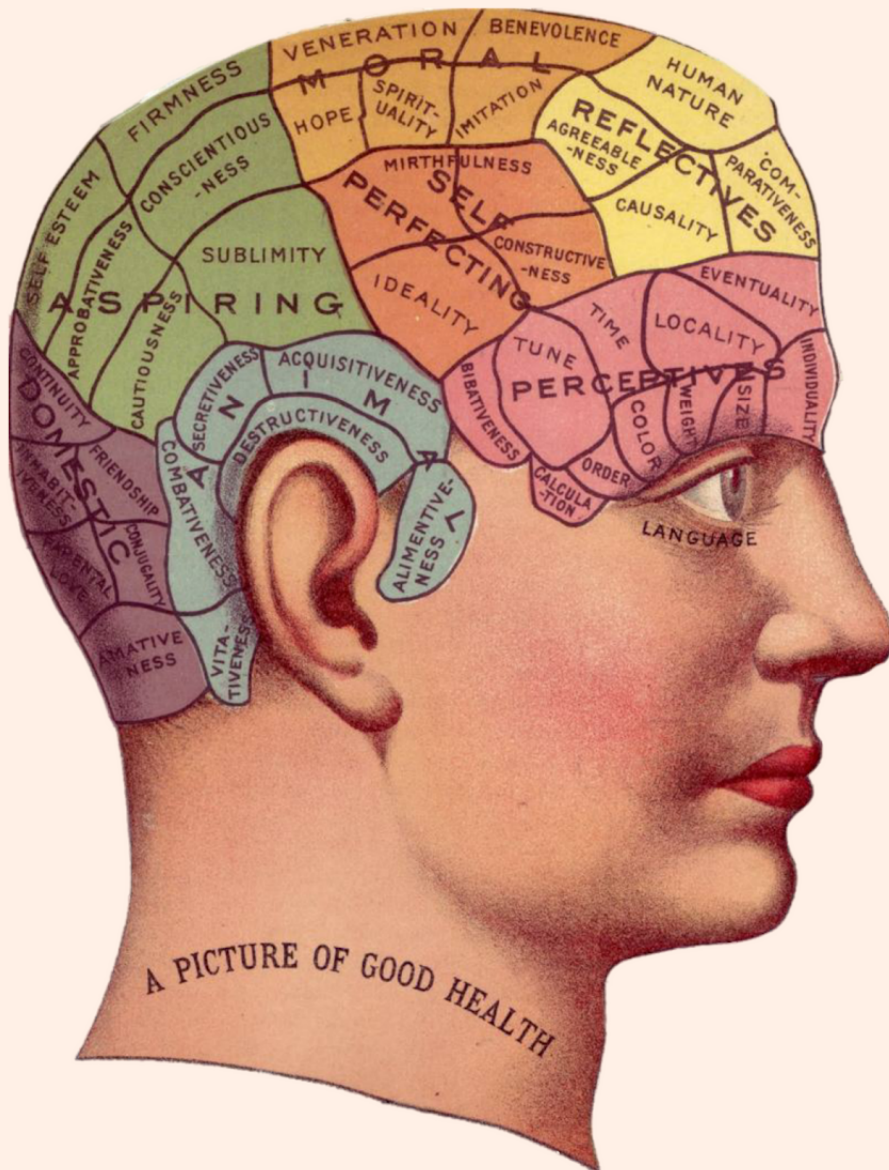




Understanding Your Inner Critic

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WARNING:

What you are about to read will help you discover how to transform your Inner Critic into a powerful ally.

When you understand the Critic's function in your world, you can use its remarkable skills in a positive way - to help with your personal growth and to live your life in the way you would like - bringing you ease, joy and fulfilment.

Reading the following book has a high likelihood of
**freeing yourself from the negativity of your
critical inner voice!**

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My Story:

For years I was a people pleaser.

I was a full-on, pretzel-twisting expert on pleasing others (and throwing myself under the bus in the process).

I was in the middle of an emotionally abusive marriage. I had a job where I was not respected. I had a heart that would cry whenever she had a free moment to witness how unhappy she was. (Which wasn't very often, because there was "so much to do!" and "I couldn't let anybody down!".)

