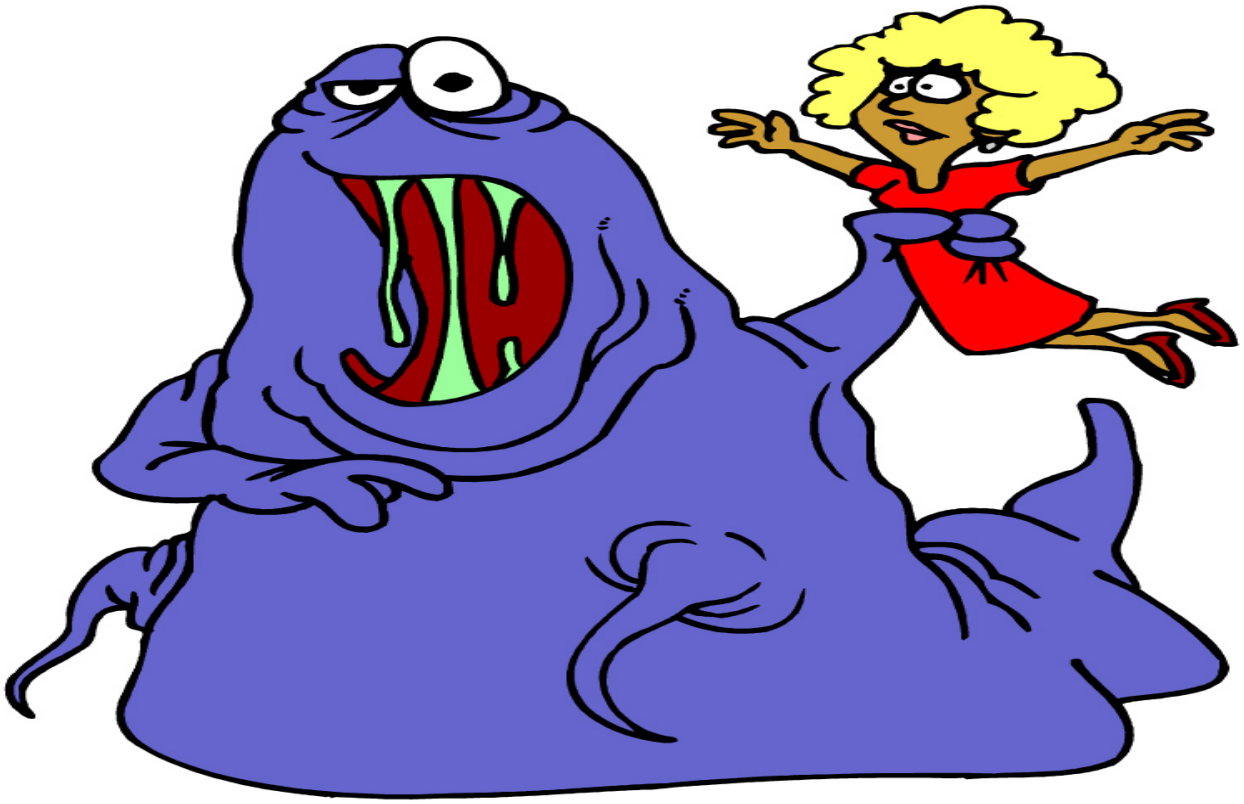
CONQUER YOUR INNER CRITIC

Discover why you should celebrate self-doubt!

Explore proven techniques for turning your inner critic into your best friend

by Doris Helge, Ph.D. ©2011



EXAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS
ABOUT THIS BOOK

"Doris' books and MP3 programs will help you master life!"
-- Mark Victor Hansen, co-author, the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series

"Doris' books touch my heart. So many people are starved for happiness. Doris shares proven ways to create the life you want."
__ Michael Port, Bestselling Author, "Book Yourself Solid"

"THIS IS A WONDERFUL BOOK & MP3 PROGRAM. You'll love having so much essential information presented in a fun way. I also love the illustrations."
-- Elizabeth Hendricks, Ph.D., Psychologist, Portland, Oregon

"Wow! This book blew me away. This is so powerful. It's like gold! If your inner critic bothers you, read this book and find out how YOUR mind works. I love all the different exercises you can do on your own. This book is so easy to read and understand. It's amazing! Great work, Doris!"
-- Adriana Nicholson, client of Dr. Helge's, Gallup, New Mexico

"Conquer Your Inner Critic" is a practical guide you'll use to overcome your fears and achieve anything you want to. I couldn't stop reading it! You'll discover so many new ways to think about your inner critic! I used to think my inner critic was my enemy. Now I have a whole new mindset. Doris' book gave me the courage to finish my most creative projects and do my bucket list. Thank you Doris!"
-- Christine Avers, client and life coach student of Dr. Doris, Columbus, Ohio

"Doris, I love your book! It's so important to learn from and use the negative voice that lives inside all of us. You are filling in a huge missing piece in the puzzle of life. People have been struggling for so long. If you've wondered why affirmations and positive thinking don't work for you, discover how to USE your negative thoughts in positive, empowering ways. Now you can live a happier, more successful life, too."
-- Anell Tubbs, Reiki Master, Boise, Idaho

"Doris books are in a prominent place in my house. I'm always referring to them because they are packed with useful information. No matter how often I read Doris' books, I always learn something new and see a situation in a different light."
-- Edna Johnson, Audio Technician, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

“Gain instant positive results. Discover the magnificent possibilities awaiting your exploration. Learn how to cash in on your strengths. Dr. Doris' books and MP3 programs are always fun and immensely useful. Use her books to build your confidence and escalate your success and happiness!”
-- Bill Uhl, winner of five gold medals for the U.S.

"This book and MP3 set, like all Doris' programs, give you a magnificent guide to help YOU discover your personal power and choices. I wish I'd had this book and the recordings years ago when I was floundering in my fears and confusion. Nothing worked for me. Now, I have an amazing personal and professional support system . . . plus the income level I always wanted. You'll also grow fast with this program because you'll gain total freedom when you have a new way of looking at yourself and life. You'll also love the fun illustrations."
-- Kelly Matthews, Chicago, Illinois

"Without Doris' latest book and MP3s, I'd never have understood that my desire to get rid of my inner critic has actually been making it much stronger. I love how Doris' programs always make me see through the illusions that have been holding me back. If you want to be free of the chains that have been suppressing YOUR success and happiness, take advantage of what Doris is offering you. You'll laugh hysterically about all the myths we've been taught and you'll grow by leaps and bounds . . . easily and quickly. Give yourself this gift now. It's the last self-help program you'll ever need . . . and it's the best!"
-- Pat Keller, Mailboxes, Etc.

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by Doris Helge, Ph.D. © 2011

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Exercises 6

Acknowledgments & Dedication 8

Is Your Inner Critic Sabotaging Your Happiness or Success? 9

Say Hello to Your Future Self 14

Chapter 1
The Critic—Friend or Foe? 16

Chapter 2
Travel the Path to Complete Self-Acceptance 26

Chapter 3
Transform Your Critic Into a Loyal Employee 42

Chapter 4
You Have the Tools to Tame a tyrant 84

References 88

About the Author 90

Additional Resources for You 91

Thank You! 99

EXERCISES

Pre- and Post-Test: Is Your Inner Critic
Sabotaging Your Happiness or Success? 9

Exercise One
Get to Know your Gremlin 23

Exercise Two
Consider the Source 28

Exercise Three
Productive Thinking 31

Exercise Four
Self-Acceptance Through Personal Integration -- Phase One 35

Exercise Five
Self-acceptance Through Personal Integration -- Phase Two 38

Exercise Six
Compassionate Communication -- Phase One 46

Exercise Seven
Compassionate Communication -- Phase Two 48

Exercise Eight
Speak to Source 50

Exercise Nine
Write a New Script. Stage One 53

Exercise Ten
Write a New Script. Stage Two 55

Exercise Eleven
Plan Your Own Itinerary 57

Exercise Twelve
Emergency Mind Calming Technique 58

Exercise Thirteen
How Can I Live Without You? 61

Exercise Fourteen
Turn Your Critic Into Your Inner Coach 66

Use Strengths-Based Language 67

Exercise Fifteen
Watch Your Language 69

Exercise Sixteen
Mirror, Mirror on the Wall 72

Exercise Seventeen
Discover the Truth 74

Exercise Eighteen
Chart Your Map to the New You 77

Exercise Nineteen
Use Your Body to Stop Self-Defeating Thoughts 80

Exercise Twenty
Breathe in Your New Now 82

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To everyone who field-tested the exercises in this book. Your thoughtful efforts guaranteed that future readers can also stop fearing their negative inner voices. Now they can gain control over their inner lives . . . easily . . . with rich insights, humor and joy. Thank you for carefully testing each exercise so that people around the world can now enjoy the same inner peace and confidence that you gained from using this work.

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated with immense love to my Soul Mate, Life Mate and best friend, William. Even after 20 years of the most rewarding connection I can imagine, the purity of your heart and the breadth of your love and wisdom still amaze me.

IS YOUR INNER CRITIC SABOTAGING YOUR SUCCESS OR HAPPINESS?

Which of the following challenges are yours?

