

Worksheet 2

Transforming the inner critic

Meeting the harsh inner voice with curiosity, then with compassion.

The inner critic is rarely an enemy. Most often it is a part of you that learned, long ago, that being hard on yourself was the safest way to stay loved, accepted, or out of trouble. This worksheet helps you hear what it is saying, see what it is trying to do, and then offer a kinder voice in response.

Step 1 — What does the inner critic say?

Write down the harsh, critical words you hear yourself thinking. Quote them directly, in the voice they actually use.

Step 2 — Whose voice does this remind you of?

A parent, a teacher, a coach, a sibling, a culture? Sometimes the inner critic is repeating something we first heard from outside.

Step 3 — What is the critic trying to protect?

Even harshness usually has a hidden good intention. Is it trying to keep you from being rejected? From failing? From being seen? Try to see what it is afraid of.

Step 4 — Speak as the compassionate voice

Now imagine a wise, warm friend who knows everything you know — including the critic's fears and good intentions — and who deeply cares about you. What would *they* say to you about this?

The compassionate voice says:

Note: The compassionate voice is not a denial of difficulty. It can still tell the truth — but the tone is warm, not punitive.

References

- Gilbert, P. (2009). *The compassionate mind*. Constable.
- Gilbert, P. (2014). The origins and nature of compassion focused therapy. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 53(1), 6–41.