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While studying for my English exams I had such low self-esteem that I struggled to write essays because I criticized every sentence I wrote and thought it wasn't good enough.

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I can't pin down a thought or an idea, it's there in my mind but I can't quite get to it. Like in a dream when you are moving through water and the current is against you.

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Sometimes before I even begin writing I feel it; the pressure, the fear. It feels like I am going on a long scary rollercoaster with the Grinch anxiously waiting on the other side to judge me.

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My heartbeat quickens and my hands get sweaty. Afterwards I kick myself because it was actually really simple and I knew the answer.

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I procrastinate or put things off because I worry that my work isn't good enough. I agonise over the tiniest details to get things just right even when it's good enough already. When things don't work out exactly as I'd hoped, I find it hard to get over these mistakes... even though most people wouldn't really see them as mistakes. I'm caught in a trap of constant self-criticism and I think it's starting to take a toll on my mental health.

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Instead of a light bulb appearing in my head when I have an idea, I have a candle with a short wick that is blown out by the slightest breeze or movement.

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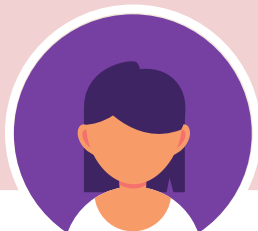
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When I did badly in an exam, I would almost go into a shell. I felt like I've not only let myself down but all of those who believed in me down too.

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My mind goes totally blank. I feel like everyone is watching me, waiting for an answer, thinking how easy it is.

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In my head, I'm expecting my FIRST draft to be perfect, the first sentence I put down to be perfect.

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Situations where I've been so extremely anxious, I sort of disassociated - mentally I wasn't even there or able to come up with anything to say, and when I did want to say something, I would stutter, mumble or my sentences wouldn't make sense.

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When I am in a circle of people who are more 'accomplished', go to a 'better' university or study a 'harder' subject and they ask me what I do; I'm embarrassed to tell them, I feel as though they are embarrassed for me. I feel inadequate.

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Even though I know what to say, whenever I get asked to say my answers and speak in front of others, I tend to get nervous or afraid that I'll make a fool of myself...I mean everyone wants to look or sound like they know what they're talking about, especially when you're required to do so.

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