couldn't leave out: coffee.

During the hardest times, I found myself returning to my coffee machine, as if drawn to something sacred. Making coffee became a ritual, an act of self-care and grounding. In moments of pain or reflection, I always ended up there, finding peace in the process of brewing something warm and familiar. My coffee machine, and the original recipes I created, weren't just sources of comfort, they became part of me. They were so dear to me that I knew I had to share them.

Because coffee played such a meaningful role in my journey, I knew it deserved a place in this manuscript. So I included some of my favorite latte recipes, ones that were born during my moments of growth. Sharing these recipes is my way of sharing love. My heart had so much to give, and coffee became the way I poured it out.

As you read the words that once sat heavy on my heart, I hope you also find joy and comfort in the coffee you make along the way. Each latte recipe holds a special place in my soul, and I'm truly grateful to share them, and this story with you.

Each chapter in this book is written with intention:

- A life lesson
- A latte recipe that pairs with the energy or emotion of that chapter
- A journal prompt to help you reflect and connect with your own path

Whether you're here for the reflections, the recipes, or the moments of quiet journaling in between, I'm so grateful you're here. This is my coffee chat with you, the reader. So grab your drink and your pen and let's coffee chat about it.

With love,

Maryam

Section 1

ROASTING YOUR BEANS

BUILDING UNSHAKABLE HOPE



CHAPTER 1

THE LIES YOUR MIND TELLS YOU

It's 6 a.m. Your alarm goes off, and the first thing on your mind isn't motivation, it's *ugh*. Your head aches, your chest feels heavy, and all you want to do is stay in bed. But somehow, you get up anyway and shuffle into the kitchen, hoping a cup of coffee might help turn things around.

You follow the usual routine, open the cupboard, grab the beans, grind them, tamp them in. It's all automatic by now. But today, something feels off. The espresso pulls weird, the crema looks thin, and when you take that first sip... yikes. It tastes awful.

"Great"

Before you know it, your mind jumps in with its usual commentary:

"I can't believe I messed this up."

"Why did I spend so much on this machine if I can't even make good coffee?"

"Maybe I'm just not good at this."

Wait...hold on. You just made one bad cup of coffee. That's it. But your mind? It's turned it into a story about you, a story about failure. A story about your downfall, and before you know it there is a picket stabbed into the ground where your dreams of owning a coffee shop once stood

But who said one bad cup defines your skill , or who you are?

Not God. Not reality. Just your mind.

And here's the truth, your mind isn't always truthful.

I'm sure for many of us this cycle of mental dialogue feels all too familiar. Maybe just today you have caught yourself thinking a small mistake was the end of the world? Or replaying something you said, convinced it made someone think badly of you? Maybe you've spent hours stressing over something that hasn't even happened yet.

We've all been there, feeling like the world is crashing down over something small. But this reaction is completely human and you are not alone. It's actually quite common and psychologists have studied these patterns and even named them: **cognitive distortions**. They're habits of thinking that twist reality and keep us stuck in negative loops.

Our brains are amazing and complicated, wired to protect us. Back when life was about surviving predators, thinking worst-case scenarios made sense, it could literally save your life. But today, those threats look very different. Now, it's deadlines, awkward conversations, and uncertainty. Our brains haven't fully caught up.

Instead of protecting us, these thought patterns sometimes trap us in stress, doubt, and overwhelm. A single exam can feel like a life-or-death moment. That's how powerful, and outdated these survival instincts are.

Cognitive distortions are an important concept taught in modern psychology. It teaches you to spot, challenge, and change unhelpful thoughts, which is basically catching your brain when it's lying to you. This idea also has roots in Islamic teachings.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: *“Wondrous is the affair of the believer. If something good happens, they are grateful; if something hard happens, they are patient.”*

What psychology calls a **cognitive reframe** is echoed here, shifting your perspective. In Islam, this is called **muhasabah**. This means holding yourself accountable with kindness and truth.

It starts with asking yourself:

Is this thought true?

Is it helpful?

Would God want me to believe this about myself?

Asking these questions opens the door to clearer thinking, instead of blindly accepting every thought. So let’s get into what these cognitive distortions are and learn to recognize and reframe the most common ones, so you can take back your peace and confidence.