I remember being in weekly therapy for months and felt like I was really getting somewhere this time.

However, I was still the same.

When I asked my therapist when I would change – when I would let these patterns and pain-in-the-ass parts of myself go – my therapist laughed.

And I mean guffawed. Bent over double with laughter. Almost had tears running down her cheeks.

"Oh, honey" she said. "Did you think you were here to change or be different?" "Uh, yeah!" was my response.

(And I'm getting irritated).

"This isn't about being different. It's about being in relationship to ourselves differently" she kindly responded.

Well, now I'm just pissed.

And I left. And didn't go back for weeks. I just kept thinking, "If I'm not here to change the shitty parts of me, what the hell am I spending all this money on??". I wanted a refund. Pronto.

After a few weeks (3 to be precise) of pouting and being indignant and feeling generally confused, I decided to re-engage with my therapist, at least to ask for my money back.

What she explained was that there is no need for me to be different.

And wasn't it ironic that (for a living) I sat with people with all of their imperfections and loved, honored and respected wherever they were in that process.

And the only person who was exempt from that compassion and understanding was...me.

Because everyone else is allowed to have their holes and "faults" but I'm supposed to be perfect. (Duh!)

I continued with my therapist for a few more months until we got to a "good stopping point".

At this juncture, she told me, "Now it's up to you to practice loving yourself. That's all that's required."

I diligently nodded my head (being the considerate people pleaser that I was, who was I do say, "What the fuck does that mean?").

I just smiled and appeared to understand her sage advice. Like months and months of therapy should have launched me into a place of understanding what this meant.

Like *I* would have been failing *her* if, at this point, I didn't get what "loving myself" meant.

Out I went, back into the big cruel world, now armed with the knowledge that I *should* be loving myself, but (in reality) was just as harsh of a self-critic as ever.

So now I got to judge myself for that too.

Fast forward a few years - a myriad of self-help books, retreats, new therapists, ceremonies, and lord knows how many trees worth of journals - I have come to understand, on a whole new level, what it means "to just love yourself".

And as I have incorporated this deep knowing in myself into my medical practice with my patients, the results have been astounding.

Teaching myself, and then others, what it means to actually be friends with yourself has been life altering (and I don't use that phrase lightly).

This is a task that while simple, is not always easy.

I have found it invaluable to have a guide in this process.

And now I know how to guide others to the same place of ease, peace, and inner kindness.

And that has expanded my sense of self, my relationships, my business, my capacity as a momma – you name it.

This work has benefitted every aspect of my life. And the same is true for those I work with.

Now it's your turn!

Intro:

The Critic. The Judge. The Bully. The Perfectionist. The Worrier.
Pick the mask that fits (or a couple!).

We all have them. These parts of ourselves that don't let us rest.

No matter how hard we work or what we achieve or how impressive we become.

We spend countless hours and infinite amounts of energy trying to appease the Critic.

Turning ourselves into pretzels of all varieties. Investing money and time into self-help books, lectures and gurus trying to fix that broken part that just won't seem to heal.

Feeling stuck in a double bind that no matter which option you choose, you will be judged for it. And found wrong. Guilty. Stupid...

You may not be conscious of the powerful, and sometimes dangerous, effects of the Inner Critic. They can range from feeling frustrated, unhappy, dissatisfied. S/he can limit the choices and experiences you allow yourself to have because of the judgments that come with it.

This voice can get so intense, that s/he can cause depression, anxiety, and even suicidality.

Bottom line - ***the Critic is interfering with you functioning at your highest level (or even being effective in your world).***

It is exhausting to deal with our Inner Critic. And most of us don't even know that it is s/he that is zapping all of our energy and

motivation. Causes you to drink more than you know is good for you. Steals your peaceful sleep. Keeps you in that relationship that doesn't serve any longer. Or endure the job you hate for another year.

We spend more resources (money, time, energy) on the Inner Critic than we do anywhere else in our world. You run from it. You hide from it. You fight against it. You work to prove it wrong. You beg for it's approval.