1. My self-talk is often self-critical.
   True ____ False ____

2. I wish it were easier to promote myself, my accomplishments and my abilities.
   True ____ False ____

3. Sometimes I can't focus clearly because I'm so worried about what other people will think.
   True ____ False ____

4. Sometimes I'm afraid to take a risk even though I know it would probably lead to a better life.
   True ____ False ____

5. Sometimes I say "Yes" when I want to say "No" or "Not now" because I want to avoid criticism.
   True ____ False ____

6. Sometimes I do too much for other people. I do things they should do for themselves because I want them to value me.
   True ____ False ____

7. Sometimes when people compliment me, I think, "They don't really mean it" or "If they really knew me, they wouldn't say that." When the compliment comes from a friend, I may think, "They're just trying to

make me feel better." Within a work environment, I sometimes think, "They're trying to manipulate me" or "They want something from me."
True ____ False ____

8. When I want to achieve a new goal, I often hear an inner voice criticizing me with putdowns like, "You won't succeed," "You don't know enough," or "You're not good enough."
True ____ False ____

9. I want to feel calm and secure when I present my ideas and plans but my inner critic often sabotages my confidence.
True ____ False ____

10. I want to truly enjoy socializing and networking but sometimes I feel uncomfortable or doubt myself. When this happens, I struggle to fit in or I "go along to get along" instead of creating the meaningful connections I need and want. This is frustrating and can be exhausting.
True ____ False ____

11. I dread public speaking. I want to feel more confident selling myself and making presentations. I want to gain, instead of drain, energy when I speak out. I also want to do this on my own terms, after I've had time to absorb and reflect on information. I want my inner critic to shut up. I don't want to feel pressured to immediately blurt out pearls of wisdom just because I've been asked a question.
True ____ False ____

12. I want the quality of my work to be recognized, respected, appreciated, and rewarded. Sometimes my inner critic warns me, "You're not *that* good" or "You'll look foolish."
True ____ False ____

13. My inner critic suppresses my creativity.
True ____ False ____

14. Deep down inside, I may be a courageous person, but my inner critic zaps my courage to change.
    True ____ False ____

15. I often try to please people instead of expressing my true opinions or being My Authentic Self.
    True ____ False ____

16. When someone makes a critical comment, instead of taking time to reflect on the accuracy of what they say, I assume the criticism is valid and feel bad about myself.
    True ____ False ____

17. I sometimes assume people are being critical of me and later I discover they weren't.
    True ____ False ____

18. I want to control unnecessary interruptions that zap my focus and productivity but my inner critic says, "Don't! People will think you're being rude or anti-social."
    True ____ False ____

19. I want to reduce overwhelm and stress when I'm working. I want to ask for what I need without feeling vulnerable and exposed. I want to get my needs met without having to schmooze, play political games, or struggle to change my personality.
    True ____ False ____

20. I could be and do more if I could stop the voice inside of me that makes me feel inferior by comparing me unfavorably with other people.
    True ____ False ____

21. Sometimes I want to try something new but I hold myself back because I fear looking foolish or making a mistake.
    True ____ False ____

22. When I think "I just did something really good!" my inner critic often reminds me, "You could have done better."
    True ____ False ____

23. Sometimes I'm intimidated by people I think are more confident than I am.
    True ____ False ____

24. I want to prevent conflicts and easily resolve disagreements. I want to deal with criticism in a comfortable, carefree way, even when someone's critique is unfair.
    True ____ False ____

25. I want to fully develop my "receiving muscles" so I can receive the supportive relationships and income I deserve. I'm ready to tame my inner critic and gain inner peace now.
    True ____ False ____

TOTAL YOUR SCORE:

How many times did you mark "True?"

Please use the chart on the next page as an indicator of how much you gain from using this program.

1-5 "True's"	Congratulations! You've done a wonderful job of making friends with your inner critic. Now it's helping you instead of holding you back.
6-14 "True's"	You have some tools for managing your inner critic but you often suffer from a crippling inner voice that puts you down and creates feelings of insecurity. This proven program will help you let go of unnecessary anxiety and stress.
15-25 "True's"	Your inner critic has a strong negative voice that is creating unnecessary worry. Sometimes you self-sabotage. Your inner critic is suppressing your ability to enjoy the level of happiness, confidence and success you want. Use the tips in this program to blast through your inner blocks to complete confidence.

When you've completed this program, take this test again.

You'll enjoy noticing the rapid progress you make.

SAY HELLO TO YOUR FUTURE SELF

If you've ever longed for more confidence when facing tough challenges or people, this book will be a trusted resource you'll refer to time and again. Below are just a few benefits you'll gain from this book.

- Once you explode the myths about your inner critic, you'll bask in the peace and confidence you deserve. Let's probe one of the most common inner-critic myths. It's not your negative inner voice that has been holding you back. Your challenges have been caused by lack of awareness. You haven't yet perceived the amazing resources your inner critic is poised to provide you. Right now, you have the ability to turn a confused, misguided voice into a friendly force that fiercely fights for your happiness and success.

- Your inner critic can become the most loyal servant you could possibly imagine. Pause to ponder this idea. Your critic is already working very diligently. It will go to any length to gain your attention when you feel challenged or uncertain. Discover how to harness this powerhouse of energy. Use this book to begin right now to refocus your critic from a detractor to an amazing resource for your personal and professional empowerment.

- Your peace of mind and self-awareness will be continuously fed. After you use the exercises in this book when your inner critic appears, you'll perceive greater truths about life. You'll understand at a deep core level that fear and other negative emotions are just opportunities to become *experientially gifted.* You'll know, "Each time I'm afraid or I doubt my ability to succeed, I have a valuable opportunity to empower myself to enjoy an even greater level of inner peace and confidence. Now I have all the tools I need!"

- Once you know how to turn your gremlin into a trusted ally, you'll enjoy a distinct, special advantage that most people never discover. You'll have tamed your inner tyrant. As soon as you transform your gremlin into an inner employee working 24/7 to create the life of your dreams, another advantage will spontaneously appear. You'll automatically enjoy a new leadership position on Earth, one that is essential to the development of

this planet. You'll spontaneously inspire everyone in your presence to gain your new level of calm and confidence.

Just read the book and use the proven exercises that I've used with hundreds of clients during the field-testing stage of preparing this book for you. When times are tough, close your eyes and practice the multisensory experiences. Notice how every carefully designed and tested exercise helps you align with your life purpose, values, passion and inner strength. After each exercise, feel a soft glow in your heart. Allow that blissful sensation to expand into every cell of your body.

Sink into a deep connection with your authentic self. You feel so comfortable when you realize you're not alone. You're a key component of a vast army of other courageous Souls around the planet. All of us are destined to help elevate the people on Earth to a new level of consciousness and joy. Like you, your peers around the globe are committed to being all they can be. No more settling for a mediocre life! Total joy and abundance are patiently awaiting your discovery.

Begin reading the next chapter now so you can bust the myths about the inner critic that have been holding you back. Explore this complete toolkit for taming what you thought was your worst tyrant.

CHAPTER 1

THE CRITIC—FRIEND OR FOE?

> "Oh, I always think I'm going to give up . . . I don't *have* to do this . . . You think, 'Why would anyone want to see me again in a movie? . . . I don't know how to act anyway'."
>
> Meryl Streep

Do you sometimes hear an internal voice that belittles your abilities and criticizes even your best work? Maybe you're related to actress Meryl Streep or author Mark Twain who once planned to burn *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* because he didn't think it was a very good read.

THE ENEMY AS A GUARDIAN

The personal critic is usually described as a racket in your head, nagging voice or harsh judge that was created when disapproval was flung your way by nitpicking parents or teachers. The story goes that such individuals downgraded your finest efforts and taught you to criticize yourself. This chapter provides an additional point of view that can contribute to your peace of mind.

Your internal censor

has not been treated fairly.

You originally gave birth to this annoying, judgmental part of your personality as a young child because you needed an internal guardian. The critic actually began as a defense mechanism. It shielded you from physical harm and social disapproval by convincing you that you weren't powerful enough to do certain things. In the guise of protection, your guardian kept you from fully experiencing life until you were big enough and strong enough to confront new challenges.

For instance, as a young child, when you wanted to stand on a wobbly stool to steal a treat from the cookie jar on a shelf, your guardian warned, "Don't try it. Remember, you're not big enough." This protector kept you from hurting yourself and from getting into trouble with adults.

As time passed, your guardian's message was magnified from, "You're not strong enough or powerful enough" to "You're not good enough." Your critic eventually became part of your core identity. This protector-turned-critic still fears that you're not powerful or deserving enough to have everything you want. In too many ways, your faithful childhood servant has assumed the job of master controller.

Your guardian is an avid cheerleader for the status quo, even when your present circumstances feel unpleasant and it's clear change would be to your advantage. Your guardian reinforces your misperceptions that you are incapable or powerless. This distortion allows your "protector" to function in its familiar zone. It gets to feel in control of your life. Your guardian's resistance to change can even cause you to push away the very things you desire.

Now, for the good news. Since you personally created the early version of the critic (the guardian), you can manage today's chattering censor. As a child, you believed what you were told about yourself and your abilities. Now you are an adult with choices. The critic can only be unduly influential when you are unaware of its persistent and wily ways. You can assign a new job description to this loyal servant. (It has been laboring nonstop for most of your life.) The next two chapters of this book will show you how to gain the freedom you've been longing for.

ADVOCATES FOR THE NEGATIVE VOICE

First, let's further explore the potential value of the internal critic. Even if you believed and integrated harsh voices from your childhood, the critic is not really a fearsome adversary. In fact, you can learn to use it to your advantage. Most famous athletes, actors, and authors derive as much value from their internal censor as from external judges. These individuals have learned to deal with their critic in a positive manner.

The myth is that banishing the critic
would instantly transform self-judgment
and self-doubt into self-confidence.

David Guterson, author of the bestselling book that eventually became a box office hit, *Snow Falling on Cedars,* is certain his self-confidence was not gained from external recognition. He credits years of practice in which he constantly critiqued his work. Bill Uhl, an enduro-racer who won six Olympic gold medals in Europe, sums up the value of his internal critic, "If I'm not always evaluating my performance, how will I keep getting better?" You harness a powerhouse of energy when you face your shadow side. You discover that your doubts, fears, and insecurities are tools to help you become more competent and complete.

Trying to get rid of the critic is not the solution.

Just keep your critic's feedback in perspective.

When managed effectively, the barbs of your critic prevent complacency and boredom while nudging you to improve your chosen profession. If there are any magical keys to self-confidence, they are:

- preparation
- practice, and
- passion.

When you allow yourself to practice the vocation of your choice and take greater risks without fearing humiliation, your self-esteem escalates. Both self-confidence and the joyful state of *flow* emerge from facing challenges.

> No matter what you take on, insecurity is part of the job description. It's not possible to forge your own path while remaining on familiar ground. Serious doubt is actually a very good sign. Just recognize that self-doubt is a whole lot of hot air you've cooked up for absolutely no good reason. Muster the courage to trust yourself for five minutes. The dream is yours and yours alone . . . the chance for perfect freedom . . . your chance to fly.
>
> Suzanne Falter-Barns

SEPARATE THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF

A little negative self-talk—healthy evaluation—is fine because it helps you improve. Your freedom comes from distinguishing the pathological internal critic from your essential critical thinking abilities.

You can easily recognize the potentially damaging voice of the critic. It attempts to control your behavior. It is fear-based, harps on your faults, and demands perfection. The critic never notices your strengths and achievements. It insists you're a failure and compares you unfavorably to other people.

The critic is unaware that we all make mistakes. It doesn't know that errors are so essential for achievement and personal growth that many savvy companies now formally honor failures. It is their way of rewarding employees for taking healthy risks.

The critic's voice can sound so credible. Its messages can become so automatic and subtle. You may not realize its communications are irrational and untruthful. There are reliable ways of detecting the expressions of your critic. If it sounds like that of an insecure child, it stems from your childhood guardian-turned-critic. Treat this voice with caution.

Remember, the critic is only in power when you believe its messages. Even if a part of you is fearful, *you are not your insecurity*, so don't allow fear to become your primary identity. Insecurity is just a habit, and habits can always be broken.

