YOUR INNER WORLD

Transforming the Inner Critic

About 10 minutes with one manageable example

This workbook offers a gentle introduction to the practice for you to explore on your own; deeper work is best undertaken with the support of a professional counsellor.

Find a different way to respond

Self-criticism can make a particular difficulty sound like a judgement about your whole self. This practice invites you to notice one critical message and consider a response that is both kinder and more accurate.

Here, the inner critic means a self-critical way of thinking or speaking to yourself. You do not need to imagine a character. Changing your response can begin with a few ordinary words.

1. Choose a manageable moment

Recall a recent everyday difficulty, such as a task taking longer than you expected. Choose something you can consider without becoming overwhelmed. Leave intensely painful material for a setting with support.

2. Notice the message and its effect

What did you say to yourself? Write a short version, or simply note "harsh criticism" if repeating the words feels unhelpful. Notice how the message affects what you feel or do.

3. Separate the concern from the judgement

Is there a specific difficulty, wish or responsibility you want to attend to? You can acknowledge something that needs attention without accepting a sweeping conclusion about your worth.

You may recognise a concern beneath the criticism, or you may not. There is no need to invent a positive intention or make yourself feel grateful for the message.

4. Try a fairer response

What could you say that takes account of both the situation and your needs? Aim for words you can believe. "This has taken longer than I planned. I can decide what is needed next." You can be clear about a mistake without speaking to yourself contemptuously.

5. Choose what to attend to

Would a practical step, a break or some support help now? Try one response if it fits, then return to your surroundings. You do not need to argue with every critical thought or wait for the criticism to stop.

If the practice intensifies the criticism or leaves you distressed, stop. You can leave the page unfinished and seek support with what has come up.

TRANSFORMING THE INNER CRITIC

Make room for another response

The situation, and the message I noticed or its effect:

Any specific concern worth attending to, without the judgement about my worth:

A fairer response I can believe, and what I want to attend to next:

An ordinary example

After forgetting a small task, you notice the thought "I am useless." The task may still need doing, but the judgement says more than the event establishes. You might respond: "I forgot this. I can check what needs doing and choose a way to remember next time."

A kinder response does not have to feel convincing straight away. Adjust the words until they are as fair and believable as you can make them, or leave them for now.

TRANSFORMING THE INNER CRITIC

Returning to the practice

Over four weeks

If this practice is part of your Development Map plan, follow the pace suggested there. The aim is to explore your response to criticism, without monitoring every thought.

Week 1 | Recognise the message

Notice one everyday instance of self-criticism and its effect. You can describe it briefly without recording the exact words.

Week 2 | Hear the specific concern

Consider what, if anything, needs attention in the situation. Distinguish a practical issue from a broad judgement about yourself. Some messages may contain no useful guidance.

Week 3 | Try a different response

Use a short, believable response in one manageable moment. Follow it with a practical choice if that helps. Notice what is useful, even if the critical thought remains.

Week 4 | Review the relationship

Which words or actions helped you respond more fairly? What felt forced or unhelpful? Decide what to keep practising and where you would like support.

What helps me take a difficulty seriously without turning against myself?

This practice supports self-reflection. It is not a treatment or a substitute for professional support.

Work with me

If this workbook has opened up something you would like to explore further, you are welcome to get in touch. I offer psychotherapy and counselling in Dalston, East London, and online. We can use an initial session to consider what brings you to therapy and whether working together feels right for you.

BOOK AN INITIAL SESSION	CONTACT ME