And you are exhausted.

Well, you're in luck. I've got some good news for you.

Turns out, the latest in neuroscience has proven what many of us have already discovered:

The Critic is actually on your side!

Your Critic is designed by the brain to help you perform more efficiently and learn from your mistakes. (I know - "Coulda fooled me", right?)

Stick with me.

We'll start by learning a little bit about where this Critic came from. Once you understand the origin of the Critic - that it's really a self-defense mechanism that has gone a little out of control - it will be easier for you to breathe and make some room for him/her.

I know this might sound counter-intuitive, but I'm going to teach you how *getting closer* to your Critic will actually create freedom from her/his negativity. How leaning into those painful parts will actually create more ease in your system. (Trust me!)

I am so excited that you have chosen to read this booklet. It is the first step in changing your whole worldview!

Let's jump in....

Background:

Most people I talk with feel like it's a natural state of being to be hard on oneself. That to remember that we were born amazing feels like an impossible task.

But just look at any baby or toddler around you. They are totally in their bodies. They scream when they want to. They sleep anywhere. They dance in the street. They think they are the funniest thing going.



You started that way too.

There are many theories about what happened along the way that made us start telling ourselves horrible stories. And there is a general theme - we internalize negative stories about ourselves based on early childhood experiences.

At around 18 months of age, you wanted to start exploring the world around you. You wanted to be more independent. So, off you went - curious and budding into independence.

As you were cruising around checking out the world, you probably made “mistakes” - ate something you weren’t supposed to, broke something, took something from a sibling...

...and BAM! You were corrected. Told you are wrong. Teased by your sibling. Yelled at.

And you felt confused. “Up until now, I have been adorable! Perfect even! What just happened?”

By kindergarten, we start to believe that you’re not fast enough or smart enough...you start to feel different than everybody else. You feel the shame of the harsh words of your teacher or even in the look from your parent. Your siblings watch your parent’s negative reaction and get in on the teasing (because they want to make themselves feel better too!). Maybe your peers were cruel and said hurtful things.

And there’s the same basic message: you are not good enough and you are incapable of becoming good enough.

The Critic keeps judging other things (myself and others) instantly so you don’t feel so terrified.

S/he becomes invisible characters in your head that distorts reality and becomes the masters of your mind. These characters pretend that they know you. That they *are* you.

But these characters aren’t you!!

And that’s how you forget who you really are. **Brilliant. Amazing. Limitless.**

According to Freud, we all (yes, everyone!) have a part of ourselves called the Superego. The Superego is an idealized sense of self.

It creates an unattainable, imagined perfect version of yourself that never fails at anything, receives adulation from others for being a master at everything.

The Superego manifests daily as self doubt that causes us to distrust our intuition and instincts. A voice who's constant narrative of comparison and judgment stifles spontaneity and creativity and replaces it with shame and self-doubt.

This is the very part of us that is chronically anxious and fearful. It is desperately afraid that we will make a mistake, lose our job, be unloved, become homeless, grow old, become ill and die.

It is a remarkably clever self, with knowledge about all your innermost thoughts and vulnerabilities. It knows EXACTLY how to push your buttons.

Many people even feel that it knows who they 'really are underneath'.

Sound familiar? Yep. Does for me too.

Surprisingly, once you get to know your Inner Critic and understand *why* it criticizes you, you'll gain empathy for it and for its anxieties.

(Yes, it's *anxious* underneath that stony exterior!)

Your Superego (or Judge, Critic or Perfectionist) is on your side!!!

Keep reading to understand how....

Purpose:

Think about yourself when you were little - 3, 4, 5 years old. (Or if that's hard to connect to, think about a little kid that you know today.)

Is there something inherently wrong with that kiddo?

Nope. Not at all.

S/he is perfect. As is.

However, you were reliant on your parent(s) or caregivers for your survival. At that age, you could not take care of yourself.

So, it became a matter of survival. Either there's something wrong with my parents (which threatens my survival). Or there's something wrong with me.

It was WAY too scary to consider your parents might not be able to take care of your needs. So the next logical conclusion (from a small child's perspective) is "there must be something wrong with me".