There are some easy ways to separate useful feedback from the dysfunctional voices that ramble through your consciousness. Messages that are rational, mature, and reasonable are input from your adult self.

Statements that are insecure, childish, or inappropriately emotional are expressions of the critic. Truly listen to the untamed critic, and you'll notice how ridiculous it sounds.

> Why would you accept the advice of a child's voice that sounds controlling but is actually panicked one moment, impulsive the next, and then feels helpless?
>
> Joseph Luciani

Make a decision to discover your truth. You are a highly developed species called *homo sapiens*. Dictionaries say we are the wise branch of the primate family, so we should be able to use our rational abilities for productive thinking.

The first step is to separate the truth from self-criticism. Your critic's incessant desire to control your life is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. Just notice when you compare yourself to other people in negative ways. Remember, other people serve as mirrors so you can perceive yourself more clearly. *If you feel self-doubts, they do, too. The positive attributes you recognize in others also exist within you, even if they are just now beginning to sprout.*

Enjoy the light-hearted way the next exercise provides you with new clarity, insights and less stress when you're confronted by your inner critic.

EXERCISE ONE

GET TO KNOW YOUR GREMLIN

If someone on the street yelled at you, you wouldn't charge at them without at least scoping out the situation and their size. We usually behave differently when our critic encourages self-doubt. Most of us struggle to banish the negative voice instead of searching for the personal and professional growth opportunities that are always present when we hear it.

Make a commitment to get to know your gremlin. Our self-judgments and fears are treasure chests filled to the brim with the ingredients for developing greater self-confidence and joy. We just need to be willing to explore them.

Harsh approaches that attempt to crush the critic create internal resistance to change. The activities that follow are more effective because they combine levity with self-awareness. Accepting the parts of yourself that you are uncomfortable with is the only way to transform them into greater self-respect. Habits such as putting yourself down begin to change when you observe them without judgment.

- Imagine your critic's theme song and sing it.
- Draw sketches of your critic with your nondominant hand.
- Notice and label self-defeating thoughts. De-stress by drawing cartoon characters with names such as, Yabut, ShuddaCuddaWudda, Faultfinder, If Only Ida, and Doubtful.

The exercise you just completed helps you recognize the unfounded nature of your critic's fears and concerns. You develop compassion for this misguided component of your character. This creates clarity. The next time self-doubts arise, you can easily resist any temptation to battle your negative feelings. When you aren't resisting what exits and you aren't emotionally attached to distorted thoughts, they can gently vanish from your consciousness like a feather in the wind.

JUST A THOUGHT FORM

Because you have the power to change yourself,
you have the power to change the world.

The guardian is merely a thought form. It was originally designed to protect you until you became big enough and strong enough to meet life's challenges. Over time, it developed a life of its own. It became the dreaded internal critic. Left unsupervised, your critic thrives on controlling your behavior while encouraging the misperception that you are incapable or powerless. The good news is that you are the one person whose thoughts and attitudes you can control.

Simple, easy actions, like differentiating the voice of the critic from your authentic internal feedback system, will help you use the critic to your highest advantage. You will begin to perceive its input in ways that truly empower you so you can experience more happiness and success. In the next two chapters, you'll

discover exactly how to give your hard-working critic a job description that will serve you.

CHAPTER 2

TRAVEL THE PATH TO COMPLETE SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Our entire life and our freedom consist
ultimately in accepting ourselves as we are.
Jean Anouilh

POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS CAN DELAY SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Positive affirmations, such as "I love and accept myself right now," are usually prescribed as the antidote to self-criticism. Affirming the positive is truly empowering . . . when you actually believe the message. Unfortunately, trying to substitute positive words for negative feelings can delay self-discovery and problem-solving. This is particularly true when you use affirmations to hide feelings of inadequacy or to gain social acceptability.

Consider the affirmation, "I believe in my abilities. I know I can achieve anything I want to, right now." Ultimately, you may sincerely believe this statement, but if your critic is taunting you, it is not currently your truth.

You're too smart to lie to yourself. Mouthing an affirmation when you're struggling with self-doubt escalates your emotional turmoil. Your critic pipes up with a new round of invalidating messages. The original negative self-talk you were trying in vain to subdue has intensified.

Cognitive restructuring is a technique in which you substitute a positive for a negative thought. It is only effective when you have no subconscious desire to hold onto a negative thought. *Subconscious* is the key word. How many people consciously want to hold onto a negative thought?

Positive affirmations often fail because they don't investigate or confront the *source* of negative self-talk. The next exercise is much more powerful.

EXERCISE TWO

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

1. Using your dominant hand, ask your critic what it needs or wants. (If you are right-handed, your dominant hand is your right hand and your non-dominant hand is your left hand.)

2. Record the critic's answers with your nondominant hand. (For most people, using the nondominant hand triggers their brain to access information that is unconscious so they receive new insights. This is also the way many people consciously create new neural networks in their brain.)

3. Review your list. Notice and write down any patterns such as "I want to be as well-respected as they are" or "I want to feel worthy."

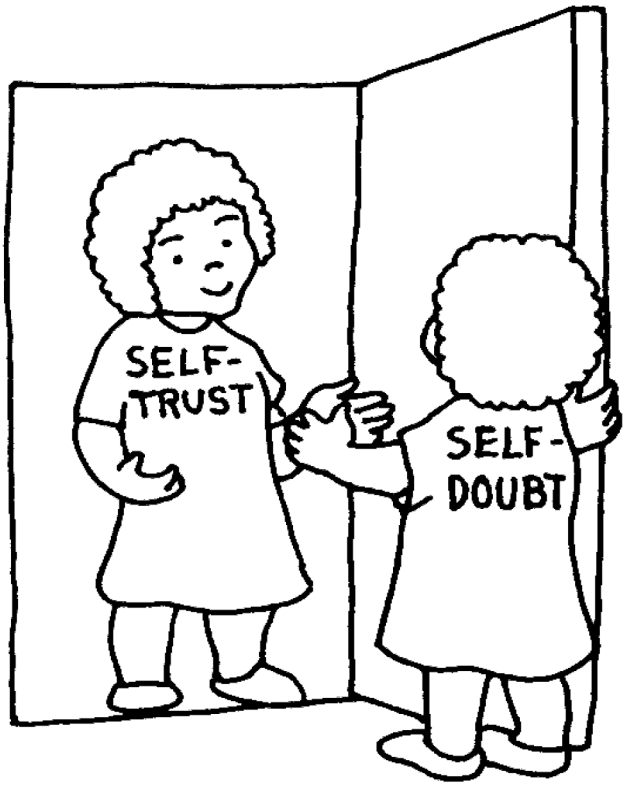
4. During the next few days,
   - observe the patterns you identified.
   - acknowledge any self-doubts or insecurities that arise. Notice any tendency to resist them or judge them as good or bad.
   - recognize that we all have self-doubts and insecurities. Be willing to accept these parts of yourself.

5. During the next few weeks, notice that acknowledging the desires of the critic calms its chatter. You more easily detect distorted perceptions.

Used in isolation, verbal affirmations lack the power necessary to counteract a lifetime of negative programming. This is because the affective (emotional) component of your subconscious is critical to any real change in beliefs and behavior. Insecurities are experienced in the emotional realm, but positive affirmations engage only the cognitive part of your brain. In addition, your brain processes and reacts to strong emotions much faster than to words. To make a long biochemical story short, changes in your self-esteem and behavior require an emotional impact. The most effective approaches are multisensory and holistic, such as those discussed in this book.

Even though we often dread feeling negative emotions, they eventually run their course when we simply acknowledge, instead of attempting to deny, them. When we try to avoid uncomfortable feelings, they return time and again, in a magnified manner, clamoring for our attention.

The foundation for your future self
is your current self-image.
As soon as you discover what that
is, you've taken a giant step toward
creating the destiny of your dreams.



Many advocates of positive thinking don't understand that unpleasant feelings such as fear and insecurity lead to their opposites: self-confidence and peace of mind. The uncomfortable emotions we try to dodge with directives like "Just think happy thoughts" disappear when we adopt an honest approach. The positive mental attitude we have been seeking happens spontaneously. Engage in productive thinking instead of struggling to achieve positive thinking.

The next exercise provides you with a proven tool and a way to practice your new technique.

EXERCISE THREE

PRODUCTIVE THINKING

Productive thinking involves being truthful and realistic. Instead of saying, "I'll do the job perfectly" tell yourself, "I'll stay as calm as I can and do the best job I can. I don't have to be perfect." When you say, "I'm going to do my best," your brain knows this is a genuine possibility. You haven't initiated internal resistance by saying something unrealistic. You have a higher probability of success.

Instead of struggling to engage in positive thinking, simply replace critical comments with realistic remarks and encourage yourself to stay focused. When you make mistakes, be as kind to yourself as you would be to your best friend. Make a statement such as, "I won't beat myself up about this. Instead, I'll stay calm. Next time, I'll make sure I _____ (e.g., am more prepared, think before I speak, or leave 15 minutes earlier so I arrive on time)." Focus on the solution instead of the problem. Solutions are inherently constructive and positive.

High self-esteem flourishes with self-acceptance, which occurs when you accept yourself exactly as you are, warts and all. Self-knowledge is empowering. It grows vigorously when you don't bury your feelings or say you already are who you want to be.

> When you know who you are, you are powerful. When it comes from within, it radiates outward, and there is no need to "affirm" it methodically or mechanically.
>
> Naomi Steinfeld[1]

THE POWER OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE

I once interviewed over fifty CEOs from small, mid-sized, and large companies. Each successful individual, regardless of their career path, had independently come to the same conclusion: It is self-acceptance—not monetary success or worldly achievements—that gives birth to workplace happiness and success. Each CEO discussed numerous significant setbacks during their travels toward joy on the job. All of them now welcome challenges. They are convinced they owe their strength and capabilities to having been forced to overcome one adversity after another.

Many of the CEOs had experienced multiple bankruptcies. When asked, "If you could name only one thing that saved you when the world or your internal critic said you failed, what was it?," their responses were consistent. No matter how valuable their external support systems, self-acceptance had been their mainstay. When relationships with friends or families dissolved, they gained solace to the degree to which they accepted themselves.

Neither their self-esteem nor their comfort was dependent on when or if they pulled themselves or their company out of a problem situation. Self-respect gave them the courage to be fully present with themselves and their lives, whether the world applauded them or spit in their faces. Self-acceptance allowed their energy to be fully available to them so they could stand up to each test that came their way.

Today's achievement-oriented culture declares that you have no merit separate from your accomplishments. This is far from the truth. If you didn't have value, you wouldn't exist. Nature makes no mistakes.

Your life is a purposeful
unfinished masterpiece.

