



"You can either walk inside your story and own it, or stand outside your story and hustle for your worthiness"

~ Brene Brown, PhD

UNDERSTANDING YOUR INNER DIALOGUE INNER CRITIC TO INNER MENTOR

GAINING AWARENESS OF THE "STORY" YOU ARE TELLING YOURSELF AND YOUR SELF-TALK IS PROFOUND AND TRANSFORMATIONAL WORK. BEGIN MENTORING YOUR OWN THOUGHTS.

The Inner Critic is composed of ideas, beliefs, emotions, perceptions, fears, and thoughts. It is part of our Inner Dialogue that tries to manage our experience by telling us when we're doing something right or wrong, or if we are good or bad. We acquire this part of our mind (aspect of the superego) as young children, starting around age 7. It continues to develop throughout our lives. For many, it is subconscious and this unawareness is in itself the problem.



ATTEMPTS TO ENSURE WE 'FIT IN': Inner Critic is the part of you that judges you, demeans you, and tells you who you "should" be. It undermines your confidence and makes you feel bad about yourself. However, you will soon find Inner Critic has a purpose and it **takes its job very seriously**. **Paradoxically, its overall purpose has been to PROTECT you. Yet, it tends to be overbearing and even counterproductive.**



It attempts to shape us in ways that conform with others' expectations (perceived or real), and overall societal demands of what is considered good and successful. Inner Critic's job is to ensure we "fit in" at any cost, in hopes of feeling accepted, loved, and safe, and it starves for a sense of belonging. It can even berate you into making sure you are extra nice to toxic people, no matter what.



MAY ALSO REBEL AGAINST 'FITTING IN': Inner Critic may even swing in the opposite direction, pushing you to try to not care about what others' think about you and rebel against the tugging, sometimes agonizing need to 'belong' and please others. This can result in reactions and sabotaging behaviors. Inner Critic can also be fueled by **INAUTHENTIC SHAME**, also referred to as toxic shame (you will learn about this in the Tearing-up Contracts practice).



IMPACTS SELF-WORTH AND IDENTITY: As you can see, this part of us is externally-focused; it monitors everyone else's wants and needs, and internalizes these perceptions 'unfiltered' (essentially brainwashing unless you are mindful in each moment). This internalizing becomes your 'programming,' your psychological and emotional foundation and framework, and the basis for which you build (or tear down) your self-identity and worthiness. And thus, it is a very important part of our psyche to be aware of, to nurture, understand and guide with care and rationale.

WHY PRACTICE INNER CRITIC WORK? TRANSFORM YOUR INNER CRITIC TO AN INNER MENTOR

Inner Critic Work is a major step in understanding yourself, and understanding why you may be getting in your own way of attaining aspirations in life, realizing a sense of calm, overcoming anxiety, quitting an addiction, breaking up with an abusive partner, changing a behavior that you realize does not serve you, and even sabotaging attempts at a respectful, joyful, compassionate, loving relationship with yourself and others.

INNER CRITIC (Automatic)	INNER MENTOR (Guided)
FEAR BASED	REALITY BASED
Definite pronouncements	Curious questions
Intent to Protect	Intent to Learn
Unaware of inner dialogue	Aware of inner dialogue
Black and white thinking	Ability to see the gray
Repeating unwanted behavioral patterns	Forward moving/accountable/learns lessons
Emotionally Unaware (suppresses emotions and reacts)	Emotionally Empowered & Grounded (feels, accepts, understands emotions)
Reactive (mindless, knee-jerk reactions)	Careful (full of care and mindfulness)
FIGHT / FLEE / FREEZE / FAWN	CONNECT WITHIN / CLARITY / CALM
Impulsive	Thoughtful
Porous or Rigid Boundaries	Healthy/balanced Boundaries
Retreat	Explore
Resentful and Vengeful	Forgiving and Sets Boundaries as Appropriate
Anxious or berating tone	Calm and compassionate tone
Sees problems and makes assumptions	Sees problems, seeks truth and finds solutions
Externally focused	Internally focused, self-trust, guidance
Self-critical, Self-berating, Self-punishment	Self-care, Self-compassion, Self-discipline
Forces you to be "nice" but not authentic	Authentic kindness with balanced self-care
Aggressive to others/Passive Aggressive	Communicates with respect and clarity
Dishonest (perhaps without even knowing it)	Honest
Controlling (tries to control others for a sense of safety)	Brave (accepts others as others are not controllable)
Obsesses, Over-analyzes and Over-thinks in order to get a short-term "fix" of false relief	Proactive planning based on info available, yet has the wisdom to know what cannot control. Allows for hope and faith as appropriate

