

MANAGE YOUR INNER CRITIC: FROM CRITIC TO COACH

The Inner Critic is an inner voice that judges, criticizes, and makes you feel bad about yourself.

7 STEPS TO MANAGING YOUR INNER CRITIC

1. Give your Inner Critic a name.



When you detach yourself from the Inner Critic, you mentally recognize that you are not your thoughts or the inner voice that is criticizing or judging you. You can then treat the Inner Critic as a friend or foe – but it is not who you are.

My Inner Critic's Name is: _____

2. Where and when does the Inner Critic tend to show up?



When you can anticipate when and where the Inner Critic tends to show up, you're more prepared to manage it when it does.

The Inner Critic shows up when I: (Check all that apply. Add your own.)

- face a new challenge or stretch outside my comfort zone
- compare myself to others
- try to live up to other people's expectations
- make perfection the standard by which I measure success
- am fearful of failure, shame, or guilt

3. What are the Inner Critic's common criticisms or judgments against you?



The Inner Critic repeats the same messages. When it finds what works (as in what stops you), it goes back to those messages again and again.

Which are the "go-to" messages of the Inner Critic? (Check all that apply. Add your own.)

- "You're not deserving."
- "You're not good enough."
- "You're not smart enough."
- "You're too fat."
- "You're not attractive."
- "You're not better than _____."
- "You're going to fail."
- "What's wrong with you?"
- "Don't even try."
- "You're going to make yourself look foolish."
- "You can't do it."
- "Your life is good enough as it is."
- "Don't blow it."

4. What is the Inner Critic afraid of?



One perspective of the Inner Critic is that it may be attempting to help or protect you from harm in a maladaptive way. New experiences and new challenges create risks. By saying things that keep you playing small, the Inner Critic keeps you in a comfort zone and out of harm's way.

The Inner Critic is afraid I may: (Check all that apply. Add your own.)

- fail
- get hurt or harm myself in some way
- be sad
- disappoint myself
- lose stature with my family, friends, or coworkers
- succeed and try even riskier endeavors in the future
- be embarrassed or embarrass others I care about
- be rejected
- lower my self-confidence or esteem

5. Who would I be without the Inner Critic?



Think about how the Inner Critic might be holding you back and how it will change when you learn to manage it.

Without the Inner Critic, I am: (Check all that apply. Add your own.)

- Confident
- Outgoing
- Unafraid to try new things
- Proud of myself
- Able to meet people more easily
- Less anxious or depressed
- Successful
- Calm and gentle with myself
- Happier

6. Turn the Inner Critic into Your Inner Coach.



Learn to manage your Inner Critic by giving it a new job. Instead of the Inner Critic judging and demeaning you, make it a valuable Inner Coach.

Look at the samples below and try to complete the chart using the messages the Inner Critic commonly says to you.

What the Inner Critic Says...	What the Inner Critic is Afraid of...	What the Inner Coach Says...
You're not deserving.	Rejection	You're just as, if not more, deserving than anyone else.
Don't even try.	Failure	If you never tried, you wouldn't have accomplished all the things you have. Go for it.
You're not smart enough.	Embarrassment	No one knows everything. You have learned other things. You can learn this too.
You're not better than _____	Comparison/losing stature	You are better at some things. And what a great opportunity to learn from _____

7. How to Talk to Your Inner Critic

When you engage with the Inner Critic, call it by its name. Remember to assume that the Inner Critic wants to help and protect you. Give your Inner Critic another assignment by telling it that if you do what its critical voice says, that will lead to more harm.

Here's a dialogue with the Inner Critic, Max, as an example:



Max: "Don't apply for that job. You don't have what it takes."

You: "Max, I understand you may be afraid that I won't get the job and that I'll be disappointed, but I'll be more disappointed in myself if I don't go for what I want. Instead of telling me not to apply, you can be helpful by remembering all the strengths that I bring to the role."

Max: "I don't want you to be disappointed, so if helping you think of your strengths will help you, then that's what I will do."

You: "Thank you Max. I knew I could count on you."