Self-acceptance means accepting yourself just as you are, right now, before you achieve anything new. When your self-acceptance is related to your performance or when you reject some aspect of yourself, you invite the critic to visit.

Saying "I love and respect myself" when you don't invites the critic to call attention to the lie. Use a different, more effective approach. Just notice the areas in which you still judge yourself. Trying to fix, rather than accept, yourself leads to a vicious cycle in which the critic's voice prevails. Simple awareness, on the other hand, creates spontaneous change.

Self-acceptance does not mean losing your interest in self-improvement. It means your desire to change is no longer fueled by self-criticism, guilt, or shame. Instead, growing self-respect causes you to graduate from one level to the next of your personal framework for self-actualization. You are driven by two very precious factors: the innate human craving to discover more about your abilities and an unquenchable curiosity about the process of life.

You radiate self-respect, and positive changes in your life are spontaneous and rapid. You recognize that a simple, splendid secret has been awaiting your discovery. As soon as you stop trying to fix yourself and no longer resist who you are in the present, you've already begun to change. The delights of self-discovery are always available to you.

Refusal to accept your faults and limitations is based on false grandiose beliefs bolstered by unrealistic expectations that you should not possess imperfections. The result is self-torture. You tune in to screechy internal radio frequencies that feature the critic's carping.

Make another choice. Accept your personal freedom by surrendering to reality. Acknowledge that humans must make mistakes in order to learn. Admit we always have something new to master. Recognize we cannot control the whims of the world.

If you are not "failing" on a regular basis, you are probably not learning very quickly. Almost anyone can have a perfect performance if they are willing to settle for only doing tasks in which they are already proficient. Drop the social

programming that you must be perfect in order to be accepted, respected, or loved. Instead, head straight toward self-acceptance.

You're already perfect.
You're as perfectly flawed
As the rest of us.

Instead of struggling to maintain the status quo, allow life to mold and shape you with immaculate precision. The payoffs include less stress, more joy, and a big boost in self-confidence. The rewards are profound when you surrender to the process of life. You finally allow yourself to receive a backlog of insights and wisdom that life has been poised to provide you.

EXERCISE FOUR

SELF-ACCEPTANCE THROUGH PERSONAL INTEGRATION

PHASE ONE

This exercise helps you accept and integrate what you do and don't like about yourself. You will need colored markers, pens, or crayons, and paper.

1. Close your eyes and think about aspects of yourself and your life that you do and don't like.

2. Open your eyes and pick up a pen or pencil.

3. Draw a vertical line down the middle of a piece of paper.

4. On the left-hand side of your paper, draw figures, symbols, or words representing the aspects of yourself and your life that you *don't* like.

5. Using a different color, draw figures, symbols, or words on the right-hand side of the page. What you draw on this side of your page should represent aspects of yourself and your life that you *do* like.

6. Use a new piece of paper and draw a large, simple figure that represents you.

7. Add all of the pieces from your previous two drawings to your new picture.

8. Draw links between the positive and negative characteristics you have drawn. It isn't necessary for the traits you link to be opposites. The objective is merely to accept that you have favorable and unfavorable attributes.

9. We all have shadow material—qualities we aren't proud of—as well as characteristics we like about ourselves. How do you feel when you realize the fully integrated you has both favorable and unfavorable characteristics?

The next exercise can be completed immediately after Phase One or after you allow time for reflection.

EXERCISE FIVE

SELF-ACCEPTANCE THROUGH PERSONAL INTEGRATION

PHASE TWO

1. Name your negative qualities. (Examples: The Judge, The Martyr, The Blamer, or The Know-It-All.)

2. Draw these qualities as cartoon characters.

3. Have a conversation with these characters so you can get to know them better.

4. Answer the following questions:

    - Under what circumstances do your negative qualities appear?

    - How do they serve you? What needs do they meet?

    - What would you feel was missing in your life if these negative qualities disappeared?

    - What would happen if you accepted that you are a student of life?

    - What have your learned from this exercise?

Carl Jung once commented that the shadow side of our personality, which we normally try to squelch, is actually 90 percent pure gold.[2]

Once you accept your shadow material,
your critic loses its power.

BECOME YOUR OWN HERO

Just remember, we're all in this alone.
Lily Tomlin

Although Tomlin's comment was made in jest, you are the only person who can give yourself the self-acceptance that is essential if you are to thrive in the world. Self-respect unleashes a flood of approval within a very fickle world.

The same Mark Twain who considered burning *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* because it "wasn't a very good read" eventually commented to a potential publisher, "and I shall like it, whether anybody else does or not."[3] Twain grew to accept himself and his work by recognizing the value of his internal critic and befriending this aspect of his personality. He learned we are never comfortable in the world until we journey with self-approval in our pocket.

Radical self-acceptance is a profound ingredient for creating happiness at work because positive change is impossible without it. Just hold a sincere intention to discover who you are, and you will allow yourself to meet your full potential.

Remember, everyone around you has an inner critic. Other people are busy judging themselves. They have far less energy, focus, or time to downgrade you than you think. Those who criticize you are usually avoiding feeling their own self-criticism, so just focus on your own feelings and insights. Peace and bliss await you.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSFORM YOUR CRITIC INTO A LOYAL EMPLOYEE

The first rule of holes:
When you're in one,
stop digging.
Molly Ivins

Since there is a time and place for the well-honed skills of the critic, how can we use it to our advantage instead of being stressed by its negativity? The following proven techniques will assist you in transforming the critic into a virtual assistant that will help you accomplish your goals. Although every strategy has potential value for you, a wide array of techniques are presented for the following reasons.

- In a given situation, you may respond better to one approach than another.
- While you are learning to manage your critic, it will act like a chameleon. It will wear many disguises and will try first one technique and then another to distract you. By the time you complete this chapter, you will be equipped to counteract the critic's cunning ploys.

DON'T RESIST

Befriend, instead of battling your critic. When you try to get rid of the critic, you set yourself up for additional self-judgment because your attention and focus magnify the power of the negative voice.

Since what we resist, persists, rather than trying to squelch the critical voice, simply acknowledge it, "Oh, that's the voice of my critic. Hello!" Then continue with your life.

Most of the time, this works quite well. You're not labeling the critic as an evil force. Nor are you tormenting yourself for engaging in negative self-talk. Because you are not denying the critic's existence, there is no battle. Your critic will usually drift out of your consciousness.

The best defense is often no defense. A skilled
martial artist often defuses opposition by stepping
out of the way when an opponent attacks.

MANAGE THE TIMELINE

If the critic's voice persists with a message such as, "But your work (or your idea) is awful," be as precise as you would with a two-year old throwing a tantrum to gain your attention. Briefly tell the critic, "I promise I'll attend to your concerns at a later time. Right now I'm doing something else." You can do this without much effort. You multi-task everyday, so you're perfectly capable of placing your critic on the back burner without a battle.

As Uhl and Streep indicated, the voice of the critic can be a valuable tool for personal and professional growth. Engage its energy in a positive way until you truly need a critical evaluator to judge your work. Think of the critic as a

small, high-energy child who is babbling away while you are trying to work. Occupy its attention by giving it something else to do. Direct its attention to a low-priority project.

One of my clients created a mental storyboard of her "Seven Self-Defeating Thoughts." She visualized them as dwarfs under the care of Snow White. Each time a negative thought appeared, she recognized it with respect, "Thanks for trying to help. I'm okay right now, so go play with your buddies."

Below are the reasons this strategy will work for you.

- When you casually acknowledge the existence of a negative voice, you don't create a civil war inside of your psyche. You're relaxed. Tension feeds the critic's voice. When you observe it from a neutral stance, it can gain no power over your life.
- Because you consistently respond, your critic does not fight to gain your attention. All of your precious energy is available to focus on what you want. Since what we focus on magnifies and then manifests, if you try to push the negative voice away, your focus empowers it.

Discover the joy of realizing that
you're truly in charge of your life.

EDUCATE YOUR CRITIC

Remember, the critic is simply an old voice inside of you that is trying to protect you from your fear of others' harsh judgments. Tell your critic (yourself) the following.

- I am now an adult, and I *value* constructive criticism and feedback.
- Because I am no longer a child, I don't believe everything I hear about myself.
- I learn by taking healthy risks and making mistakes.

When the voice of self-doubt nags at you, "Something bad might happen!" you can counter it. "By definition, this means something good can also happen." Set your intention and keep moving forward while practicing the techniques in this chapter.

> Your brain responds more to pictures than words.
>
> Your subconscious mind strives to manifest the pictures you provide it.
>
> Post a visual reminder of your goal and keep it in plain sight.

KEEP IT CLEAN

Keep in mind that the critic thrives on clutter and disorganization. Help yourself stay on target.

- Maintain awareness of your goals.
- Clean up your work area.
- Carefully prioritize your work.

CULTIVATE COMPASSION

Since negative self-talk unconsciously reinforces feelings of unworthiness and inadequacy, practice self-acceptance. Notice and acknowledge your positive intentions as well as your actual achievements. Cultivate patience, compassion, and understanding for yourself.

You have a guarantee that you'll spend the rest of your life with one person—yourself. Use the next exercise to ensure that you'll be happy with your own company.

EXERCISE SIX

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION

PHASE ONE

When you notice self-talk such as "When will you ever learn?" or "How stupid! You did it again!," ask yourself, "Would I say that to someone I really care about?"

Then respond as if you are speaking to a child you dearly love or an adult you want to help. Convey an empathetic message to yourself like, "The truth is I really do care about you." Rather than judge your critic (yourself), make a new start toward becoming a better friend to yourself. Recognize your strengths and your unique talents.

Why does the compassionate communication technique work? You're not beating yourself up for self-judgments, and you're not trying to reverse a life-long

habit overnight. When you become aware of a negative pattern, it eventually changes on its own.

The next activity can be completed immediately after "Compassionate Communication -- Phase One" or after allowing time for reflection.

EXERCISE SEVEN

COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION

PHASE TWO

One way to rewire the old negative feedback loops in your brain is to use a variety of ways of addressing old disempowering comments. Explore the two options below and then design your own technique.

Option One

Consciously experiment with your self-talk by varying the tone and pitch of the voice. Turn down the volume. Change the quality and intonation of the critic's voice. Do this until the voice sounds so much like someone else talking that it seems impossible that the words came from within your own consciousness.

Option Two

Enhance the appeal, peacefulness, and pleasure of your internal voice. Discover that, similar to a parent singing a nursery rhyme to a child, what you say is often not as important as how you say it.

Option Three

Enjoy designing the next option. Have fun playing with a variety of approaches.

When you experiment with the tools in this book, you'll begin to have fun playing with your critic. Move toward pleasure and away from pain. Focus on what you want, not on what you don't want because two strong opposing forces or beliefs cannot exist simultaneously in your consciousness.

