

Building Inner Strengths to Heal Your Inner Critic

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Supplemental Exercises & Resources

Part One: Getting Acquainted Exercises

1. By yourself

By yourself: To be more aware of how the IC manifests in your life: Notice when/where/how your IC shows up. What is it saying to you? How does it feel inside when IC is present?

Write out what your inner critic says to you at different times of the day, in different situations, and with different people and notice whether there are patterns to it's showing up. For example, does your inner critic get stronger when you're tired, hungry, or stressed? If so, taking breaks, unwinding, having snacks, and relaxing can all reduce the power of your inner critic.

Later, ask yourself, "Do these voices remind you of someone in your life?" Notice how you feel when you think of this person. Could you have adopted someone else's critical messages as your own? If so, you may be able to separate from the inner critic by saying to yourself, something like "Ah, yes, that's what my (mother/father, etc.) would have said."

If at some point you feel as though you are having trouble separating from the IC (i.e. you are identifying with the critic, rather than being able to see it simply as a part within you) it can help to take steps to ground yourself. To do this, imagine yourself stepping back from the inner critic. Get in touch with your body, the feel of your feet on the floor, other sensations in/around your body. Then become aware that there is a part of you that thinks this way, and that there are other parts that are very different (for example, the part that signed up for this workshop!)

Remember that we don't need to argue with the inner critic, but rather just be aware of it.

2. With a partner

Choose one instance of an appearance of an inner critic part in your life today or yesterday, and use this as a starting point to begin a Focusing session with your partner.

Plan on Focusing for a minimum of 20 minutes each, and then spend a few minutes sharing with your partner how the session went for you. The listener can then share how the session was for him/her. Be careful, though, to not give advice, sympathy, or to add anything other than your own experience.

*So be careful what you let in the door, is my advice.
It should not make you feel numb or bored, or demeaned, or less than human.*

Barbara Kingsolver, High Tide in Tuscon

Part Two: Approaches to Working with the Inner Critic Exercises

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.
Albert Einstein

1. By yourself

- Mantras on acceptance:

"The greatest discovery of my generation is that man can alter his life simply by altering his attitude of mind." – William James

"The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change."
– Carl Rogers

- The next time you hear a voice inside of you putting you down, take a deep breath, remind yourself it's your inner critic speaking, take a step back, and observe it in action. That may be all you need to do to reduce its impact.
- Listen for potential disowned parts, and then acknowledge them. Keep in mind that the more we can acknowledge all of who we are, and how we can behave, the less powerful the inner critic will be.
- Listening to the IC and its target (aware, curious, separation) Write out a conversation between an inner critic and another part of yourself where you simply listen, ask clarifying questions, understand the inner critic's deeper concerns, offer reflection, and whatever else might feel right. This can often soften the IC more and has longer lasting results.

2. With a partner

Choose one instance of the appearance of an IC part in your life today, and use this to begin a Focusing session with your partner. Plan on Focusing for a minimum of 20 minutes each, and then spending at least a few minutes sharing with your partner how the session went for you.

You can have anything you want if you are willing to give up the belief that you can't have it.
Robert Anthony

RESOURCES

Articles, Recordings & Videos

- Brainpickings.article quoted on p. 2:
https://www.brainpickings.org/2016/05/23/against-self-criticism-adam-phillips-unforbidden-pleasures/?mc_cid=5e19106c81&mc_eid=eba706358e
- Hardwiring happiness *The Hidden Power of Everyday Experiences on the Modern Brain: How to overcome the Brain's Negativity Bias*. Dr. Rick Hanson at TEDxMarin 2013
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpuDyGgIeh0&feature=em-share_video_user
- Link to Guided Forgiveness Meditation (and other resources):
<http://www.peterrussell.com/Meditation/Meditations.php>
- How to break a bad habit: <http://jamesclear.com/how-to-break-a-bad-habit>
- A story: The Snow Queen http://hca.gilead.org.il/snow_que.html

Books

- Dweck, Carol S. 2006. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*
- Ford, Debbie. *The Dark Side of the Light Chasers*
- Hanson, Rick. 2013. *Hardwiring Happiness: The New Brain Science of Contentment, Calm, and Confidence*
- Kashdan, Todd. *Curious?: 2009. Discover the Missing Ingredient to a Fulfilling Life*
- Kashdan, Todd and Biswas-Diener, Robert. 2014. *The Upside of Your Dark Side: Why Being Your Whole Self--Not Just Your "Good" Self--Drives Success and Fulfillment*

Free Courses & Assessment

- Free 8 week course on The Science of Happiness
<https://www.edx.org/course/science-happiness-uc-berkeleyx-gg101x-2>
- Existential Well-being Counseling: A Person-centered Experiential Approach
<https://www.edx.org/course/existential-well-being-counseling-person-kuleuvenx-ewbcx>

Free Assessment to identify your own signature strengths

<https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/user/login?destination=node/434>

Click Register. Then choose VIA Survey of Character Strengths to access the survey

Connect with Ruth

Email: ruth@ruthhirsch.com

Website: <http://www.ruthhirsch.com/>

YouTube Channel: Short videos on Meaningful Musings related to Focusing and life

<https://www.youtube.com/user/ruthhirsch>

MORE EXERCISES

*Adapted from **The Dark Side of the Light Chasers** by Debbie Ford*

1. For one week, observe the judgments you have about others. Whenever upset by another's behavior, write down quality that is most upsetting to you. Write down any opinions you have of the people who are closest to you. Be sure to include your friends, family, co-workers.
2. Make list of the advice you give to others. What are you telling others to do to make their lives better? Reflect on whether the advice isn't just advice to yourself.
3. Get feedback from others about yourself- positive and negative. Then, make list of three people you love, three you hate. Then three qualities you wish to emulate, three that get you really angry or upset. These lists are good places to find disowned parts of yourself.
 - a. Look at list of negative words and identify the ones that have an emotional charge for you, when you say "I am....."
 - b. Write down the judgments you have about each of these words.
 - c. See if you can identify when you first made that judgment or whom you took the judgment from. Was it your mother, father, or someone else?
4. What story have you created about who you really are that explains your current life circumstances?
5. What resentments, old wounds, anger, or regrets do you carry in your heart?
6. What needs to happen for you to forgive yourself and others?