START BY WATCHING TWO VIDEOS AND TAKE THE ASSESSMENT

VIEW BOTH 'Inner Critic' Videos available: <https://youtu.be/uWc4pZhnpOw> and https://youtu.be/DaQ_-3NRRzo

TAKE THE ASSESSMENT "Inner Critic Type": www.creatingyourbalance.com/resources

Check the top 3 Inner Critic Types you scored highest in and note the score for each:

Perfectionist Score _____

- This critic tries to convince you that you must be perfect to be accepted, loved or enough
- Sets impossibly high standards for things and has difficulty saying something is complete
- Drives you to succeed at all times in an attempt to avoid painful failure, or being judged or rejected
- Its expectations probably reflect those of people who have been important to you in the past

Guilt-Tripper Score _____

- Critic is stuck in the past and unable to forgive you for wrongs you have done or people you have hurt
- Concerned about relationships and holds you to standards of behavior prescribed by your community, culture and family (inauthentic shame, also known as toxic shame as it impacts you subconsciously)
- Tries to protect you from repeating past mistakes by making sure you never forget nor forgive yourself

Underminer Score _____

- This critic tries to undermine your self-confidence and self-esteem so that you won't take risks
- Makes direct attacks on your self-worth so that you will stay small and not take chances where you could be hurt or rejected, and thus tries to protect you from feeling the pain of having expectations only to be disappointed
- Afraid of you being too big or too visible and not being able to tolerate judgment or failure

Destroyer Score _____

- Makes pervasive attacks on your fundamental self-worth
- Shames you and makes you feel inherently flawed and not entitled to basic understanding or respect
- This most debilitating critic comes from early life deprivation or trauma
- Motivated by a belief that it is safer not to exist

Molder Score _____

- Tries to get you to fit into a certain mold based on standards held by society, your culture or your family
- It wants you to be liked and admired and to protect you from being abandoned, shamed or rejected
- The Molder fears that the Rebel or the Free Spirit in you would act in ways that are unacceptable. So, it keeps you from being in touch with and expressing your true nature

Taskmaster Score _____

- This critic wants you to work hard and be successful; can create more anxiety than necessary for the situation
- It fears you may be mediocre or lazy and will be judged a failure if it does not push you to keep going
- Its pushing often activates a procrastinator or a rebellion that fights against its harsh dictates

Inner Controller Score _____

- This critic tries to control your impulses to a fault: eating, drinking, sexual activity, etc.
- It is polarized with over-indulging/addictive impulses; Inner Controller fears it will lose control at any moment
- It tends to be harsh and shaming in an effort to protect you from yourself, but its attempts to control tend to fail
- It is motivated to try to make you a good person who is accepted and functions well in society

STARTS WITH AWARENESS: INNER CRITIC TO INNER MENTOR

FOR AN ENTIRE DAY (OR MORE) START OBSERVING YOUR INNER DIALOGUE (ALSO KNOWN AS MINDFULNESS)

Begin noticing your THOUGHTS in each moment. What patterns do you notice? Are you harsh towards your appearance, performance, or how you interact with others? Perfectionist? What are you telling yourself? Do you make assumptions of others' perceptions of? Do you believe your thoughts are facts? Describe what you observe overall.

What is the first thought or image that pops up when you think of what you are **most** self-critical of?

List 5 or more of your common inner critical thoughts you noticed today or recently.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

What tone do you notice your Inner Critic has? Mean, passive, berating, judgmental, quiet, cold, stern, whiny, etc.?

Does it sound like anyone from your childhood... a parent, family member, teacher, or other authority figure? This is not to shame anyone... it is to bring awareness of your inner dialogue.

Allow your Inner Critic to let you know it's perspective on what you just wrote. Who does it care about impressing the most? Who or what does it want to blame the most? Give it permission to honestly state whatever it wants unfiltered.

How do you feel towards you Inner Critic right now?

Remember Inner Critic is a part of you that wants you to "fit-in," succeed, look good and please others to get love, sometimes to any extreme. It may also criticize you for even trying to fit it, fearing rejection. This part of you has been around since childhood and adolescence. Thus, it is imperative to have care and compassion for Inner Critic.



It is common for us to accept messages from society and marketing in terms of what makes a person worthy or not. In addition, authority figures, parents and teachers to use humiliation, control, fear, berating, comparing you with others, perfectionist standards, etc. in order to get you to behave or win.