Pleasant experiences and feelings are evidence of your progress. Escalate your confidence by emphasizing your strengths while you manage your weaknesses.

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Since the critical voice is only powerful when you accept its message at face value, it is sometimes helpful to identify the source of the negative voice. The verbal abuse is usually a verbatim quote from an old authority figure.

Use the next exercises to begin rewiring negative neural loops in your brain that support your critic's voice. My clients are always surprised about how quickly such a simple exercise can produce positive results.

EXERCISE EIGHT

SPEAK TO THE SOURCE

1. Remember the image of a person from your past who said negative things about you or your performance.

2. Answer their cutting comments out loud. To strengthen the beginnings of a new neural association in your brain, use empowering phrases like, "You're just a blast from the past! I no longer need your approval."

3. Now picture the person delivering the negative message from the past wearing a clown suit and a sad face because you've exposed their ridiculous game. They have lost control over your life.

4. Record your new insights.

5. During the next week, notice when you unconsciously accept someone else's critical statements as truth.

6. Consider a couple of "cure-alls" if your inner critic is particularly strong: (a) compassion and (b) observing from a neutral state of mind.
    a. Call forth your compassion.
        i. How can you develop compassion for people who are feeling so stressed, distraught or inadequate that they lash out at you? People who love themselves very seldom judge other people as inadequate. They understand that we are all students in The School of Life.
    b. Engage your "curious witness." As previously discussed, when you observe the inner critic with curiosity instead of harsh judgment, fear, frustration and anger cannot gain a foothold in your consciousness. Write an example of how you can be as curious as a small child when your inner critic screams for your attention. Examples include deleting disempowering questions like, "Why is my inner critic bothering me now?" or "How can I get rid of my critical voice?" Notice the difference in focus when you ask questions like:
        i. "I wonder what I'm learning right now?"
        ii. "I wonder how I'll resolve the challenge that the inner critic in concerned about?"

IF YOU WANT TRUE PERSONAL POWER

If you really value peace of mind and personal freedom, take the next step. One by one, forgive every person whose voice has been nagging you. You'll heal old wounds and they won't fester again. You'll also be amazed at how much energy you gain for your next adventures.

Many valuable new understandings
will emerge when you stop
dragging your past into the present.

DIRECT YOUR OWN MOVIE

You are in charge of your life now. You can hand your critic a new narrative while choreographing each scene of your personal movie. Assume the critic is as tired of the old script as you are. The more creatively you use the next exercise, the more fun and lasting effects you will experience. You'll distract the critic from its original objective and line of thinking because tremendous focus is required to maintain a state of anxiety.

EXERCISE NINE

WRITE A NEW SCRIPT

STAGE ONE

Neurologically, it is impossible to experience anxiety and fun at the same time. In this exercise, you'll interrupt a state of anxiety so it can disappear.

1. Listen to your self-talk. As soon as you notice comments such as "How dumb! I can't believe you did that!" add a new sentence such as, "What I like about you is when the going gets tough, you keep going!" Write two examples here.
    a.
    b.
2. Continue this thread of inner dialog as if you're engaged in a fabulous improvisational theatre experience. Write some additional comments you can make like, "Henry Ford made mistakes, too. He forgot to put a reverse gear on his first automobile, but he revolutionized the entire auto industry."
    a.
    b.
    c.
    d.

Next comes the fun part in which you erase old negative memories and create new neural pathways packed with pleasant memories. To fully empower your new scene and initiate lasting changes, remember your brain is a pattern-recognition machine. It carries out orders more efficiently from pictures than from words. Your brain is your loyal servant. It will implement whatever software program you feed it when you follow a few guidelines.

- Send vivid, specific, and clear messages and pictures to your brain.
- Fully engage your imagination and emotion (enthusiasm).
- Truly believe it's possible for your desires to come true.

Use Exercise 9 "Write a New Script -- Phase Two" will help develop these important, life-changing skills. When you turn the page, you're making a commitment to yourself.

EXERCISE TEN

WRITE A NEW SCRIPT

PHASE TWO

1. Set aside at least ten minutes and find a place where you will be comfortable and undisturbed.
2. Hold a picture in your mind of a person giving you a *positive* message. Place an imaginary nametag, "Previous Critic," on this person.
3. Take a few deep breaths to relax and clear your mind. In your imagination, place the person you have envisioned in a supportive work environment or a beautiful home or outdoor scene.
4. Enhance the effectiveness of your creation by adding more and more vivid, clear, and specific imagery. Keep adding and seeing pleasing details while hearing enjoyable sounds. Finger the textures of your clothes and nearby objects. Smell gratifying scents. Notice the temperature of the air. Relax and breathe deeply as you continue to intensify your senses and feel your satisfaction with the new scene. Incorporate other physical movements and actions to enhance the new neural pathways you are establishing.
5. You have now reprogrammed your memories and constructed a new backdrop for an original unpleasant scene. Make any old disagreeable memories dull, fuzzy, and insignificant. They should be as boring to watch as a C-grade movie. Make negative characters from the past (old unpleasant memories) one-dimensional. Their voices should now be extremely difficult to hear.
6. Ensure the new memories you are building are action-packed, exciting, pleasant, and vivid. Fill them with imaginative, vibrant characters that peak your interest. Saturate the scenes with interesting details and multiple sensations. Continue the process until only your positive feelings remain.
7. Keep using the methods described in this chapter to secure your critic's assistance in miniaturizing and storing any remaining unpleasant memories in a file.
8. Close the file and store it in a remote location while you enjoy the new scenes you have created.
9. You have now created positive new neural associative pathways. Anchor your new level of confidence by closing your eyes and feeling your new level of inner peace and confidence as it circulates throughout your body.

You are never limited
to acting out
someone else's script.

Why is the last exercise effective? Your critic is just part of you. Provide your critic with choices. It will choose pleasure instead of pain.

OWN YOUR PERSONAL POWER

We are all so much more capable than we believe we are. We have incredible power to change our lives in positive ways by making decisions that serve us.

Because we can choose our thoughts, we have the capability of being serene and enthusiastic about our lives in spite of almost any circumstance. Instead of judging situations as negative, we can label challenges "learning experiences." This label short-circuits dread by triggering our curiosity. We become engrossed in the adventure of discovering solutions. We choose to act, rather than react. We no longer respond in a socially programmed or unconscious, habitual manner. Instead of being immobilized by emotions, we simply notice them.

The critic thrives when we don’t recognize the choices available to us. The next exercise removes the critic from the driver's seat so you can focus on solutions instead of problems.

EXERCISE ELEVEN

PLAN YOUR OWN ITINERARY

1. Find a place where you won't be distracted.

2. Close your eyes and breathe five deep breaths.

3. Breathe three more deep breaths while concentrating on making your exhalations longer than your inhalations.

4. Hold a symbol or image of your current challenge in your mind.

5. Breathe deeply again, and exhale more completely than you inhale. Imagine you are exhaling your current reality and inhaling a new scenario. With your eyes still closed, hold an image in your mind that you are the hero or heroine of your life.

6. Envision, in vivid detail, that you are excelling in every test life presents to you. Notice how good it feels to be taking an action-oriented approach.

7. Feel satisfied with your efforts, and breathe deeply again before opening your eyes.

During the next few days, be curious about how positive changes in your life will unfold and take notes as the magic emerges. This will enable you to perceive clues regarding the best actions to take. If you feel anxious, close your eyes and breathe deeply. Recall the images, feelings, and other positive sensations related to meeting life's challenges. This will re-stimulate the new neural pathways you developed in steps six and seven.

During the next few weeks, notice that you're more likely to *observe* your life's journey rather than becoming emotionally distraught about it.

To boost your progress, repeat this exercise anytime you wish.

QUIET YOUR MIND

Why do the critic's messages cause us so much distress? Our brains tend to magnify negative incoming messages and minimize positive ones. Robert Cooper, author of *High Energy Living,* concluded that criticisms are shouted to the higher brain centers. Compliments, on the other hand, are merely whispered.[1]

Your best defense is to quiet your mind by using the Emergency Mind-Calming Technique in the next exercise. When you're relaxed, the critic has very little access to your consciousness.

EXERCISE TWELVE

EMERGENCY MIND CALMING TECHNIQUE

In just a few minutes, you can quiet your mind so you can handle critical messages that come into your consciousness.

1. Sit quietly with your eyes closed and your feet flat on the floor.
2. Place your hands in your lap with the end of each finger touching the corresponding finger on your opposite hand. (Your left thumb touches your right thumb, your left index finger touches your right index finger, etc.)
3. Breathe slowly, rhythmically, and deeply.
4. Notice how quickly you feel calm enough to handle challenges.

Why does the last exercise calm your mind so quickly? This technique re-channels neurological energy in a way that causes you to communicate with your authentic self. Because your connected fingertips channel your own energy into your consciousness, the technique also prepares you to handle any criticisms sent your way by other people. This is particularly valuable for sensitive individuals who tend to internalize the negative comments or intentions of others. (Scientists have confirmed the effects of an electrical field of up to ten feet away from an individual's body. This field is influenced by the thoughts and intentions of others.[2)]

After you practice the Emergency Mind-Calming Technique a few times, you'll be able to use it standing or sitting, while in a crowd and with your eyes open. You'll be able to calm yourself in the midst of chaos and no one will even notice the process.

IDENTIFY YOUR AFFINITY

It is easy to identify your aversions to your critic because it grates on your nerves to hear a harsh, negative voice that questions your capabilities. You may not realize that we also have attachments to our critics.

Our inner gremlins have been around for a long time. They reinforce our needs to feel secure and socially accepted. They also support the illusion that we can be totally in control of our lives. This distortion squelches our natural curiosity

about how life will unfold. Then we cheat ourselves out of experiencing the joy of our journey.

Psychologists call the affinity to the inner critic's voice a secondary gain. For example, sometimes we buy into the myth that we are incompetent so we can avoid taking a risk and potentially failing. At other times, we allow a "Yeah, but" voice to keep us from accepting total personal responsibility for our lives because we don't want to acknowledge how capable we truly are. The next exercise will help you identify unconscious attachments to the put-down voice of your inner critic.

EXERCISE THIRTEEN

HOW CAN I LIVE WITHOUT YOU?

Write your answers to the following questions. Use your nondominant hand and scribble the first responses that come into your mind, without editing them. Keep your hand moving on the page.

1. What do you think you would lose if you could never—ever—criticize yourself again?

2. How does this relate to your fear of being as capable as you truly are?

3. How does it relate to fear of accepting total personal responsibility for your happiness and success?

4. What would you lose if you could never again criticize other people?

Use the questions in the last exercise to discover any hidden attachments to your critical voice. A profound sense of freedom will emerge because awareness initiates a spontaneous change process.