Because in a roundabout sort of way, that was the safer choice.

The Critic is based on the survival region of your brain – parts of left brain, brainstem, and the limbic system.

These parts of your brain are wired to feel stress and unhappiness – anxiety, anger, disappointment, shame, guilt, regret, and blame.

And the Critic is born.

Your Critic is actually concerned that you'll be ok and do everything right, so that you'll be accepted and therefore safe.

It works to keep us out of trouble.

THE POWER OF MAKING MISTAKES

STANFORD UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OF MATHEMATICS EDUCATION – JO BOALER



"...the brain sparks and grows when we make a mistake, even if we are not aware of it, because it is a time of struggle; the brain is challenged and the challenge results in growth"

<https://www.youcubed.org/think-it-up/mistakes-grow-brain/>

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The Critic comes in because it reviews our mistakes endlessly rather than the once or twice needed for new learning....

...and it believes that the best way to ensure our happiness is to berate us about our shortcomings.

(It doesn't realize that it is also stealing away our innate capacity for happiness. This part of you is young! S/he didn't have other resources at hand and did the best they could!)

As we grow older, the Critic can infiltrate our mind so thoroughly that we don't realize that we have fallen into a **pervasively negative pattern of thinking about ourselves.**

When this happens, we begin to think of ourselves as “defective” or ‘broken.”

From a very young age, you created elaborate coping strategies to try to get your needs met. You became a people pleaser, or an overachiever, or a worrier, or uber-independent.

Remember, the motivation of the Critic is to ***keep you safe and create more love for you.***

Staying safe is the purpose of your “primary selves”. These are the parts of your psyche that enable you to survive in your family and culture. They become part of the personality you identify with.

Your Inner Critic is a part of you that has helped the “primary selves” keep you safe, *in the best way they can.*

Once we see these strategies as mechanisms to believe that we’re lovable, worthy and valuable, we can start to work *with* the Critic rather than against ourselves all the time.

Which, let’s face it, is exhausting! (and not very effective anyway...)

Solutions:

Even though as an adult you can dispute the Critic's claims with evidence and ideas from more supportive aspects of yourself and from people who know you. It's common to still experience your Inner Critic as an authoritative, all-knowing inner voice that holds immutable (critical) truths about you.

When we can back up from the "Truth" of the stories we tell ourselves and unhook from story to actually look at the intention behind it, we can unhook from the negative self-talk and see it for what it is.

A little kid trying desperately to get her/his needs met and to feel loved.



That's it. That's all.

With that in mind, the next time the Critic or Judge shows up, can you actually create a little space for it?

Rather than run from it or jump into full panic or start figuring out how you can do it better - can you stop and face him/her?

Can you listen to your Critic? I mean, *really* listen?

What is her/his true purpose? What is s/he trying to accomplish?

