

Conversation with Your Inner Critic

This practice works best as an actual role play. Sure, it may feel awkward at first to be talking to yourself. But find a quiet space and give it a try. If your circumstances don't allow for the privacy you need to do this, you can practice it as an exercise of imagination, but engaging your body will provide the most information by allowing its wisdom to teach you things that your mind alone cannot, so try actually engaging your body if you can.

First, ignite your imagination. Allow the character of your Inner Critic to take on flesh. What does s/he look like? How does s/he dress? What is their age? Their posture? What does his/her voice sound like? What kinds of places does s/he like to frequent? Create a vivid picture of your Inner Critic.

Next, identify his/her common critiques. Does s/he belittle you? Scorn you? Doubt you? Write these things down and, as you do, see if your imagination's picture of your Inner Critic becomes more detailed.

Now, set up two chairs near each other. Sitting in one chair, take on the persona of your Inner Critic. Feel this critic's energy. Allow your body to assume its shape. Then speak the critic's judgment.

Next, move to the other chair. Here, you will be your wisest, most curious, and compassionate self. Respond to the Inner Critic. Turn to wonder. Come closer with gentle curiosity.

Move back to the first chair to allow the Inner Critic to respond to your curious wondering.

Continue this back and forth exploration until it feels complete. Then note any new awareness or surprises.