FLOW PAST THE CRITIC

If you are giving less than 100 percent to a task that requires your full attention, your critic is probably on stage. Ed Strachar, author of *Reading Genius*, trains people like you and me to read and comprehend over one hundred pages a minute by helping them silence the critical voice that screams, "That's impossible!" Since humans routinely underutilize their brain cells, up to 95% of their cells may be "unemployed" and function as critics because they have nothing else to occupy their time. As Strachar says, "If you were unemployed, you'd probably lie around watching old movies and chattering, too."[2]

The solution, of course, is to fully employ your brain cells so energy is not available to sabotage your performance. It is the performer within us that takes action and moves toward our goals. The critic procrastinates by analyzing and judging. (Channing Pollack once commented that the critic is a legless man who teaches running.)

Strachar advocates a brain overwhelm strategy to get the critic out of the way so all of your brain cells can work toward the same objective.[3] World-class athletes prove the effectiveness of this idea. I have watched gold medalist Bill Uhl compete. As the moments get closer and closer to his signal at the starting

line, his physical appearance alters to the degree that he could be mistaken for a distant cousin. His attention is so sharp that you could stand in front of him madly waving your arms and screaming and he would pay no attention to you. I have seen people talk to him or try to massage his shoulders before an event. He didn't notice their presence. Nor was he aware of encouragement from crowds of spectators.

As Uhl fastens his helmet, his breathing is deep and steady and his mind is calm. The steady gaze of his eyes portrays 100 percent focus on his sport. There is not a single thought regarding whether he will maintain his Olympic record. The critic doesn't exist because Uhl is in *the zone*, the state of flow that is the best deterrent to self-criticism.

In each moment, all of Uhl's available brain cells are consumed with his actions. There is no past and no future. He never takes his eyes off the path ahead to check on the progress of his competitors. He wastes no energy chastising or congratulating himself regarding his progress. This intense focus empowered him to endure six consecutive days of grueling competition during drenching rains, snowstorms, sleet, and hail in some of the world's highest mountain peaks, where over 80 percent of the world's best athletes are usually disqualified on the first day.

You can prove the value of fully employing all of your available brain cells to yourself. Observe competing teams at any level. Notice that the moment they interact with the critic by checking their progress or congratulating themselves,

they lose their concentration and must refocus their attention. When we are concerned with how well we progress, the critic always holds some power over our actions. Uhl's process illustrates a more effective technique.

When we focus only on the details of acting in each moment, the final outcome does not enter our minds. We are in *the zone*—a state of flow. Self-judgment has no access to our consciousness.

HELP THE CRITIC MEET ITS NEEDS

The best business leaders determine what employees need and want and how to use their skills for the good of all concerned. In the case of your critic, you are the team leader. The following story illustrates one of the most effective ways you can deal with your critic.

A young boy named Tim had nightmares of a huge, green monster chasing him. Night after night, Tim cried out until his father came to comfort him. At first, Dad tried to convince Tim that the beast didn't exist. When that didn't work, Dad asked, "Have you asked the monster what he wants?"

The next night, Tim mustered his courage and asked the creature, "Why do you keep coming into my dreams?"

The answer amazed Tim. "I don't want to scare you. I'm just lonely. Can't we play?" The monster instantly became a wonderful imaginary playmate. For years, he and Tim shared fun adventures.

Many of my clients have used a similar procedure, asking their internal critics, "What do you want from me?" These clients then formed a friendly pact with their former enemies. Eventually, they assigned them different job descriptions. One client complimented his critic, "You're quite a powerful force. Instead of criticizing my work, I could sure use your help thinking up new ways to do my project." He was amazed at such an easy solution to his problem but it only makes sense.

Because your critic originated as a defense mechanism attempting to shield you from the criticism of other people, it is your strong and loyal servant. You can program it to be one of your most valuable resources. It's unfortunate that people have been programmed to waste precious energy trying to squelch the unique abilities and vitality of the critic.

UNLEASH YOUR INNATE INNER COACH

Consider the critic to be a well-intentioned friend who hasn't learned how to word its criticism in a constructive fashion. Ask it, "What are your positive

intentions?" Since you want your critic to be nonjudgmental, give it the benefit of a doubt. Listen to its concerns without finding fault. You may discover that the negative voice is simply trying to get your attention. It may want to help you or encourage you to be more careful as you work toward goal achievement.

EXERCISE FOURTEEN

TURN YOUR CRITIC INTO YOUR INNER COACH

You can replace your inner critic with a wonderful coach who lives inside of you and talks to you in kind and supportive language. You can assign specific tasks to this part of your consciousness.

- Begin by changing your definition of the critic from "a nag" to "a faithful and powerful ally."
- Ask your critic to identify and lead you to new resources.
- Invite your new coach to feed you positive suggestions for accomplishing your goals.
- Imagine that your inner coach has become the best friend you'll ever have.
- Listen when your new helper describes your strengths and capabilities. This is firm evidence that your shift in perception worked!

USE STRENGTHS-BASED LANGUAGE

You are so powerful that the words you choose to use will either pump you up or bring you down. To gain control over your future, become conscious of the language you think and speak. When you use words that reinforce your abilities, you implant the suggestion in your subconscious that you are a very capable person with the ability to make choices.

When you say "I'll try to do _____" (instead of saying "I am doing ____" or "I will do _____"), you're communicating, "I may or may not follow through. I feel compelled to do this but I really don't want to." Most importantly, you're telling your subconscious to *keep trying* instead of achieving.

Scientists have proven that using the word *try* makes your body weaker than using words like *can* and *will*.[4] Notice how different you feel when you say out loud:

"I will _____ (state an activity such as "complete the report I've been assigned)" instead of "I'll try to _____ (complete the report I've been assigned)."

Your subconscious mind functions in a very literal manner. It follows your directions in detail. Therefore, in spite of your conscious intentions, when you tell yourself you'll try to do something, your faithful unconscious sets up a situation in which you keep trying . . . and trying . . . and trying.

Whether you think you can
or you think you can't, you're right.
Henry Ford

Another great example of the power of language concerns words that indicate personal choice. When you pepper your speech with *should's, could's, ought to's*, and *have to's,* your subconscious perceives that you aren't *choosing to* complete an action. Then you feel disempowered, stressed, and guilty.

You don't have to lie to yourself to clean up your act. If “I can’t” is accurate right now, insert a sense of future because this will empower you. Instead of saying “I can’t do this assignment,” you can say, “I haven’t yet done the assignment.” The future-oriented phrase, “I haven’t yet . .” introduces hope while retaining honesty.

Use language that supports your highest intentions instead of inviting your critic to participate in the dialogue.

The next exercise will help you identify and avoid "absolute phrases” that your critic uses to disempower you.

EXERCISE FIFTEEN

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE

1. Notice and record common negative phrases your critic throws your way, like "You're always late" or "You never think quickly enough on your feet."

2. Identify the *absolute words* in the phrases you wrote in #1 above, like *always* and *never*.

3. Make a decision to change disempowering *absolute phrases* when you talk to yourself. Practice inserting “exceptions language” by using words such as *sometimes* and *occasionally*.

4. Record how you feel different when you change the examples above to "I am only late sometimes," and "I sometimes think quickly on my feet."

5. Continue to explore this technique during the next few days. You'll discover the advantages of abandoning *absolutes*. Your self-talk will become much more positive.

RECOGNIZE THE LINK

Since the critic is an integral part of you, there is a direct relationship between the degree to which you judge other individuals and the degree to which you judge yourself. In fact, one of the best ways to disempower your negative voice is to stop rating other people harshly.

This is not as difficult than it may sound. Since what you resist persists, simply observe your negative evaluations of other people as well as your self-judgments.

Don't try to change your patterns and don't beat yourself up for being critical. Just recognize your behavior. Situations change spontaneously once we become aware of them.

Use the next exercise to gain an elevated level of self-awareness. Once you discover your mirrors, you'll spontaneously shift your patterns over time. This will encourage your inner critic to take a long nap.

EXERCISE SIXTEEN

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

Criticism of other people reflects our own lack of self-acceptance, so use the instances in which you judge others as an opportunity to gain more self-awareness. When I notice my judgment of someone else, it triggers a response like the following.

> "Oh, I'm still judging other people for being _____. Since we're all mirrors for each other, this must be a reminder that I'm sometimes still _____. I appreciate this reflection. Now I don't have to waste energy denying that I'm sometimes still _____."

Fill in the blanks above with the names of things you judge about other people. For example, we often judge and label others as:

- insecure
- rigid thinkers
- frightened
- angry
- unmotivated
- insensitive
- arrogant
- projecting personal issues on others
- easily offended
- etc.

[5] This exercise was excerpted with permission from Helge, Doris. *Transforming Pain Into Power – Making the Most of Your Emotions, Second Edition.* Shimoda Publishing: Bellingham, Washington.

Remarkable positive changes occur when we stay open to the wisdom available in all of our experiences, even when a situation is unpleasant. The insights we gain eventually create bliss.

Although we have little or no ability to change other people's behavior, we can be grateful to them for helping us perceive ourselves more accurately. We can remind ourselves not to criticize others.

REFRAME

Assume that interacting with your critic is similar to interacting with an individual who is constantly critical. One secret of thriving when you're around "difficult people" is to elevate your own energy by having a clear intention to learn from the experience. You turn adversity into opportunity when you focus on your own behavior instead of trying to change another person (an impossible task).

This nonjudgmental attitude changes the energy involved in the situation. Those who play the difficult person role begin to relax and feel secure. This is important because people are often difficult simply because they don’t feel at ease. It only makes sense that this technique will also work with your internal critic. It's worth repeating that we created this part of our personality because we wanted to avoid being criticized by other people. (We didn't feel safe and comfortable.)

EXERCISE SEVENTEEN

DISCOVER THE TRUTH

1. Imagine you have just finished a delicious picnic lunch by a crystal clear lake in a beautiful setting. The surface of the water fascinates you. You have never seen more accurate reflections in a body of water. The lake is so still that it is virtually impossible to tell the difference between the real trees and wildflowers that border the lake and the perfectly detailed, reflective picture.
2. Close your eyes. Imagine looking at your own image mirrored in the surface of the water. For the first time in your life, your self-image is totally accurate. You perceive your current and potential abilities as well as your physical characteristics.
3. Inhale slowly and deeply. Declare out loud, "The critic isn't present so I finally see my true self!" (Making a positive statement out loud begins to transform a negative thought pattern in your brain to a positive one.)
4. When you exhale, say to yourself, "I also perceive situations in my life as they really are."
5. Continue this activity for several minutes and then sit silently. Concentrate on breathing deeply.
6. Repeat the above exercise during the next few days. Notice differences in how you perceive yourself, your life and your choices.

