How low mood changes your thinking

How depression affects memory, attention and the way you see yourself and the future.

When mood drops, thinking changes with it. This is a known effect of depression and says nothing about your character. Knowing how it works helps you take dark thoughts a little less at face value.

What the thoughts are about

Myself
"I am useless, a burden, a failure." Strengths vanish from view and every flaw is magnified.

My life and other people
"Nothing goes right. Nobody cares." Problems look huge and help looks far away.

The future
"It will always be like this." Hope feels naive.

What depression does to the mind

- **Memory is biased.** It becomes easier to recall bad times and failures than good times and successes. This is a measurable effect of low mood. It is not an accurate record of your life.
- **Attention narrows.** You notice what fits the mood and miss what does not.
- **Thinking slows.** Concentrating, remembering and deciding all get harder, which then gets read as "I am stupid".
- **Thoughts feel like facts.** The feeling of certainty comes from the mood, not from the evidence.

What this means

You do not have to believe everything you think when you are low. A useful question is: "Is this me talking, or the depression?"

Depression says	A fairer version might be
"I never get anything right."	"I am finding things hard at the moment. I have got plenty right before."
"Nobody would miss me."	"I feel cut off. That is the low mood. People have shown they care."
"It will never get better."	"It feels endless now. Low moods lift, and this one will too."

A thought of mine that might be the depression talking, and a fairer version

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