

Befriending Your Inner Critic

Working near or beyond the edge of our comfort zone, stepping up to something bigger in our life - or even thinking about it – will activate one of our strongest and most ancient fear / protection mechanisms, one that may well discourage us from ever stepping up to our dreams.

Your closest companion and your biggest critic

Your closest companion and biggest critic is one and the same: your internal dialogue. For many of us, there'll be a bevy of these darlings that some folk fondly refer to as the Itty Bitty Shitty Committee. Everyone will have at least one inner critic.

To be able to step up and live our full potential, it's useful to identify the typical refrains you hear from your inner voice/s. These will invariably tap into the relevant dossier of your innermost fears and life's most painful experiences to prove to you, instantly and beyond doubt, that you're not up to it, that your good idea won't work, that the romantic interest or potential business partner you've just met isn't to be trusted based on previous experience, that you/they are not worth listening to...etc etc.

When you really get present to the impact of these voices on your life, there can be a tendency to want to bring in the big guns to obliterate it, or to cold shoulder it.

Unfortunately, while these quick-fix tactics can be momentarily satisfying, they do not work. It's the same sort of thinking as the rationale to make war on a country in order to make peace. As Albert Einstein said, *We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.*

Instead, try critical compassion

In a nutshell, what TO DO and what that looks like in action:

- Be aware of your inner critic in action.
- Be kind to it, even love, hug, embrace the little darling - with empathy, not sympathy.
- Recognise it for what it is, a little part of you operating out of a memory and a decision created from an early moment in your life. An earlier moment that's been stored away for all time to keep you safe so you never ever have to have that or a similar experience again.

With this insight and sense of compassion, it's so much easier to 'be with', love and even feel gratitude to that inner voice - which in turn is able to relax and chill out as a result.

What NOT TO DO:

- No matter how tempting, don't choose the path of sarcasm, revenge or other put-downs. This doesn't serve you well. Keep remembering this is your hurt younger self that we're talking about. Treat it as you would treat a hurt child.
- Don't give your inner critic the driver's seat in your life (which is so easy to do if we're

not aware of what's going on). Your voices are likely to have been created in your very early years, and that's exactly the developmental age they have retained. Do you really want your car or your life directed by an upset, scared, angry five-year-old? (Holy moley!)

Befriend your inner critic

The following ideas are each designed to remove your inner critic from the command position in your life - while also treating them with love and compassion - and providing you with opportunities to lighten up with ease and humour.

Read through to see which ones resonate for you. When you've found one or two, practise them over and over every day for a week or two. Having them become truly second nature in low-stress situations will help you towards effectively accessing them when needed - easily and almost without thinking. And whatever you do, enjoy!

1. Be present and lean in

Use a natural calming technique of your preference, for example breathing or meditation, to become grounded in the present, observing your thoughts as they arise and letting them pass by without evaluating them as wrong or right, but simply as things that *are*. *Be with* the fear as it arises, leaning into it, bringing compassion to it and to yourself, and gently staying there as you feel the fear lessen.

1. Namaste

This is one I like for everyday use. It's based on calm and respect, and you both end up feeling great!

In this space, sit with your inner critic. ACKNOWLEDGE the fear, THANK HER (or it/him) and honour her for sharing and caring. Take a long deep breath. Connect with your inner core. STEP WITH COURAGE (sprinkled with bravado) into who you know you really are, into the difference you're committed to making.

(Body language helps here as well. Simply straightening your back and moderately tightening your core muscles will assist. The Amy Cuddy [TEDx talk](#) has some beautiful ideas for having your body influence your confidence and presence in the world and the results you achieve.)

