



The Professional Woman's Mentor

Quieting Your Inner Critic

The 3 Step Process

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Introduction

Your Inner Critic has a big job... and that job is to keep you safe!

This means... he / she will show up right when you're about to do something BIG!!! BRAVE!!! EXCITING!!! TOTALLY OUTSIDE OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE!!!!

And... your inner critic will do everything she (or he) can to stop you.

Why? Because that's her job, and she's darn good at it!

You have a big job too... Your job is to keep going, do big things, and create your dream life!

You'll know when your Inner Critic has invited herself (himself) into your thoughts when the voice in your head is:

- Repetitive - like a broken record, saying the same thing over, and over, and over again...
- Highly Negative
 “You should have never accepted that job, you're going to totally fail!”
- Very black and white / either - or in his / her thinking
 “I'm too fat” (because I'm either a size 1 or I'm too fat)
- Uninterested in solutions
 “Forget about starting a business, you'll never replace your corporate income”
- Completely focused on negative outcomes
 “I'm going to forget my speech and totally embarrass myself on stage”

If the voice in your head is harsh and mean, your Inner Critic has arrived!!

The 3 Step Process to Quiet Your Inner Critic!

Step 1: Get to Know Your Inner Critic

The best way to get control of your Inner Critic is to get to know her. I mean REALLY get to know her. Instead of pretending she / he doesn't exist, ignoring her, or arguing with that voice in your head... spend some quality time with your Inner Critic.

We're going old school on this one! Carry around a notebook for two weeks and capture information about your inner critic. Getting to know her / him starts with understanding the answers to the questions below:

What does she / he say to you?

- Is your inner critic pushing you to be or do something she / he believes is right?
Example: Be the perfect mother or father... most patient daughter or son... student with the highest grade point average... employee who rises to leadership at an astronomical rate?
- What does she / he say that is most hurtful?
- What excuses or arguments does she / he use that are the most effective?

When does she / he show up?

- Applying for a job
- Stepping on stage for a presentation
- Thinking about going back to school
- Planning a holiday party
- Others?

List 5 adjectives that describe your inner critic

- Anxious
- Frustrated
- Angry
- Stubborn
- Sneaky
- Challenging
- Others?

What tactics does she / he use?

- Shame
- Fear
- Embarrassment
- Family Expectations
- Some version of "not enough"

Now that you have a good idea of when your inner critic shows up and the tactics she / he uses, create a vision of who she / he really is. This includes physical appearance, how she / he dresses, family situation, and how she / he feels.

Jot down answers to these questions in your notebook:

What does she / he look like?

- Tall or short?
- Fit or Out of Shape?
- Skin tone / ethnicity
- Hair color
- Does she wear glasses?
- How old is she?

What are her / his occupation details?

- What is her / his highest level of education?
- Office or a trade?
- Employee, Manager, or Executive?
- Is she good at her job?
- Satisfied with her / his career or frustrated? Why?

What is her / his family situation?

- Single, Married, or Divorced?
 - Is this a satisfying relationship or is she / he content being single? Why?
- Does she / he have children? If yes:
 - How many?
 - What are their genders?
 - How old are they?
- Does she / he have a good relationship with her parents? Why?

Give your Inner Critic a name

Something magical happens when we give our inner critic a name. When your inner critic has a name, she / he becomes separate from you. Her thoughts are not YOUR thoughts. Her mean criticisms of you are not YOUR criticisms of yourself.

Even if this step feels a little bit odd, give it a try!

Some people that I coach know the name of their inner critic right away. Others give a name to their inner critic. Before we jump into finding the name of your inner critic, a word of caution.

Don't name her after someone you have a relationship with. Your inner critic is her own person, even if she strongly resembles someone you know

Here's why it's dangerous to assign the negative thoughts to someone you know::

- While they may say or feel similar things, it is also possible that they don't! By giving your inner critic the name of a family member or colleague, your feelings toward that person become worse and your relationship will suffer.
- You really don't want an unsupportive person taking more of your thoughts than they currently do! The goal is to give them less space, not more.

Note: This doesn't mean that you have to give your inner critic a name that doesn't belong to anyone you know. Simply don't imagine a negative person you know in your head all day.

Now, let's get down to the business of naming (or learning) the name of your inner critic!

Is there a name that comes to mind naturally?

- When you visualize your inner critic, is there a name that comes to the surface?
- Imagine a coworker calling her, is there a name that feels natural?

What is her / his strongest personality trait?