This is "OLD SCHOOL," yet it remains common even though studies show how unproductive this uninspiring style is. Inner Critic may be holding on to using these "old school" tactics, attempting to motivate you or protect you by berating and shaming you.

CATCH: STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS TO WORK WITH INNER CRITIC SHAME



CATCH

In each moment, as you notice an Inner Critic remark, CATCH it. Instead of continuing to allow this aspect of your mind to get away with its influence, you are learning to CATCH it in the act.



ACCEPT

Unconditionally ACCEPT and embrace the thought or belief that Inner Critic has, such as "I am not worth it" or "Everyone disappoints me." Simply notice and ACCEPT without fighting it, avoiding it or resisting it.



TRANSFER

TRANSFER it to a "You Statement" instead of an "I Statement." For example, instead of "I am not worth it." Change to "You are not worth it." This separates you from your Inner Critic so you can observe it and begin to work with it. Otherwise you are powerless, stuck, and enmeshed with it.



CHECK INTO (EXPLORE DEEPER MEANING)

CHECK INTO this Inner Critic remark. **Ask the following questions:**
Is this remark a fact or belief?



How does this remark make me feel? Describe emotions and bodily sensations.

When is the first time I formed this belief (young child, teen, adult)? Who does it sound like?

What do I fear may happen if I let go of this fact or opinion/belief about myself?

What is it trying to protect me from (heartbreak, being fooled, failure, having too much hope, being too emotional, disappointed, pain of let-down, anguish of being rejected, humiliation, etc.)?



HONOR & NEGOTIATE TO CREATE MORE OF AN INNER MENTOR

Honor Inner Critic's service. It takes its job very seriously and in many cases Inner Critic believes your very survival and/or success in life depends on it. It is essential that you HONOR this part of self, rather than shame it more. Be grateful for Inner Critic's hard work. This is a part of you that likely DISLIKES its job. Honoring self is **self-esteem** in action. **Esteem, by definition, is respect, honor and appreciation.** NEGOTIATE and guide Inner Critic learn to be more of an Inner Mentor (an experienced and trusted adviser) that coaches and mentors you without berating, ridiculing, or feeding you fear-based beliefs. NEGOTIATE for ideal guidance.

How would a wise, mentor advise you on the fact or opinion/belief that Inner Critic has?

For example, instead of "Everyone disappoints you," an Inner Mentor would say, "I know you've been disappointed by people a lot, and this sucks, however, by learning how to choose the right people to trust and learning boundary-setting skills, you can find ways to ensure more fulfilling relationships, and reduce the risk of being disappointed again."



CONTINUE TO THIS STEP FOR UNRELENTING ISSUES THAT KEEP SHOWING UP IN LIFE

Negotiate to Take Action Now in the Moment or Make a Plan of Action

Ask Inner Critic what it needs right now to feel better about it's belief or concern.

Use the following table to understand and resolve patterns of behavior or issues that Inner Critic keeps berating you about. You get to circle back to this as many times in life. Even if the same issue keeps coming up, work with it again and again until it is resolved as you desire. Negotiation tends to get more specific with time and with details the more you practice (which is good, the more awareness the better) and eventually smoother each time. Practice is key!

Describe the aspect of yourself or your life that you are inner-critical of currently (from CATCH)		
FEARS REGARDING THIS What could happen?	FACTS REGARDING THIS What is happening?	MUST YOU ACCEPT AS-IS OR WHAT CAN YOU CHANGE?

Make a Plan of Action and "To Do List" for Long-Term Issues

If your situation requires long-term action planning, continue this step. Examples include: Inner Critic says, "You always screw up... don't even try for that promotion." Or "don't even try to lose weight... you'll fail like usual." Or "Stop having hope for finding love, you will only get hurt and disappointed again."

Write a to-do list of ways to help your possibilities. This "TO-DO LIST" is up to you. It is unique for each individual and issue you are facing.

Each time Inner Critic berates you, do this journal practice. This is also healthy discipline for your Inner Critic and helps this aspect of yourself 'grow-up' and mature, in a balanced, compassionate way. Instead of allowing it to just throw insults at you, all-or-nothing type statements, other forms of lashing out, and harsh self-talk that negatively impacts your life, you will begin leaning into what it says and giving it attention, valuing it, seeing, hearing and understanding it (this is self-love); working with, instead of against yourself.

