

HOW TO

REFRAME

SELF- CRITICAL THOUGHTS AND BOOST YOUR SELF ESTEEM

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HOW TO REFRAME SELF-CRITICAL THOUGHTS

AND BOOST YOUR
SELF-ESTEEM

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Introduction

Self-critical thoughts can be overwhelming. They can consume your day and make it difficult to focus on anything else.

These types of negative thoughts can harm you in multiple ways.

Self-criticism can be an ongoing dialogue inside your head. Most of the thoughts focus on flaws, whether actual or perceived. Sometimes the thoughts start after a critical comment from another person.

In rare cases, self-criticism can be useful. It may increase humbleness and provide a way to evaluate mistakes.

However, most of the time, self-criticism creates unnecessary pain and suffering.

Self-critical thoughts can increase the risk of depression, anxiety, stress, and other mental health issues. They also weaken your self-esteem and confidence.

Luckily, you can learn to reframe these negative thoughts in your head and overcome them.

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“It's easy to become very self-critical when you're an actor. Then you get critiqued by the critics. Whether you agree with them or not, people are passing judgment on you.”

- Keanu Reeves
.....

Understanding Self-Criticism

Most self-criticism can be separated into two categories: comparative and internalized criticism. Comparative criticism is when you compare yourself to others. On the other hand, internalized criticism is when you feel like you can't live up to your own standards.

Both comparative and internalized self-criticism can be dangerous.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE TWO TYPES OF CRITICISM:

1. **Comparative criticism.** Comparative criticism makes you constantly

compare and contrast your life with friends, family members, coworkers, and others. It can even affect your relationships.

- You might view others as superior or better than you with this type of criticism.
- You're also likely to think that others are judging you and assume you don't measure up.

2. **Internalized criticism.** Internalized criticism makes you feel that you'll never be perfect or achieve the things you desire. It can even make you think that success isn't enough.

- The obsession with being perfect can be overwhelming with this type of self-criticism.

Now that you've learned more about the different types of self-critical thoughts, you can begin to effectively address the issues.

“Much protective self-criticism stems from growing up around people who wouldn't or couldn't love you, and it's likely they still can't or won't. In general, however, the more you let go of the tedious delusion of your own unattractiveness, the easier it will be for others to connect with you...”

- Martha Beck

"I'm Not Enough"

One of the most common self-critical thoughts is that you're not enough. It can stem from both comparative and internalized criticism.

How can you change the "I'm not enough" thoughts?

UNDERSTAND WHERE THESE
NEGATIVE THOUGHTS COME FROM
AND HOW TO REFRAME THEM:

- 1. Why do you feel like you're not enough?** The first step is to get to the root of this thought.
 - Examine your feelings and consider your past.

- Why do you feel you're never enough, and where do these feelings come from?
 - **In many cases, the roots of this self-critical thought can be found in the past.** Dysfunctional families, difficult childhoods, traumas, and illnesses can make you feel less worthy.
2. **Remember it's an internal message.** Even if others are praising you and complimenting your life, you may still feel like you're not enough. This happens because it's an internal thought that is hard to shed.
3. **Start to heal the past.** Therapists share that not feeling like you're enough may require healing the past.

- If you're having difficulty letting go of this self-criticism, counseling or therapy may help you get past these thoughts.
 - Try journaling, meditation, or other contemplative activities to release the things that are holding you back.
4. **Say, "I am good enough."** Each time this negative thought comes up, rephrase it to a thought that uplifts you and makes you feel like you are good enough, instead.
- **Remember that you're unique,** with your own special combination of talents and characteristics, and worthy of love and happiness.

- Remind yourself that you're enough. You're smart enough, strong enough, and good enough to do anything. You're capable of great things and can accomplish what you desire.

Once you realize that your past may be controlling your present, it becomes easier to reframe this self-critical thought.

.....
“Fear has governed my life, if I think about it. I don't even know why I'm saying this in an interview situation, but I always feel like I'm not good enough for some reason. I wish that wasn't the case, but left to my own devices, that voice starts speaking up.”

- Trent Reznor

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"I'll Never Improve"

When you're stuck and haven't reached goals, it's common to have the self-critical thought that you'll never improve.

You may think you'll never get better and never get past a certain point.

However, the "I'll never improve" thought can hold you back. It can make you give up on your dreams and make you walk away from potential opportunities.

It's important to reframe this self-critical thought before it makes life more difficult.

TRY THESE IDEAS:

1. **Understand the learning process.**

You might think you'll never get better at something while you're still learning it.

- For example, when you're learning a new skill, language, or subject in school, it can be tempting to give up before finishing. The process can be hard and time-consuming.
- However, it's important not to stop before giving it all of your effort. **Continuing your learning process will give you proof that you do, indeed, learn and get better.**

2. **Remember you're not alone.** It can be tempting to have moments of self-pity mixed with self-criticism and believe you're the only person who struggles with something.
 - Keep in mind that some things, such as learning a new language or a math class, can be hard for many people.
 - Reach out to friends and family members for help, and you'll see you're not the first person to struggle. **It's a normal human feeling that everyone experiences at some point.**
3. **Give it time.** It's important to give yourself enough time to strengthen your skills in the area or topic you're

working on, and not judge the process.

- Pay attention to the little details and take notice of your progress.

4. **Say, “I’m learning and getting better.”** Reframe the self-critical talk by reminding yourself that you’re always learning.

- Another way to fight the self-criticism is to say, **“I’m good enough now.”**
- You can also say, **“I’m getting better all the time.”**
- Saying these new phrases will help you feel more optimistic about what you’re struggling to

learn and also boost your self-esteem.

You can also get rid of this self-critical thought by putting less pressure on yourself. You're more likely to be critical of yourself when you expect too much, even if that expectation is unrealistic. Give yourself a break! Be patient with yourself and feel good about learning something new!