- Is your inner critic harsh, cruel, sneaky, or condescending?
- How does your inner critic get her way? Does she / he negotiate, analyze, or use negotiate, use either / or tactics.
- What name embodies her / his strongest personality traits?

Would an ugly name help you quiet your inner critic?

- Some people find success in giving their inner mentor a name they don't like. A few that I've heard people use are:
 - Helga
 - Olga
 - Bertha
 - Gertrude
 - Elmer
 - Mortimer
 - Side note: If your name is Helga, Olga, Bertha, Gertrude, Elmer, or Mortimer... please know that I didn't pick this list, and feel free to use Carla the ugly name for your inner critic. :)

My inner critic's name is Joy. Yep, Joy.

You'll be the only one who knows her name... so don't worry if it doesn't make sense to anyone else. Joy and I know each other very well, and her name absolutely suits her!

Step 2: Shine a Light on Your Inner Critic

The next time your inner critic shows up, expose her!!! We all remember that glorious feeling when we had a bad dream and our parents came in and turned the light on. Instantly, things felt ohhh sooo much better!!!

Recognize that it is your Inner Critic is doing the talking

- Actually say in your head (or out loud if you are POSITIVE that you're alone)...
 - Oh, Hi Joy! I've been expecting you because I'm about to create great content for my business. I know you are trying to keep me safe. I appreciate that, but seriously... I've got this."
 - Ugh! This is not the truth, this is my Inner Critic showing up because I'm about to do something super exciting!
- Your inner critic will state fears as fact. These are lies, replace the lies with truth.
 - "You're too old to start a business" is a lie. The truth is that people start successful businesses at every age! Your years of experience are an asset. Recognize the lie and replace it with truth
- Don't let your inner critic hide
 - Imagine a bright spotlight focused on your inner critic.
 - Why is she so mean, fearful, or condescending?
 - Say to your inner critic some version of:
 - "I see you, and I'm not putting up with your negative commentary"
 - "Hi Joy, you can stop now. I see you, I know what you're up to, and it's not going to work"

Step 3: Reframe Your Story

Put your Inner Critic in her / his place (kindly)

Your Inner Critic is simply doing her / his job. She is trying to keep you safe. Try being kind but firm in the beginning. Your inner critic will never leave permanently. She / he is along for the ride, just don't let her near the steering wheel!

- Remind your inner critic that you don't need her help. Increase your urgency and language if she refuses to listen. Try telling her / him:
 - I know you want to keep me safe. Here's the thing, I don't need your help on this one.
 - I'm busy getting stuff done, you aren't welcome right now.
 - Seriously, I've got this. I'm not going to listen to this negative talk.
- Thank your inner critic, and do it anyway!
 - Hi Joy, thank you for being concerned for my emotional well being. Here's the thing, public speaking isn't really all that scary, and I'm going to rock this presentation!
- Shift the focus of your fear, embarrassment, disappointment to your Inner Critic
 - Instead of thinking "I'm afraid I'll fail the test".... Change the internal dialogue to "Joy is afraid I'll fail the test. I know I'll do just fine!"

Rewrite Your Story

- Replace negative messages with positive stories.
 - From: I can't believe you accepted that project!! You've taken on more than you can handle this time!
 - To: I'm going to manage that project, and it's going to be spectacular! I'll learn a lot and I've got a great team to support me!
- Remind yourself of evidence to the contrary:
 - From: You're not ready for the presentation, and you're going to embarrass yourself!
 - To: I've spoken at dozens of conferences and my sessions receive the highest ratings, people always come to the front of the room to meet me, and I know how to deliver highly impactful presentations. I'm ready and I'll be awesome!!!
- Remind yourself of the upside potential:
 - From: You've never started a business before. It's a waste of your time to even try.
 - To: I can, and I will, create multiple streams of income that surpass my corporate paycheck. Others have done it, and I can do it too!

Write a letter to your Inner Critic

- Break out your pen and paper and tell your inner critic:
 - That you recognize what she is doing
 - The rules of engagement (what she is - and is not - allowed to do)
 - That you are in charge of the direction of the journey
- Put the letter in a safe place
- Add to it as you need to
- Read it occasionally to remind yourself:
 - You are creating your dream life
 - Your inner critic has a job to do (keep you safe) and you have a job to do (create an awesome life!)

Don't let your inner critic create your future!!! You are in the driver seat, your inner critic is simply along for the ride.

Build your dream life, do more brave things, and step outside of your comfort zone!!!