

TWO VOICES INSIDE YOU

The Inner Critic & the Inner Ally

Most of us carry both voices. The critic often arrived early — formed in environments where harshness felt like the only way to stay safe or acceptable. The ally is what therapy, practice, and time gradually grow. Both deserve understanding.



The Inner Critic

OFTEN A PART TRYING TO PROTECT

HOW IT SOUNDS

"You should have known better."


"What's wrong with you?"

"Everyone else has it figured out."

"You'll never be enough."

WHAT IT LEAVES BEHIND

Shame, exhaustion, perfectionism, fear of being seen, depleted motivation. Research links chronic self-criticism to depression and anxiety (Gilbert & Procter, 2006).



The Inner Ally

HONEST, WARM, ACCOUNTABLE

HOW IT SOUNDS

"That was hard. I'm here."

"This is a moment of difficulty."

"What do I need right now?"

"I can be honest and still be kind."

WHAT IT LEAVES BEHIND

Steadier mood, willingness to try again, capacity to learn from mistakes. Self-compassion correlates with greater motivation and emotional well-being (Neff, 2011; Breines & Chen, 2012).

Practicing the Shift — Sample Reframes

<p>SITUATION You make a mistake at work.</p>	<p>CRITIC <i>"You're so incompetent. Everyone is going to lose trust in you."</i></p>	<p>ALLY <i>"I made a mistake. I can take responsibility, learn, and move forward without abandoning myself."</i></p>
<p>SITUATION You feel sad without an obvious reason.</p>	<p>CRITIC <i>"Stop being dramatic. You don't even have a real problem."</i></p>	<p>ALLY <i>"Sadness is allowed to visit, even without a tidy explanation. I can be gentle with myself today."</i></p>
<p>SITUATION You said no to a request and feel guilty.</p>	<p>CRITIC <i>"You're selfish. They're going to be upset, and it's your fault."</i></p>	<p>ALLY <i>"Honoring my limits is part of how I stay well. Guilt does not automatically mean I have done something wrong."</i></p>
<p>SITUATION You compare yourself to someone online.</p>	<p>CRITIC <i>"Look at how far behind you are. You should be doing more."</i></p>	<p>ALLY <i>"I am seeing one curated slice of someone's life. My pace and path are my own to honor."</i></p>

A CLINICAL REMINDER

The goal is not to silence the critic, but to relate to it differently. In *Internal Family Systems* (Schwartz, 1995), critical parts often carry old protective intentions. With practice, the ally becomes the steadier voice that listens to the critic without being ruled by it.