The critic's carping ceases when we focus on what we can learn from every challenge. We feel safer. We're more aware of our capabilities.

DO NOT LET PRIDE INVITE THE CRITIC TO YOUR PARTY

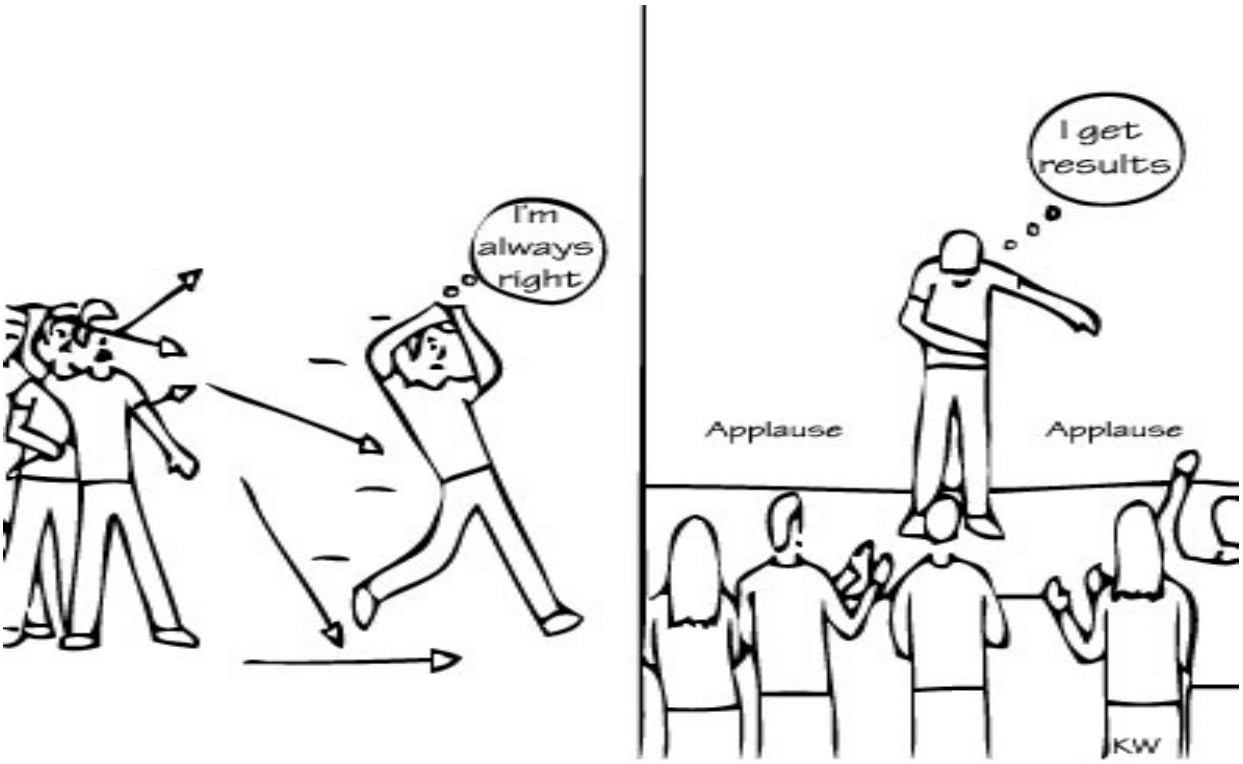
Your critic thrives on self-doubt and insecurities. Many people don't understand that a need to convince others they are a cut above average is based on a nagging fear they are substandard. Acting better than other people backfires. This "superiority" state of mind attracts your critic. It prevents the level of joy and success you want.

A state of humility produces personal freedom. It is so rewarding to comprehend that we are all on an equal footing. When we know we're all both students and teachers for each other, we're filled with curiosity about what life will present next.

Excessive pride is also a red flag. It indicates feelings of inferiority that are ineffectively masked by a façade of superiority. Like a gang member who has newly won a battle, we must constantly fight to stay on top. All the while, we are painfully aware that we'll inevitably fall at some time from a very fragile pedestal. We deplete our energy by engaging in elaborate postures designed to maintain our image and deny our fear.

When you strive to convince yourself and others that you already know everything you need to know, your mind is closed. You sacrifice the joy that curiosity produces. A hunger to discover what we don't know is the only

assurance that we'll learn new things quickly and effortlessly so we can take our next steps in life.



Pride produces your critic's analysis paralysis. It freezes forward motion. When you're afraid to risk failure, you constantly analyze everything you could do instead of enthusiastically participating in the improvisational theatre of life.

To combat this problem, turn inward, relax, and reach a state of inner harmony that will rebalance you. (Use the Emergency Mind-Calming Technique described earlier.) As soon as you calm your mind, the critic's incessant chatter

will subside. Answers you crave will spontaneously emerge from the most highly developed part of yourself.

MAP THE NEW YOU

When you create a mind map, you invite new possibilities. You're mind is wide-open to solution-focused thinking because the process of mind mapping is multisensory and also void of judgment. There is not a *right* or *wrong* way to proceed. Every thought and idea is worthy, so it's very difficult for your internal censor to belittle your efforts. Your critic falls asleep so you glean valuable information regarding a path that will lead toward more joy and success.

EXERCISE EIGHTEEN

CHART YOUR MAP

TO THE NEW YOU

Do a mind map now by completing the following sentence stem:

"The best way for me to move forward when my critic is active is to . . . "

Mind mapping is a wonderful way to re-pattern the habits of your critic. Eventually, your critical voice—originally your creation and now an unconscious habit—will no longer be able to affect your behavior.

USE YOUR INTUITION

There are times when "no thinking" is more effective than thinking. A pleasurable and highly effective way to dissipate negative self-talk is to tap into your intuition. When you're quiet, still, and tuned into your sixth sense, it's virtually impossible to be upset. You effortlessly receive clear guidance from the free resource of universal intelligence.

To achieve this state, instead of battling when the critic babbles, simply say, "That's one thought." After each negative thought, comment, "Okay, now I'm ready for the next idea." Simply focus on your breathing and critical thoughts will evaporate. You'll achieve a very peaceful state because you will reconnect with your true self.

STAY ON THE MOVE

A good way to invite the critic to criticize is to spend your day on your posterior staring at a computer screen. The ill effects on your body—from back pain to eye problems to repetitive strain injuries (RSIs)—will amplify the noises of the critic, so add more movement into your day.

When possible, get up and move around at least once an hour when you are working at your computer. Also protect your eyesight and avoid tension by blinking often. Occasionally shift your gaze to distant points and back to your computer monitor. Use part of your lunch hour to take a walk.

Geniuses have long recognized the importance of movement to oxygenate the body and feed the brain. Legend has it that Thomas Edison worked from two desks at a time. He wanted to make sure his body was moving frequently because he knew that stimulated his brain.

Because physical movement keeps your mind alert, you'll notice when the critic tries to worm its way into your consciousness. When your mind and body are active, you notice when you stall out with doubt. Then you can rev up again without hesitation.

ALIGN YOURSELF

The more you physically align your body, the more balanced you are emotionally and mentally. Opportunities for the critic to catch you off guard dramatically diminish. Studies have indicated that Pilates, yoga, tai chi, and qi gong create greater self-awareness, which helps keep your critic at bay. Each of

these practices enhances your posture, which is also related to self-confidence and well-being.[6]

EXERCISE NINETEEN

USE YOUR BODY TO STOP SELF-DEFEATING THOUGHTS

In this exercise, you deter the critic by decreasing body tensions and improving your alignment. Create lasting effects by gradually building your awareness. The superior effects of a slow and deliberate approach are similar to the way steady weight loss outlasts a quick-fix diet.

If you want to obtain the greatest value, be gentle. Be particularly cautious doig any of the stretches or movements described below if you have back problems. In fact, be careful when doing all stretches not to hurt your back or traumatize any injured or tense areas.

1. Begin this exercise with a few minutes of deep, conscious breathing (as relaxing as possible) while sitting or standing. Although standing is preferable, you can do this exercise while sitting at your desk.
2. Hold your attention on your belly.
3. Invite your body to move in ways that relieve tension. Stretch accordingly.
4. Inhale and raise your arms toward the sky as you gaze upward. Then relax and exhale as you lower your arms to your sides.
5. Raise your arms at 90 degree angles to your sides. Rotate them in slow, six-inch circles (forward or backward).
6. Increase the width of the circle rotations while you focus on deep belly breaths.
7. Inhale and interlace your fingers behind your neck.
8. With your fingers interlaced, extend your arms as high as comfortable. Stretch your upper torso while leaning to your left side. Relax and then repeat the motion, reaching to your right side.
9. Disconnect your fingers, lower your arms while exhaling deeply, and relax.
10. Bend at the waist and extend your arms toward the ground while you inhale.
11. Hold your breath for a moment. Exhale slowly and deeply while imagining each of your vertebrae relaxing, one at a time. If you are in a sitting position, relax your neck by letting it hang limply between your legs.

Continue to relax by repeating the exercise as often as you like, breathing deeply. Allow your body to direct you to stretch this way and that as you focus on deep belly breaths and emit deep sighs. You are eliminating tensions and reducing extraneous motions that can take you off center. Notice your awareness growing as you simultaneously align your body.

Because you're calmer and more aware, it will be difficult for the critic to enter your consciousness.

When you're relaxed and you feel balanced physically, emotionally, and mentally, the critic cannot gain a foothold. You're free.

BREATHE IT OUT

Deep abdominal breathing, focusing on each inhale and exhale also shifts your focus away from the critic's negative messages. My clients love the next exercise. As one said recently, "This very simple exercise is amazing because it's quick, easy and the effects are surprisingly positive. First, it's so relaxing! After just a few minutes of doing it, I feel so confident and empowered that the critic has no way to get my attention."

EXERCISE TWENTY

BREATHE IN YOUR NEW NOW

1. Observe your breathing while you inhale and exhale from deep within your abdomen. Your objective is to deeply relax.
2. Visualize a ball of energy in the middle of your body one inch below and one inch behind the navel.
3. As you gently and slowly inhale through your nose, visualize the air traveling all the way from your nose to the ball of energy in your belly. Imagine you are filling a collapsed beach ball with air.
4. When you exhale, visualize the air flowing away from the ball of energy as if to collapse the ball. At the end of each exhalation, slightly lift your abdomen up and toward your spine.
5. Repeat the process at least until you notice how much more relaxed you feel with each complete breath.

