

A S S E M B L Y

I D E N T I F Y I N G
Y O U R I N N E R
C R I T I C

INNER CRITIC

Here are some of the ways the inner critic might present itself in your head. You may not recognise all of these ways but you will probably identify some.

The inner critic will sound:

+ HARSH, RUDE, MEAN.

Saying things to you that you would never say to anyone that you love. If that rings true – you are hearing the inner critic.

+ BINARY THINKING.

Black and white – you're either amazing or awful. Great at that or a miserable failure. Pretty or disgusting. Awesome friend, or shitty friend. Inner critics rarely leave room for grey.

+ PRETENDING TO BE THE VOICE OF REASON.

"You're not ready for that yet" "Your ideas aren't enough to get you going – you need more training" "You don't want to put that out there yet because it will ruin your reputation as....."

+ THE VOICE OF THE PATRIARCHY.

Stuff that as women, we have been told either verbally or in action or culture that are reserved for the skills of men. Technical things, negotiation skills, even leadership ability. Things that would never be questioned when it comes to a mans ability.

+ BODY PERFECTIONISM.

Picking on areas of your appearance as unworthy or unable to be seen. Even aging. *"You are too old for that – it's a young girls game now."* *"Don't let that part of your body show – online, in clothes etc. Nobody wants to see that."*

INNER CRITIC

+ THE PLAYED OUT TAPE.

A voice that automatically runs in your head. The same things being said over and over again. You are not in control of the tape – it runs itself. Core narratives that you have come to know as familiar.

+ IT IS IRRATIONAL BUT PERSISTENT.

We know the thoughts aren't rational or real but they still have power over us.

+ SHAME.

The inner voice mumbles about other people having it more together and then immediately tells you to get a grip on yourself or get some perspective and shames you for even thinking or comparing. It's a double punch to the gut.

+ ECHOES.

The voice may actually be an echo of someone critical in your life – a parent, sibling, boss, expartner, or even a culture or religion. Someone who has spoken negative words over your life, abilities or gifts.

You will find in all these things that the inner critic will spin and spin, is often emotionally charged in tone, anxious, constantly pointing out risks or is overly cynical. Maybe some of those are ringing really true for you.

In contrast to how the inner critic sounds – let's think about realistic thinking. So, a realistic thinker is curious, inquisitive, seeks solutions, wants to gather evidence instead of black and white thinking. Realistic thinking is exploratory and highly creative, it is calm and moves from a place of self-support – how can I support myself to get to where I want to get to – to do what I want to do.

What we need to unpack about it is that it is actually our safety instinct. This part of our psyche that wants to avoid emotional risk – hurt, failure, embarrassment, or rejection from others.

The inner critic will always show up when we are exposing ourselves to real or perceived vulnerability – doing something that triggers a fear of embarrassment, rejection or pain. This is so very true for us that want to put our work out there for others to engage with, read, see, consume, buy, enjoy etc.

INNER CRITIC

PRACTICES FOR MANAGING AND SOOTHING YOUR INNER CRITIC:

Create a character that personifies your inner critic.

Characterise your inner critic.

- 5 characteristics of your inner critic (stubborn, hyper, people-pleasing, boring)
- Notice it's voice
- Is it male or female, older or younger
- What kind of person
- How do they dress, what kind of hair do they have? What do they eat for breakfast?

Remove your critic from the scene.

Imagine or even physically act out walking your inner critic out of the space you are working in. Watch them leave and close the door – affirm yourself that it's just you now. That you can get on with your desires, creativity, ideas and work.

Imagine you can turn down the volume on the critics' voice.

Let your minds eye turn it down so you can't hear it anymore.

Do not blast it with anger or try to argue.

The inner critic is like a scared child misbehaving because of fear (and you don't win arguments with children). Don't respond to it in anger – reassure it that you've got this and thank it for trying to keep you safe.

It sounds counterintuitive to respond kindly to something you want to get away from but these techniques are much more powerful and sustainable for you. And they bring calm instead of chaos.

We will never remove the inner critic but I hope you can see how important and life-giving it can be if you can learn to manage it, quiet it, bypass it, and lessen its presence in your life.