

AN IFS-INFORMED PRACTICE

# Meeting the Inner Critic with Compassion

*In Internal Family Systems therapy (Schwartz, 1995), the inner critic is understood as a part of you — often a part that learned, long ago, that being hard on yourself was a way to stay safe or acceptable. This worksheet helps you meet the critic with curiosity rather than war.*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Before you begin:** *The aim is not to silence the critic or to argue with it. It is to listen. Most internal critics soften when they finally feel heard.*

**1 Notice the critic's voice**  
*Write the words exactly as they sound in your mind, without softening or editing.*

---

---

---

**2 When does this voice tend to show up?**  
*After mistakes? In rest? Around certain people? In creative risk?*

---

---

**3 What is this part of you trying to protect you from?**  
*Critical parts almost always have a protective intention — often shielding you from rejection, failure, or shame.*

---

---

---

**4 When did this part learn to speak this way?**  
*Whose voice does it sound like? What environment, relationship, or moment does it echo? Stay curious.*

---

---

---

**Pause and breathe.** *If anything has stirred up here, this is a good moment to place a hand on your chest, take three slow breaths, and acknowledge the courage it took to look this honestly. Continue when you are ready.*

**5 From your wisest, kindest self, what do you want this part to know?**

*Speak as if you are addressing a tired, overworked guardian who has been doing this job for a long time.*

A MESSAGE FROM MY WISE SELF TO MY INNER CRITIC

---

---

---

---

**6 If this part could rest a little, what might you be free to feel or do?**

*Notice if anything softens, opens, or becomes possible when the critic is no longer the loudest voice.*

---

---

---

**7 A self-compassionate phrase to return to this week**

*Drawn from Neff (2011): mindfulness, common humanity, self-kindness. Write your own version, in your own words.*

“

---

---

---

”

*Examples: "This is hard, and I am allowed to be gentle with myself." · "I am doing the best I can with what I have right now." · "I do not have to earn my own kindness."*

◆ *The voice you use with yourself, in time, becomes the voice you live inside.* ◆