

# Plot Twist Technique

## What is the Plot Twist Technique?

The Plot Twist Technique is a cognitive tool designed to combat the distortion of "Jumping to Conclusions" specifically "Fortune Telling" and "Mind Reading."

When we experience anxiety or depression, our minds often become incredibly predictable, pessimistic screenwriters. We automatically draft catastrophic endings, assuming the worst possible outcome is a guaranteed fact.

In literary terms, building up a massive disaster only for things to turn out totally fine or beautifully mundane is actually an anti-climax. But to an anxious brain that has already accepted a tragedy as an absolute certainty, a boring, neutral reality is the shocking twist! This technique helps you break out of that rigid narrative by asking you to step into the role of a creative author and intentionally draft a realistic "plot twist" that your fear is completely ignoring.

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## Case Example: "I'm Going to Bomb This Presentation"

David, a marketing director, was experiencing severe anxiety about an upcoming pitch to a new client. He was losing sleep and felt paralyzed by the thought, "I'm going to bomb this presentation, they are going to hate my ideas, and I'll lose the account."

- **Therapist:** I'd like to share a new tool with you called the Plot Twist Technique. It might help with this feeling of dread about the presentation. Are you open to trying it?
- **David:** Sure, I'll try anything at this point.
- **Therapist:** Great. Right now, your anxiety is writing a script where the genre is an absolute tragedy. You go in, you bomb, and you lose the account. If we were watching this play out in a movie, what would be a realistic, unexpected "plot twist" that totally changes the ending?
- **David:** I guess a plot twist would be that I actually speak clearly, they like the ideas, and we win the account.
- **Therapist:** That's a great positive twist. How about a more neutral one? What if the presentation is just... okay?
- **David:** A neutral twist would be that I stumble on a couple of slides, but they don't really notice, ask a few clarifying questions, and tell us they need a week to think about it.
- **Therapist:** Excellent. Now, looking at your original tragic ending and your neutral plot twist, which one is actually statistically more likely to happen based on your past experiences?
- **David:** Honestly, the neutral one. I usually stumble a bit because I'm nervous, but it's never the disaster I think it will be.

After the exercise, David realized that his anxiety was forcing him to react to a fictional tragedy that hadn't even happened. By acknowledging alternative scripts, he felt a significant drop in his panic and was able to prepare for the pitch with a clearer, more grounded mind.

## How You Can Use This Technique

**Step 1.** Identify the negative prediction or assumption running through your mind (e.g., "They are ignoring my text because they are mad at me," or "I'm going to get fired"). Write the "Tragic Ending" down:

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**Step 2.** Acknowledge the genre your brain is currently stuck in (e.g., Disaster, Tragedy, Rejection). What kind of story is your anxiety trying to tell?

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**Step 3.** Write your "Plot Twist." Force yourself to draft an alternative, highly realistic outcome that completely shifts the narrative. What is a surprisingly positive way and neutral this could actually play out? Option for

Positive: \_\_\_\_\_

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Neutral: \_\_\_\_\_

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Any other positive or neutral outcomes (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

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**Step 4.** Act as the fact-checker. Look at your Tragic Ending from Step 1 and your Plot Twist from Step 3. Based purely on your past life experiences and the actual facts at hand, which scenario is more likely to happen?

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**Step 5.** Finally, rewrite your original thought by merging the situation with your new, realistic plot twist (e.g., "I haven't heard back yet, but the plot twist is they are probably just busy at work, not secretly furious with me"):

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The Plot Twist Technique is not about toxic positivity or pretending bad things never happen. It is about recognizing that your anxiety is a biased storyteller, and you have the power to write a more accurate, balanced script.

## Important Things to Keep in Mind

- **Aim for Neutrality:** You don't always have to write a fairytale ending. Often, the most powerful and believable plot twists are entirely mundane (e.g., "The twist is that nobody was actually paying attention to my mistake").
- **Catch the "Mind Reading":** This technique works incredibly well for social anxiety. When you assume you know what someone else is thinking, draft a plot twist where their behavior has absolutely nothing to do with you.
- **Review Past Twists:** If you are struggling to believe your new narrative, think back to past situations where you predicted a disaster. How often did the actual outcome end up being a boring, neutral "plot twist"?
- **Embrace the Unknown:** Anxiety demands absolute certainty. Writing a plot twist helps you build tolerance for the unknown by proving that multiple different outcomes are possible.

## Final Note

Ultimately, the Plot Twist Technique teaches us that we are the authors of our internal narratives, not just passive audience members. When negative emotions take the director's chair, they try to convince us that the script is finalized and our doom is sealed. By deliberately introducing a plot twist, you reclaim your creative control. You remind yourself that the future is unwritten, the present is flexible, and your story has far more possibilities than your fear wants you to believe.