EXAMPLES OF WAYS TO WORK WITH INNER CRITIC TO BECOME AN INNER MENTOR

INNER CRITICS NEED GUIDANCE TO MATURE AND CORRECT FALSE BELIEFS & OLD THOUGHT PATTERNS

Perfectionist "YOU FAILED AGAIN" "YOUR NOT ENOUGH" "YOUR HAIR SUCKS." "WHY CAN'T YOU GET IT RIGHT?"

False Beliefs I am flawed/incomplete at the core. I need this critic to keep myself inline otherwise I'd fall apart.

Protective Mechanism Attempt to gain a sense of worthiness, safety, love and/or support

New Realistic Belief Mistakes do not make me a mistake. I am unconditionally worthy of love. I may never feel loved by others the way I truly want them to love me, however I am realistically worthy of my own genuine love here and now and in each moment. In fact it is my job to unconditionally love myself. I am free to feel imperfectly perfect.

All or Nothing Thinking I ALWAYS ___ (SCREW UP) OR NEVER ___ (GET CHOSEN)

FALSE BELIEF: I need this critic to keep myself inline otherwise I'd fall apart or lose control

New Realistic Belief Always AND Never are grossly inaccurate statements. My extreme critic may not feel the freedom of finding comfort in the 'good enough is good enough.'



Self-hate, Self-disgust "YOU SUCK" "YOU ARE THE WORST" "YOU'RE UGLY" "I HATE YOU" "YOU'LL BE FAT FOREVER"

False Beliefs I need this critic to avoid rejection. If I berate myself it diverts from the lack of connection, appreciation, and/or love from others. It makes me in control or rejection and let-down because I get to beat others to the punch.

New Realistic Belief Berating myself causes more pain and damage to my core self-worth than others' insults. I am realistically worthy of my own genuine love and acceptance here and now. My critic is open to taking a new role as a wise mentor to stand up for myself and my right to be kind to myself.

Obsessing/Worrying "WHY HASN'T HE TEXTED ME BACK YET?" "SHE WILL LEAVE ME SOMEDAY FOR A RICHER GUY"

False Beliefs If I can mindread or catch every detail, I can predict and prevent pain in the future. I need this obsessing/worrying part to keep myself safe from pain and let-down

Protective Mechanism Attempt to future proof and control the unknown by examining details over and over.

New Realistic Belief I can't predict the future or mindread no matter how hard I try, however I can plan for scenarios and 'what if's' in order to minimize risk and allow for a sense of safety, calm, and even joy in the present moment.

Devaluing Comparisons and SHOULD statements (Underminer)

False Beliefs If I become "THAT GOOD" OR "THAT PRETTY" OR "THAT FIT" OR "THAT SUCCESSFUL," etc., then and only then, will I be good enough to be worthy of feeling good, calm, worthy, accomplished, and/or loved.

Protective Mechanism Attempt to divert from the pain of our perceived lack of love from others OR our OWN LACK OF SELF-LOVE and lack of self-attunement and connection (form of self-abandonment)

New Realistic Belief I am who I am and I am good enough to be worthy of my own unconditional love. My own love for myself is the most resilient, sustainable, powerful fuel source to power myself towards self-improvement. I may never feel anyone else's love and acceptance the way I desire, yet I am realistically worthy of my own love and acceptance. I can change this critic to a mentor that is more inspirational and loving towards me than perhaps anyone has ever been.

Over-doing, workholic, busyholic

False Beliefs I need this to be productive and successful. I fear allowing calm or allow myself to feel accomplishment.

New Realistic Belief I will not try to perform at 100% all the time. I will balance work with play, self-care, and calm.



OPTIONAL: VISUALIZE AND CREATE YOUR INNER MENTOR

Take this a step further and really visualize how you would want your most IDEAL Inner Mentor to be like. By doing this you are laying the foundation to NURTURE, MATURE, INSPIRE, and ENCOURAGE this young, immature, confused, berating Inner Critic aspect of yourself.

Visualize your Inner Critic as an Inner Mentor. Do you have a role model that you'd want as your Mentor (could be in your personal life or someone you have admired in history, athletically, heroically, etc.)?

What attributes, character and personality does this Mentor look like?

What values do you admire about this Mentor?

What values and attributes to you already share with this Mentor?

You have the power to guide yourself, even through the worst regrets, mistakes and failures in life, with compassion and mentorship rather than berating criticism. What are your thoughts and beliefs regarding this?

What advice or instructions would this Mentor give you to help resolve and what you listed above? What Plan of Action and Action Steps come to mind? Write a "TO-DO LIST of ways to help achieve your goals.