

Making Friends With Your Inner Critic

A practical guide to what your inner critic is protecting, and how to turn it into a friend and ally.

MARGARET COLLINS
Confidence | Clarity | Courage

Using the

Making Friends With Your Inner Critic

Workbook

Everyone has a self-critical voice.
Some people's critics are simply louder than others or manage to get more attention than others.

This workbook isn't about silencing your inner critic or pretending it doesn't have a point occasionally.

It helps you understand where the voice comes from, what it's actually trying to do and how to use what it tells you rather than being ruled by it.

By the end of this lesson, you'll have a way to turn its harshest message into something you can say with confidence, not despite the critic, but because of what it's shown you.

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

1. Making Friends With Your Inner Critic: What?

We all have a self-critical voice.

Some people's critics are more active. Some people pay more attention to theirs than others do.

It isn't a flaw, and it isn't unique to you.



Some people hear a voice in their heads, it's never silent. Other people know their thoughts...

Many people experience a background commentary on their actions, their judgments, even their right to exist in the world.

Your inner critic may tell you things like:

- "You should already know this."
- "How come you don't know that?"
- "You have nothing special to contribute."
- "You are a fraud."
- "Everyone else can see you don't belong here."

That inner voice reminds us of things it believes we should pay attention to...

Just because a thought feels like it's coming from inside your own head doesn't mean it's automatically right, accurate or fair.

It often has an all or nothing version of being good enough:

- You weren't brilliant - you must have been rubbish.
- Your idea wasn't greeted with great enthusiasm - must have been stupid.

These messages miss that ideas evolve, contributions can be negotiated, influence grows with effort and persistence and it's perfectly normal for us to learn from our mistakes.

Recognise these?

- You rehearse a sentence three times in your head before saying it out loud and still second-guess whether you got the tone right...
- You replay one neutral comment from a meeting for the rest of the day - was it an implicit criticism? - and completely forget the four things that went well and gained approval.
- You know, logically, that you're good at your work. It doesn't stop the voice that questions everything you know.

The inner critic tends to show up hardest with opinions around things that, for most of human history, genuinely determined whether you survived within your group.

Have you done something that will get you rejected?

Image, belonging in the group, deserving your place, making a contribution, competence - these were the things that mattered and could, in early social groups, literally be a matter of physical survival.

The voice of that critic isn't being malicious, it's trying to save you.
It's doing an old job with outdated information.



Understanding where this voice comes from
and the job it's trying to do for you,
is the first step in deciding what to do with it.



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2. Making Friends With Your Inner Critic: Who?

The inner critic doesn't affect everyone the same way.

- Some people pay close attention to their critic and dwell on those thoughts rather than noticing it and moving on
- Are you often in situations where you feel tested - interviews, being questioned in a meeting, presenting, negotiating?
- Do you hold yourself to very high standards - producing "good work" rarely feels like good enough - and your critic reminds you often?

What are your most common self-critical thoughts?

(The exact words sometimes matter...)

-
-
-
-

Your self-critical voice developed to keep you safe, in very literal terms. In early human societies, belonging to the tribe was a matter of survival. Being rejected or cast out was dangerous.

In the 21st century the stakes are rarely that high.

At its most fundamental level, your inner critic is an ancient protection mechanism doing its best with an outdated threat assessment.

What does your inner critic's message list tell you about the things that matter to you personally or professionally?

If you had a friend or colleague who spoke to you like this, what would you think?

What changes if you choose to receive the messages of your inner critic as insight or advice, rather than judgement?

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3. Making Friends With Your Inner Critic: Why?

Your inner critic isn't just noise to be managed.
When you see that it's pointing at what you genuinely care about, that's worth knowing. Now, what are you going to do with that knowledge?!

> If "you have nothing to contribute" troubles you,
> contribution matters to you deeply.
> If "you are a fraud" troubles you,
> authenticity and integrity may be core values for you.

When you hear these messages, what does your behaviour say?
Are you showing up as if you care?
Is there real information here or is this the old threat response talking?

> *Just because you think a thought, doesn't mean it's true!*



Reflections:

- Is your inner critic more like a harsh judge, someone whom you wouldn't normally choose to pay much attention to...
- Are they like an elderly relative who loves you dearly and has strong opinions but really doesn't know much about the situation?

Externalise that voice and have a proper conversation with it...

"Thanks for pointing that out, but I've got that covered!"

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4. Making Friends With Your Inner Critic: So What?

The thing your critic uses against you is very often the same thing that makes you a good fit for the work and the role you have.

Once you see the important personal or professional value that your critic is highlighting, it stops being a weakness you're hiding and becomes a cause you can make, out loud, in the room:

"I really value integrity, it's important in how I show up."

"Contribution is a real driver for me, finding ways to give back."

This stops being something you worry about constantly and becomes part of how you show up.

Before you act on anything your inner critic tells you, it's worth a quick test.

Ask: Is it true? Is it helpful? Is it necessary?

Most of the time, the answer to at least one of these is no.
That's usually enough to loosen its grip, even if the voice doesn't go quiet.

As an intelligent adult in a challenging role, you will almost certainly make mistakes. You will learn and grow and change your mind. You will adapt.

There will be times you don't know an answer but you can ask or guess or figure it out - it's what human beings are good at.

Having that inner critic proves that you're human and that you care.

That's worth celebrating!

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Reflections

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WANT MORE?



This workbook helps you understand what your inner critic is protecting and gives you a way to turn its harshest message into a sentence you can say with confidence.

The voice doesn't disappear once you understand it. It just stops being the only version of the story available to you.

You can negotiate with your inner critic if you want to or simply remind it, as an intelligent and competent adult, I've got that covered.

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me.
I'd love to hear from you.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

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Resources

Let me know how you get on!

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