“Those who improve with age embrace the power of personal growth and personal achievement and begin to replace youth with wisdom, innocence with understanding, and lack of purpose with self-actualization.”

- Bo Bennett

"Everyone Is Better Than Me"

Thinking that everyone is better than you is a common struggle, shared by many others. Most people experience it at one point or another.

However, if you think about it, you'll realize that it would be impossible for you to be the best at everything! There will always be others who seem to be more talented, successful, or educated in their own fields.

The key is to remember that you, too, have unique talents and special skills that matter!

USE THESE STRATEGIES TO HANDLE THIS SELF-CRITICISM:

1. **Understand the root of the thought.**

Often, this self-critical thought comes from past experiences or childhood.

- **You may have grown up hearing your parents or someone else compare you to others.** They may have said that you're not as smart or well-behaved as another child.
- You believed it then and you still believe it. Unfortunately, these negative thoughts can carry over from childhood to adulthood.

2. **Learn to love yourself.** Instead of beating yourself up over every mistake, learn to accept your faults.

- Practice forgiveness of yourself and others.
- Learn to let go of mistakes once you've learned the lesson. **It's important not to hang on to negative ideas or experiences.**
- Be conscious of how you view your body, mind, and accomplishments.

3. Reframe the self-critical thought.

Instead of saying everyone is better than you, say things like, "I'm good," "I'm talented," and "I'm awesome."

- Remind yourself of the unique qualities you possess.

- Point out things like your kindness, perseverance, and other positive parts of your personality.

Avoid letting this self-critical thought stop you from trying new things. It's crucial to remember you have talent!

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena . . . who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; because there is not effort without error...”

- Theodore Roosevelt

Reframe Other Self-Critical Thoughts

You may have many different types of self-critical thoughts affecting your confidence. Remember, you are your own unique combination of characteristics, shaped by past and present experiences.

This unique identity and history affects the type of self-critical thoughts that are in your head.

CONSIDER THESE COMMON
SELF-CRITICISMS AND HOW TO
CHANGE THEM:

1. **Reframe “I shouldn’t have done this.”** This thought appears after a mistake or other issue.
 - Change it by saying, **“I learned from this.”**
 - Focus on the positive aspects of the mistake. Find the silver lining that is hiding inside.

2. **Reframe “I can’t do anything right.”** This thought can also appear after mistakes. It can also show up after failures or not being able to reach goals.
 - Change it by saying, **“I do many things well.”**
 - Accept the mistake or failure and move forward. Remind yourself of

all the things you do well and are proud of accomplishing.

3. **Reframe “I’m never going to be happy.”** During difficult moments, it can be a struggle to see beyond the sorrow.

- Change it by saying, **“I can be happy, even in difficult circumstances.”**
- Remember that you’ve been happy in the past and can return to this feeling again.

4. **Reframe “I’m always a mess.”** Again, this self-critical thought frequently shows up after a failure or other shortcoming.

- Change it by saying, **“I am in control.”**
- You can also say, **“I am put together.”** The key is to fight the negativity with positive thoughts.
- Avoid focusing on failures or comparing yourself to others. You may not see the struggles they face and won't know how many messes are really in their lives.
- Instead, think about the things you do well and control.

5. **Reframe “I’m always alone.”**

Relationship struggles and other issues can make you feel isolated and lonely.

- Change it by saying, **“I am surrounded by people who love me.”**
- Keep in mind that, even if you’re single, there are always others around you, and many of those people love you.
- From coworkers to friends, you simply have to reach out for help.

Self-critical thoughts can come in many forms, but each one can be changed.

“I am continuously struck by how frequently the various thought processes of the inner critic trigger overwhelming emotional flashbacks. This is because the PTSD-derived inner critic weds shame and self-hate about imperfection to fear of abandonment, and mercilessly drive the psyche with the entwined serpents...”

- Pete Walker

More Tips for Dealing With Self-Criticism

It's important to remember that the thoughts in your head are just stories. They may not be an accurate reflection of you or your life.

Your internal dialogue can be very deceptive.

It can make you feel alone, discouraged, and unhappy. In addition, it can affect how you view the world and relate to others.

INSTEAD OF LETTING THE
SELF-CRITICAL THOUGHTS TAKE
OVER, TRY THESE TIPS:

1. **Remember the stories might not be the real truth.** The stories in your mind are all shaped by how you perceived certain situations.
 - Human perception is tricky.
 - **The world is colored by your past, present, and current emotions.** The way you think about things is affected by multiple factors.
2. **Be mindful of your thoughts and emotions.** Ask yourself, “What is going on in my head right now? Is it positive or negative? Why?”

- Pay attention to your thoughts and how they affect you. Listen to the mind, but avoid letting self-critical thoughts take over.

3. Remember to reframe the self-critical thoughts. This powerful technique turns things around in your head and boosts your self-esteem.

- Reframing can be the key to letting go of the negativity!

Self-critical thoughts can be changed. **You have the power and ability to do this.** It may take practice, but you can accomplish it.

“Turn down the volume of your negative inner voice and create a nurturing inner voice to take it’s place. When you make a mistake, forgive yourself, learn from it, and move on instead of obsessing about it. Equally important, don’t allow anyone else to dwell on your mistakes or shortcomings or to expect perfection from you.”

- Beverly Engel

Conclusion

Self-critical thoughts can appear in different forms and wearing different capes. They can fill your mind with negativity and judgment.

Remember that you're the one who is in control of your thoughts. You can alter them.

Learn to reframe your negative self-talk, so it stops influencing your decisions, emotions, and how you feel about yourself.

Once you've practiced reframing and changing the negative statements in your head, it will get easier to do, and your self-esteem will grow.