Could it be that you and your Critic might actually be on the same side?

~~~~~  
Let's go back to the image of you (or someone you know) as a little kid.

Can you hold him/her in your heart, allowing her/him to feel unconditional love from you?

Ask yourself: "What if this wasn't his/her fault?" (Let yourself breathe and have lots of space for this.) Ask again: "What if this wasn't my fault? What if I really am perfect, as is?"

Notice what comes up: tenderness, grief, anger, compassion, understanding....whatever it is, it's exactly as it should be.

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Self-criticism may feel as if it's just "who we are". The judgements we feel are self-evident truths.

And when you understand *why* your Inner Critic criticizes, and that its original intentions were to keep you safe, you'll be able to use that knowledge and awareness to grow more fully into yourself – and to love and appreciate yourself.

The Critic relies upon an idea of a self—a small self—that is imperfect and must be fixed.

It feeds on comparing, on thoughts of past and future, of mistakes and anxieties.

The Inner Critic has no traction in the present moment. When our minds become quiet, when we are resting in the this very moment, there is no past or future, there is no comparing.

Mindfulness of “what is” is the best solution.



Becoming self-aware is the answer: becoming *more* of who you are rather than becoming better.

Trying to improve yourself just reinforces the critic of not good enough!

Change actually comes from knowing more of who we are, rather than trying to be someone who we're not.

Arnie Bieser is a gestalt psychologist and says that human change is paradoxical. That *more* change comes from knowing more deeply who we actually are.

When we try to improve, whatever we are avoiding simply continues.

Bearing witness to ourselves, in our entirety, becomes our most potent practice. We cultivate an awareness of what is without judgment.

Thich Nhat Hanh says if there's an energy within us that we wish to transform, we need to take care of it rather than battle with it. It is the battle against ourselves that can destroy us

When we develop a relationship with critic, that voice gets quieter.

Bringing the parts of ourselves we keep hidden or feel ashamed of out of shadows and into light is what reclaims power for ourselves

Exercises:

Indeed, there is often a kernel of truth in what the Inner Critic says.

Yes, I was drowsy during that meeting. However that does not mean that I am bad, stupid or hopeless. It just means that I had a sleepy period.

When we can hear what the Critic says and take away the anger, the sting, the invidious comparisons of self and other, then it is transformed into the voice of discriminating wisdom and determination.

Here we have the opportunity to step into neutrality - "this is simply what is here", rather than immediately jumping into judgments about where we're at.

Using phrases like these can be helpful:

"This is an interesting point of view."
"I'm curious to hear more about why you think that."
"Oh, yes. I was drowsy during that meeting. Huh."

We're not creating a different reality. **We are practicing *radical acceptance of the reality that is here in front of us.***

We have all been drowsy or bored. Or distracted. Or angry. Or late.

It happens. It is part of us being human.

Once you allow yourself to be the flawed human that you are, the tension and pressure simply falls away on its own. No effort required. Really.

Instant Connection Exercise:

Try the following exercise the next time your Critic comes up. The more you practice, the more natural this will feel!



1. Acknowledge the part(s) of you who are present.

- a. I.e. Notice the part who is criticizing and the part who feels the sting/pain of being judged
- b. Call in the compassionate part of you - the part who listens without judgment and loves without condition. Make sure ALL the parts know that they have access to Compassion.
- c. Allow them both (all) to be present. Breathe into your heart center. There is plenty of room here for whatever is coming up for you. They don't have to be in agreement to co-exist. Breathe. There's plenty of room for everybody.
- d. The power of the Critic (and of Fear in general) is that s/he stays hidden in the shadows.

2. Label them for who they are - without judgment.

- a. I.e. the Critic and the Wounded parts.
- b. This allows us to see that just a *part* of us feels this way - not our whole person. We realize that while there might be critics and judges present, we have allies as well. And

parts that are hurting. Now we can start having a dialogue.

3. Appreciate the part(s) of you who are chiming in.

- a. Dig deeper with the critical part(s) to find out what they are really trying to say. “What is your true intention?”
- b. Remember, the critic is the part of you who is trying to protect you or help you get what you want (or what it thinks you want).
- c. “Thank you for trying to help me get motivated! I want to be more motivated too. But telling me I’m lazy doesn’t actually help me get there. It calls in my Rebel and makes me do the opposite. Try telling me how capable and excited we are to start this new project!”