Your Brain’s Favorite Traps

Our minds can be incredible tools, but also our harshest critics. Often without realizing it, we slip into thinking patterns that distort what’s really happening. These **cognitive distortions** are our brains shortcuts in thinking shaped by fear, old wounds, or false beliefs. But now that we know what they are, we can much more easily recognize them and change the trajectory of our thoughts.

The first step to growth is noticing these traps. Once you name them, you can start freeing yourself. Let’s look at the eight most common distortions so you can break free and reclaim your strength. While you

read through each of these distortions, recognize if you have found yourself falling into these traps at any point. Doing so will change your perspective on life.

Cognitive Distortions

Our brains mental shortcuts

All-or-Nothing Thinking	<p>All-or-nothing thinking, also known as black-and-white thinking, is a cognitive distortion where individuals view situations in absolute terms , things are either perfect or a total failure. For example, after making a minor mistake on a project, one might conclude, “I’m a complete failure.” An example phrase might be: <i>“Because I messed up this one task, I must be terrible at everything.”</i></p> <p>This type of thinking ignores the nuances of real life, where many experiences fall between extremes. To reframe this, remind yourself: <i>“Just because I made a mistake doesn’t mean I’m a failure at everything.”</i></p> <p>Imperfection is part of growth and learning.</p>
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<p>Mental Filter</p>	<p>Mental filtering occurs when a person selectively focuses on negative aspects of a situation while ignoring positive ones. For instance, someone may receive numerous compliments on a presentation but fixate solely on a single critical comment. An example phrase is: <i>"Because they criticized one part of my work, the whole presentation must have been awful."</i> To reframe, try: <i>"Just because one part wasn't perfect doesn't mean the entire presentation failed."</i></p>
<p>Overgeneralization</p>	<p>Overgeneralization is characterized by drawing broad conclusions based on a single event or limited evidence. For example, after failing one exam, a person might think, <i>"I always fail,"</i> or <i>"Nothing ever goes right for me."</i> An example phrase: <i>"Because I failed this once, it means I will always fail."</i> The reframe is: <i>"Just because this happened once doesn't mean it will always happen."</i> Each experience is unique, and the future is unwritten.</p>

<p>Emotional Reasoning</p>	<p>Emotional reasoning refers to interpreting feelings as objective truth. For example, feeling anxious might lead to the belief that danger is imminent, or feeling unworthy might be mistaken for actual personal deficiency. An example phrase: <i>"Because I feel scared, something bad must be happening."</i> The reframe: <i>"Just because I feel anxious doesn't mean I am in danger."</i></p> <p>Emotions are signals, not facts.</p>
<p>Labeling</p>	<p>Labeling involves assigning a fixed, global negative label to oneself or others based on specific behaviors or incidents. For example, saying, <i>"I'm a failure,"</i> after a setback. An example phrase: <i>"Because I made a mistake, I'm worthless."</i> The reframe is: <i>"Just because I made a mistake doesn't mean I am defined by it."</i> People are complex and ever-changing.</p>
<p>Mind Reading</p>	<p>Mind reading is the assumption that one knows what others are thinking, often assuming negative judgments without evidence. For example: <i>"She didn't reply quickly; she must think I'm annoying."</i> The reframe: <i>"Just because I think they are judging me doesn't mean they actually are."</i></p> <p>Most people are focused on themselves, not judging you.</p>

<p>“Should” Statements</p>	<p>“Should” statements impose rigid rules on oneself or others, such as <i>“I should be more productive,”</i> or <i>“I shouldn’t feel this way.”</i> An example phrase: <i>“Because I’m not meeting my goals, I’m failing.”</i> The reframe is: <i>“Just because I haven’t done everything doesn’t mean I’m failing. I’m doing my best.”</i> Compassion fosters growth, not pressure.</p>
<p>Catastrophizing</p>	<p>Catastrophizing involves anticipating the worst possible outcome and exaggerating its likelihood and impact. For example: <i>“Because my friend didn’t answer my text, they must be mad at me and want to end our friendship.”</i> The reframe: <i>“Just because they didn’t respond right away doesn’t mean our friendship is over.”</i> Grounding yourself in facts helps reduce anxiety.</p>

Now that we've talked through the most common thought distortions, the next step is learning to spot them in real time. This is where change begins: noticing the patterns, giving them a name, and rewriting the stories your mind tries to convince you of. It might seem simple, but it can truly be a quiet, inner revolution. So let's begin!