2. Redo, please

This idea is from family counselling. Most likely, your inner critic often speaks to you in a way that is far worse than you'd use with or expect from others, correct? When it next chimes in with a voice and tone you know is derogatory, angry etc, respond with a clear, firm yet respectful "Redo, please", aloud whenever you can, and then wait silently for an alternative way to share the same feeling or convey the same factual information. It's a learning curve for both of you, and it may take a little while to progressively shape the behaviour you want. Be understanding, patient, and avoid any inclination to be narky. (Btw, when it's set up collaboratively, this can also be a beautiful approach for couples and parent-child relationships to build mutually respectful communications)

3. In its place!

Change the way your inner critic occurs to you in order to reduce its impact.

To do this, first think about its current persona. Imagine its current voice pitch, volume and tone, where it sits in your body etc. Then change some of those key aspects: especially the ones that symbolise its level of control over you. Out of them all, location may have the greatest impact.

For example, maybe your inner critic has an authoritative overpowering voice located right next to your ear. If so, why not turn it instead into a tiny nasally, high-pitched voice - and imagine it located way down in your right big toe! Really, give this a go. Role play it out loud. Do you find it hard to take seriously now? Exactly!

Haha, you might even grow strangely fond of the little darling madly jumping up and down in your shoe calling for attention!

4. Role description swap

Along the same vein, think of some of your inner critics' most likely current role descriptions, based on available evidence - THEN give them a reframe and promotion to a new role description that will really assist rather than disempower and block you. For example, one of mine - Disaster Forboder - has been reframed to become my very own Safety Empowerment Officer who enables me to move forward knowing I have an ally.

5. Get intimate!

Remember that your inner critic really is there on your behalf even though she is misguided at times. So have some conversations with her, reassuring and creating her as your ally so that together you can deal with life's situations effectively.

Listen to the past hurts it's trying to protect you from - making sure you are listening from a space of PASSIONATE DETACHMENT.

Listen also from a space of knowing that, for most of us, being REALLY listened to is so close to the experience of being deeply loved that we hardly make a distinction between the two. This means that the little girl in you gets to be heard AND truly loved. What a gift to give yourself, and a way to pave the way for trust and confidence in moving forward.

6. Share!

Reduce or even disappear the sense of shame, undeservedness or ridicule that you've been living with for so long, by sharing authentically your realisations about your inner critic's common rants. This approach steps you outside your comfort zone, yet also enables you to access your next comfort zone and creates genuine connection with others. Here's the big proviso, however: choose with care who you'll share with. Share only with those you trust, who are a stand for you to be all you can be and who won't feel at all threatened as you step into your power and confidence.

7. Connect with your inner wise woman

Strategies such as those mentioned so far, once they become a part of your daily practice, can quieten the din enough to allow you to begin to connect with your own wisdom. Your inner wise woman. She may be you now, or your future self. Either way, you've created a clearing for your magnificence to show up and she has a valuable perspective to offer. Ask her and listen to what she has to say. (While this is an approach I teach in depth in my Unstoppable Women programs, you can connect with her now by breathing to create the calm clearing, reflecting inwards and asking or listening with an open mind.)

Make a difference

What's one AHA or reminder for you to take from this handout?

If you're also ready to step up into action, I invite you to identify one thing you're going to do differently for yourself and/or your world. For example:

- Choose a strategy that works for you and start using it! Tell someone about your plan and the results you want. (Choose someone you trust, someone who will respect you and be a stand for your greatness.) Share progress and challenges at the next Women Howling at the Moon gathering.
- As a member of the Women Howling at the Moon community, you are able to claim one complimentary, 60 minute discovery session to create clarity about the difference you want to make, what's in the way and your next steps. To access this session, book a Skype session via my [online calendar](#), or text me on 0437 327 890 to arrange a meeting.
- If you know other women whom you'd love to see liberated from their inner critics so they can do their good in the world, give them a treat by inviting them to the next Women Howling at the Moon gathering. (When you [register](#) during the early bird rate and bring a friend who has not previously attended you will also be eligible for a gift in the form of a courage coaching program.)

Whatever you choose to do, have fun befriending your inner critic, and I look forward to hearing from you or catching up at the next Women Howling at the Moon.

To Your Magnificence

Warmly

