Exercise: Catching Your ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts)

This exercise helps you notice and reframe the automatic negative thoughts that often sneak in during digital interactions, particularly when texts, tone, or timing are ambiguous.

When you catch yourself reacting to something your partner did (or didn't do) digitally, pause and fill in the table. Identify the ANT type and rewrite a more balanced version of the thought.

Trigger	ANT Type	Thought	Balanced Thought
No emoji in response	Personalization	*"They must be mad at me."*	*"They might just be busy or distracted."*
Didn't reply for hours	Catastrophizing	*"They're ignoring me on purpose."*	*"They might be overwhelmed or forgot."*
Liked someone else's post	Mind Reading	*"They're more interested in them."*	*"They might be overwhelmed or forgot."*

Common ANT Types to Watch For:

- Mind Reading: *"I know what they're thinking."*
- Catastrophizing: *"This means everything is falling apart."*
- Personalization: *"This is definitely about me."*
- All-or-Nothing Thinking: *"If they cared, they would've responded right away."*
- Filtering: *"They forgot to say goodnight, so the whole day was bad."*

Reflection:

- Which negative thought came up most often for you? _____

- How did it affect your mood or your interaction with your partner? _____

  _____

- Was it easier or harder than you expected to find a more balanced thought? _____

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- What kind of reassurance or communication would help reduce these thoughts?

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