The next time an intrusive thought creeps in, pause. Take a breath. Notice it without judgment, and then, name it.

I like to keep the list of common thought distortions nearby as a gentle guide. Over time, though, you'll begin to recognize the patterns on your own. You might say to yourself, *"This thought is an example of overgeneralizing,"* or, *"Ah, this is that all-or-nothing thinking again."*

Naming the thought helps loosen its grip. It creates a bit of distance between you and the thought, and that space gives you the power to respond instead of react.

From there, try asking yourself a few kind and grounding questions:

"Is this thought kind?"

"Is it true?"

"Is it helping me grow?"

If you're honest, the answer is usually no. And in that realization, you begin to see just how unkind your inner dialogue can be, and that you don't owe these thoughts any more space than they've already taken.

This is your chance to reframe. To gently rewrite the thought through a lens that's more compassionate and real. Maybe it sounds like, *"Just because this happened once doesn't mean it always will."*

You can use the reframe format shared earlier to guide you, but with time, you'll find that this process becomes second nature. A quiet inner knowing. A habit of choosing gentleness, even with your own mind.

You're not lying to yourself by doing this. You're actually stepping back into reality, the kind shaped by clarity, nuance, and grace. Because really the world isn't split into good or bad, black or white. There's so much in between that we often overlook when we're caught in our feelings or fears. With time, this practice will help rewire your thinking. It will teach your mind to move more gently, more truthfully. You will begin to speak to yourself in a way that reflects how God would want you to, and that is with mercy, balance, and intention. So tame the powerful mind of yours into something even more incredible.

A Cup to Cool the Mental Noise

The brain may lie, but this latte won't. The *S'mores Latte* is a grounded, gently sweet drink with a rich, comforting flavor. It's a balanced thinking in drink form and a reminder that you deserve kindness, especially from yourself. Here's a cool and balanced latte to sip while you write down, label and reframe your thought distortions. Feel free to make your drink and then follow the journal prompt that follows. Think of it as a way to get away from a mind full of fog.

Catching your Negative Thoughts

Anytime you have a destructive thought, pause, write it down or mentally note it, look through the list of distorted thinking patterns and label which category of distorted thinking your thought falls into. Lastly, actively reframe the thought to a more balanced “reality based” thought.

1. **Catch it:** write down
2. **Name it:** Look through the list of distortions and label
3. **Challenge it:** Is this way of thinking balanced? Where’s the evidence?
4. **Replace it:** What would a more balanced thought be?
5. **Act against it:** Take one small step rooted in truth, not fear.

Thought	Cognitive Distortion	Rephrase
"I failed this exam, I guess im not intelligent enough"	Overgeneralization	"This is one exam I didn't do my best in, but that doesn't automatically mean I won't succeed in the future"



S'mores Latte




INGREDIENTS

- 1-2 shots espresso (or 1.5 tbsp instant coffee + 1.5 tbsp hot water)
- 1 cup milk of choice (dairy or plant-based)
- 1 piece of chocolate or chocolate syrup
- 1-2 graham crackers, crushed
- Chocolate spread (for rim)
- 1 large marshmallow (or mini marshmallows)
- Optional: pinch of sea salt, cinnamon, or vanilla
- Optional: homemade whipped cream (dreamy!)

Iced

1. Brew espresso over your piece of chocolate and set aside.
2. Prepare your mug: dip the rim in chocolate spread, then roll in crushed graham crackers.
3. Pour espresso into the mug with ice. Add your milk of choice.
4. Top with whipped cream and a toasted marshmallow.
5. Sprinkle crushed graham crackers and drizzle with chocolate syrup.
6. Sip by a window. Close your eyes. Taste the moment.

Hot

1. Brew your espresso or dissolve instant coffee in hot water.
 2. Heat milk and chocolate together until velvety and smooth. (Or froth for extra foam.)
 3. Prepare your mug with the chocolate and graham cracker rim. (Optional but ✨ magical.)
 4. Add coffee, pour in the chocolatey milk, and stir.
 5. Garnish with whipped cream, a toasted marshmallow, and a drizzle of chocolate.
 6. Let it feel like dessert.
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End of Preview