- d. “Oh! Now I see that because I’m taking the day off, you think I’m lazy. But really I’m taking some down-time to rest and recover because I’ve been feeling over-extended and too busy. This will allow me to have more energy for the project tomorrow! Don’t worry - I want to accomplish the same task.”

4. Reframe the offering from the Critic.

- a. Now that you realize you all have the same intentions for yourself - to be successful, happy and safe - you can start a conversation about a more effective approach to this situation.
- b. What are some ways that the Critic could offer you his/her words of advice in a way that you can hear? What are some of the ideas that you can share to allay the Critic’s anxiety?

When you are more deeply in touch with yourself, you can see what’s influencing your choices more clearly.

When you can make your choices more consciously, you are no longer the victim of your Critic’s attacks.

At the same time, your Critic's attacks will lessen in frequency and intensity as it realizes you are taking responsibility for yourself and for the things it feels anxiety about.

When the Critic feels cared for, s/he doesn't have to lash out to get his/her needs met.

We are opening up a direct line of communication (that doesn't require such elaborate strategies to be heard).

Conclusion:

When we actually identify *with* the inner critic, we receive all of her/his messages as true – primarily because they are coming from “myself”.

When you identify the inner critic as simply *another part of you*, you can begin to enter into relationship with this part, realizing that it really has your best intentions at heart.

But the way s/he is going about talking to you loses the message (and oftentimes actually causes harm to ourselves).

When we can assess more objectively what the inner critic is saying, we find that we aren’t as attached to the story s/he is creating about us.

We can look at it more objectively to see if these harsh statements are actually true.

What is the critic really trying to accomplish here? S/he wants you to:

- *Be your best self.*
- *Achieve your optimal life.*
- *Create your best performance.*
- *Be an awesome partner/parent/friend/colleague.*
- *S/he wants to keep you safe.*

Guess what? That’s what your highest self (YOU!) want for you too.

Now that you realize you’re on the same page, we can begin to work together.

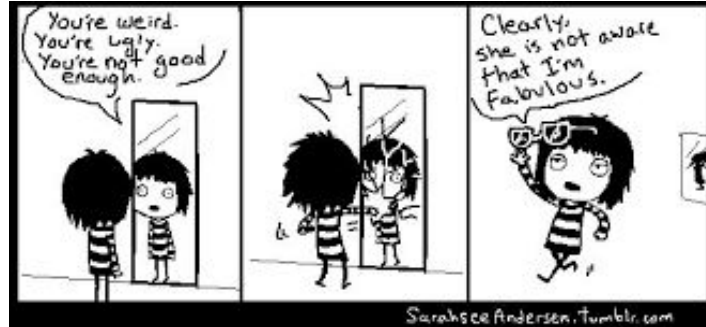
Here's a brief overview of how to BE with your Inner Critic...

1. Assume good intentions
 - a. What are you protecting me from? Or wanting for me?
2. What is its true goal?
 - a. Realize that you actually share the same goals
 - b. The way it is presenting info is making it hard to hear its good intention!
3. Can you collaborate with it to create better ways to get what you need?
 - a. Want to be realistic and acknowledge other needs like rest, play, social time, self-care, other responsibilities
4. Talking with our Critics allows us to interrupt the dialogue, be loving and compassionate to critical part.
 - a. This practice helps us get back to the discerning part of ourselves and reconnect our various parts back together
5. ** If inner critic is happy and loved and in collaboration, it doesn't activate as quickly or intensely.
 - a. This practice allows us to be more open to external critics because we are less reactionary.

As we allow ourselves to connect with the Inner Critic, we have infinitely higher access to our **deepest potential, limitless possibilities and boundless JOY!**

I hope you have fun as you start to play with your Critic. And please let me know how it goes!

I love hearing your stories about where this path will lead!



Resources:

After sitting with hundreds and hundreds of patients, one of the biggest obstacles to cure that I see day in and day out is how hard we are on ourselves. After successfully guiding my patients (and myself!) into a kinder, more supportive relationship I realized that this is the key to not only less mental-emotional stress but better physical health too!

If you would like to dive deeper, I work with people in person or from a distance via skype or webinar. I also do both individual and group retreats - let's customize the perfect fit for you!

Call for more information: 970-426-1684 or read more at www.puravidahealthcare.com

Websites:

These are some really great websites and videos to help understand more about your inner critic, the latest research and effective strategies for being kinder to yourself. Enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zdJJubvoXs> – Shirzad Chamine TED Talk– how you lost your connection to self and how to reconnect with your magnificent self! – extensive neuroscience and psychology research

<https://www.rewireme.com/insight/3-ways-rewire-relationship-inner-critic/> - ReWire Me – explanation of neuroscience behind Inner Critic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Inf-Ka3ZmOM> - Steve Chapman
TED Talk - Dancing with my Inner Critic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eUyK4byD6HE> – Kari Romeo
TED Talk - turning insecurity into joy.

<https://www.lionsroar.com/getting-to-know-your-inner-critic/> - Jan
Chozen Bays (Buddhist perspective)