Here's just one reason you'll find it especially effective to combine a breathing exercise with visualization. Using multiple senses in this way greatly reduces anxiety because you're focusing your attention on the present moment.

Your critic's voice is almost always related to the past or future. If you want to calm your inner critic, focus on the present moment. This is the source on your power. You have no power to influence the past. You have total control over what you think and feel in this moment.

EXPLORE CREATIVE TECHNIQUES

You've been reading about how to work with your mind and body simultaneously. Experiment with other ways to silence your critic's negative chatter while you're retraining it to become your loyal employee. Be creative. For example, if you're healthy, you might consider cleansing your body and mind simultaneously. You can do this while experiencing the heat of a sauna. (The discomfort caused by the heat shifts your focus from mental chatter to your physical body. You become more open to insights regarding how to increase your happiness at work.) As you continue to change and grow, your critic-cleansing strategies will become easier, faster, and more enjoyable.

We talk to ourselves more than we talk to anyone else, yet much of our self-talk has been unconscious and negative. Most of us would never talk to others in as negative a manner as we have unconsciously allowed our critics to address us. Begin right now to make choices that will validate and empower you.

Conscious choices are an eternal source of your joy and personal freedom. Begin now to give yourself the gift of conscious choice.

CHAPTER 4

YOU HAVE THE TOOLS TO TAME A TYRANT

A life of reaction is a life of slavery, intellectually and spiritually.
One must fight for a life of action, not reaction.
Rita Mae Brown

The two approaches most often recommended for combating the critic are cognitive restructuring and positive affirmations. Both techniques are based on the assumption that your intellect can resolve emotional insecurities. You've been told to correct your "stinking thinking" and "fake it 'til you make it." You've been advised to shred the heart of your poor, befuddled critic.

Experiences with hundreds of clients during the past years have made it abundantly clear that telling the critic to shut up and go away could possibly provide short-term relief. However, this would be the best case scenario. Until you fill whatever temporary void you create with self-acceptance and positive, multisensory sensations you can recall at will, the critic will return for another round of combat.

There are important reasons we have discussed cognitive techniques but covered a much wider array of tools.

- You are a holistic person with emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual needs and qualities. When you are relaxed and you feel balanced physically, emotionally, and mentally, your critic cannot access your consciousness.
- Multisensory approaches and techniques that use your imagination, intuition, and physical body are your most powerful and long-lasting solutions.

Unless you enjoy civil war, don't sap your precious energy struggling with one of your own voices. Use the techniques described to befriend your inner censor. It is a powerful force that has already demonstrated its ability to work long and hard on your behalf. Discover how to make it your faithful internal assistant.

Identify your attachments to the negative voice. Experiment with a variety of the approaches detailed, identify what works, and repeat successful approaches. Use solution-focused approaches. They are far more powerful than strategies that emphasize problems. Focus on what you want instead of on what you want to avoid.

Give yourself the gift of inner peace by accepting the human experience of having flaws and weaknesses. Then work with your critic to enhance your strengths.

Struggling to improve yourself is drudgery. It invites the critic to poke and prod mercilessly. Self-acceptance is freedom. When you lighten up on yourself and simply engage in self-discovery, life becomes an exciting journey. Positive changes are endless and effortless. You no longer feel compelled to prove your value to other people. You lose your ability to join hands with your critic in a self-flagellation ritual. Self-consciousness transforms into self-confidence. Mountains become molehills.

When you hear your critic asking questions like, "What will I do if I fail?" just answer, "I'll gain feedback!" Breathe deeply and ask yourself empowering questions like "How can I use my knowledge, strengths, connections, and skills?" Then, use the multisensory, mind-body techniques that reinforce the parts of you that perform instead of endlessly critique.

Pesky internal programs don't have to prohibit you from discovering profound pleasure and success. Patience, practice, and perseverance pay off, especially when combined with self-acceptance and humor. One day, the inner critic will become your inner coach. You'll appreciate its superior abilities for critical thinking. You'll also realize that self-doubt is a natural part of every new phase of your personal empowerment.

Most of my clients have learned to celebrate when self-doubts emerge. They know insecurities rear their heads when people inch closer and closer to goal achievement. When we stand toe-to-toe with our self-doubts, we resolve them one by one, on a permanent basis.

Just remember that your guardian fights change. It clings tenaciously to familiar unpleasant situations. It's the part of your personality that is still trying to protect you from your own magnificence! Because the guardian is fear-based, it

still doesn't want you to comprehend just how capable—how powerful—you truly are.

Our worst fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are
powerful beyond measure.
Marianne Williamson
quoted with permission
by Nelson Mandela in his
Inaugural Speech

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Doris Helge, Ph.D.

You may have seen "The Joy Coach" interviewed on "The Today Show," CNN, and NPR. Doris Helge, Ph.D., author of other best-selling books like "Joy on the Job" and "Transforming Pain Into Power," has helped thousands of people just like you claim more happiness and success. Some of her books have been published in many foreign languages.

Dr. Doris is a Licensed Certified Master Coach, Mentor Coach and Coach Trainer. (Discover more at www.CoachingByDoris.com.) She is also founder of the IAC-licensed coach training school, Confident Coach Connection, described at www.ConfidentCoachConnection.com. Doris previously served on faculty at three universities and directed national organizations. She has taught classes for five international coach training schools.

Doris' everlasting supply of joy springs from her own personal growth, so she's a natural at assisting her clients as they transform emotional pain into peace and personal power. They discover happiness at work and relish the rich rewarding relationships they've been craving. They learn how to use chaos, uncertainty and "mistakes" to their advantage.

As Doris says, "Everyone has a very special gift to bring to the party on Earth. I never forget that it's an honor and a privilege to help people." Doris' clients call her "The Joy Coach" because she has a unique intuitive ability to perceive the core of what's been blocking your success and happiness. With Doris' help and respect for perfect timing, your joy blocks are released with gentleness and love.

Although Doris' heart and passion revolve around coaching people like you, she has also received excellent evaluations regarding training at companies as large as Microsoft. She has keynoted associations as large as 3,700. The material Doris presents in this ebook and in international teleclasses is drawn from decades of work with clients like you and research in 21 diverse organizations. Download your free ebooks at http://FreeJoyOnTheJobEbooks.com and sign up for free teleclasses at http://TeleclassesWithDoris.com.

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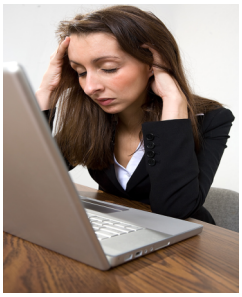

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For over 25 years, Doris Helge, Ph.D. has been helping people just like you achieve their dreams. A Licensed, Certified Master Coach and Mentor Coach, Doris is also author of books now published in many foreign languages, including "Joy on the Job" and "Transforming Pain Into Power."

"I can't begin to express my gratitude for helping me discover the tools that I now use to attain success. I am a better person for having you as my coach. Thank you 100 times over!"
Kevin N. Jackson, Jones Lang LaSalle Brokerage, Inc., Florida

"I started my journey with Doris feeling very uncertain that I really could create a successful business. She helped me see my strengths and expand on them. My work is greatly enriched because of coaching by Doris."
Kalia Kelmenson, Founder, Maui Mind and Body, Maui, Hawaii

"Doris, you have a fantastic knack for steering me down the road where I wouldn't be able to go alone. Your coaching is far beyond what I expected! The seed you help me discover causes the ripple in my mind. Then it grows and flows out to become something more. I'm truly grateful!"

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"Thanks to Doris, I finally attracted the perfect relationship for me. How sweet it is!"

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"Working with Doris is like taking a magic carpet ride. Sometimes when I peek over the edge, it's breathtaking, but I never, ever feel as though I'm going to fall. With her sincere compassion and incredible intuition and insight, Doris provides a safe haven from which to explore potential and possibility. What a gift she is to you and me!"

Clare Seffrin Bond, "The Road to Clarity"

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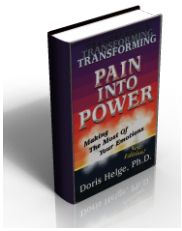

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"Joy on the Job" is a no-nonsense self-help guide to improving the quality of your life at work. Doris knows that you deserve to delight in work as much as in a cherished vacation, "Joy on the Job" discusses the value of curiosity, how to harness the power of focus and communicate unmet needs, learning when and how it's necessary to abandon "happy face paint" for negative emotions, tips and tricks for overcoming procrastination, multisensory mind-body techniques to improve happiness in your journey through life, and much more. Reference and research notes as well as an extensive index round out this enthusiastically recommended guide to greater personal happiness and job satisfaction."
Margaret Lane, Reviewer, *The Midwest Book Review*

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- ✦ Turn "difficult people" into a support system as strong as a steel brace. (See pages 53-54, 89-90, 179-182, 357-358 and Chapter 21.)
- ✦ Learn the easiest and most effective ways to get your needs met while you're working. (Read Chapter 11.)
- ✦ Develop a signature style that guarantees that your unique talents and your work style will be valued and validated (pages 277-280).
- ✦ Enjoy a pleasurable state of focus and flow all day long. (See Chapters 9 and 19 plus pages 188-199.)
- ✦ Cash in on your strengths instead of warring with your weaknesses. (You'll discover how when you read Chapter 18.)
- ✦ Develop a positive feedback loop that guarantees you are surrounded with support and constructive guidance. (Read pages 133-140 and 220-221.)
- ✦ Develop a powerful, positive resource state that shields you from workplace negativity. (See Chapter 22 and pages 150-151.)
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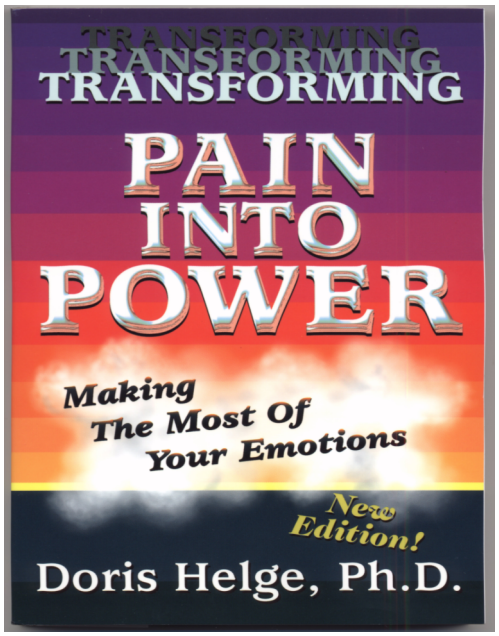

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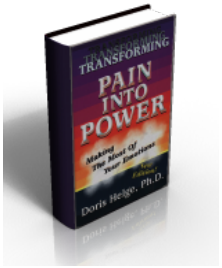

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