

MANAGING RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR

Inner Critic

Practical Guide



WHAT IS INNER CRITIC

The inner critic is that judgmental voice that never seems to stop commenting on what you do, say, or even think. Sometimes it's quiet and subtle, other times it's loud and harsh. It drains our energy and keeps us small. It can feel like living with a micromanaging boss in your own mind, always watching, always judging.

As children, this voice had a function, helping us navigate rules and stay safe. But as adults, its constant attacks don't serve us anymore. By learning to manage it, we can reclaim a huge amount of power and energy.

HOW WE EXPERIENCE IT

Toward ourselves

– When we're talking to ourselves inside our own minds. "You're not good enough."

Projected onto others toward ourselves

– When we project our inner critic onto other people and imagine what they're thinking or saying about us. "They must think I'm a failure."

Toward others

– When we're judging others instead of ourselves. If we are feeling small, we can try to inflate our own self-esteem and put others down to try to make ourselves feel better. "She's so lazy." (often a projection of how we fear being seen).



THE TYPICAL RESPONSES TO OUR INNER CRITIC

Most of us respond to the critic by:

Fighting – combative, destructive

Collapsing – giving in, hoping that if we surrender, the voice will leave us alone

Rationalising – debating our value as human beings

But like playing tennis with no net, these strategies only feed the critic and give it more energy.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO DEAL WITH IT

It drains your energy.

The critic's voice repeats itself endlessly. If you pay attention, you'll notice it saying the same things over and over. This wastes energy, creates anxiety, and rarely leads to growth.

It keeps you stuck.

Even when there's a grain of truth, the critic weaponises it, making you feel smaller instead of stronger. Instead of helping you learn from a mistake, it keeps you stuck in shame and fear.

It's not effective.

An abusive inner voice doesn't improve performance. It narrows our perspective and shuts down learning.



APPROACHES THAT CAN HELP

Whether we're dreading the critic, feeling paralysed by its attacks, or relying on it, believing it keeps us "good" or "safe," both patterns are rooted in fear. And both can shift once we recognise an important truth:

the critic is a part of us, but not the whole of us.

That's the core of every method you'll come across. The goal isn't to destroy the critic, but to change your relationship with it. Below, I share several approaches you can try.

Approach these exercises as little **experiments**.

Try them out and see which ones bring you the most ease and freedom.



If the inner critic isn't threatening, we can get curious about the voice, get to know it and befriend it.

1. NOTICE IT

Open your journal and respond to the following prompts:

When does your inner critic usually show up?

What does it say?

Does it always criticise you?

Does it show up in specific situations? What are these situations?

Does it have a certain tone?

What are its fears?

What is important to it?

2. FEEL IT

Get to know how you feel when your inner critic is criticising you. Sometimes, it's hard to identify that the inner critic is speaking, but your feelings can serve as clues that the inner critic is present.

Next time you feel the effects of self-criticism, it will be easier for you to be compassionate toward yourself.



3. GET CURIOUS

Beneath its harsh words, the critic usually has a positive intention. It's trying (in a clumsy way) to protect us — from rejection, from shame, from repeating a painful past. When we learn to listen for that underlying care, we can honour its intention while finding healthier ways to meet that need.

Get curious. “You’re falling behind” - ask your inner critic:

What are you trying to protect me from?

What are you afraid will happen if you stop?

What do you need right now?

What if you assumed the critic actually loves you — it just has very clumsy strategies for showing it?

4. BEFRIEND IT

You'll know the inner critic feels heard when it quiets down. That's when you can express how you feel and ask for compassion.

You might say: “When you’re worried about me losing connection with others, I’m wondering if you could tell me that you’re worried, rather than calling me names, because it’s very painful for me when I hear you call me selfish, and I think I could hear you better if you talk to me with more kindness.”



R.I.D.D. FRAMEWORK

This model is for when the inner critic is harsh and sabotages our progress. In that case, we need to create more space.

1. RECOGNIZE

We get so used to our inner critic that it becomes 'normalised' and it is hard to see. By putting the spotlight on it, we can feel it more clearly.

Open your journal and respond to the following prompts:

How do you know you have been attacked?

What happens in your body?

2. IDENTIFY

Once we've recognised that we're attacking ourselves, the next step is to identify the specific wording and nature of the attack.

Reflection:

What are your top 10 mostly used attacks?

What are the typical ways it shows up?

How do you usually respond to the attacks?

3. DEFEND

Challenge it and put a boundary. There are different ways of defending yourself, and you can find what works for you by experimenting:



- Head-based
 - Changing the subject: Did you watch XYZ last night?
 - Exaggeration: Yes, I'm the most xxx in the whole wide world!
 - Exposing the judge: Who cares what you think?
- Heart-based responses
 - Truth: That hurts me when you speak that way. Stop it.
 - Compassion: If I'm acting that way, it must be really painful for you.
- Strength-based
 - Some people find strong language helps set a boundary — even a sharp 'F** off' can reclaim your power.
 - How dare you speak to me that way !?

Check whether your defence has worked:

- Do you feel bigger or smaller?
- Do you feel you have the power?
- Do you feel more space in your experience?

4. **DISENGAGE**

Just “walk away”. Stop feeding it.
Where attention goes, energy flows.

Instead, think about what positive qualities about yourself you could focus on.



At the beginning of this process, the inner critic may get a bit louder because we are focusing on it.

However, by constantly recognising that we're being attacked, identifying the specific attack, defending ourselves against it, and then disengaging, over time, we're fundamentally retaining this part of our mind. In so doing, it becomes much easier to be gentle and loving toward ourselves.

Closing Thoughts

The goal isn't to get rid of the inner critic — that's not realistic.

The real shift comes when you change your relationship with it. When you see through its harshness, you reclaim your energy and your freedom. The critic becomes less of a boss and more like a quirky part of you that you know how to handle.



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