

# Catastrophic Thinking

By Dr. Michael Obsatz – August 2025

Some of us have been taught to expect horrible things to happen. When we are experiencing loss, pain, disappointment, difficult challenges, and even new experiences, we can then get into negative or catastrophic thinking.

Being prepared for the worst is what many of us learn. If we imagine the worst-case scenario, then we believe we can handle whatever comes our way.

It is also part of perfectionistic and polarized thinking. Life is either perfect or devastating — no in-between. People who are part of intergenerational trauma have a built-in world view. Anything less than perfect or less than I want is a disaster.

How we view what happens to us can cause anxiety, fear, and depression. In his book, "The Five Things We Cannot Change," David Richo tells us we have to accept certain aspects of life.<sup>1</sup>

Everything changes and ends

Things do not always go according to plan

Life is not always fair

Pain is part of life

People are not loving and loyal all the time

When we have realistic expectations about our lack of control over life, we can create less anxiety. Accepting and loving "what is" is the work of Byron Katie.

The hype of mass media and socialization messages encourage a kind of fear-based thinking. Learning to live with uncertainty can result in greater faith and spiritual connection.

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<sup>1</sup> David Richo, The Five Things We Cannot Change, (Shambhala Publications, Boston, 2005), pp. 3,20,21,34,47,65.