

## **Overview Handout from Taming Your Inner Critic Workshop**

### **Basic Things to Remember about Your Inner Critic**

1. Inner Critic's job is to protect you from harm/ensure you are ok
2. It does this by leveling every criticism it imagines anyone else could level at you (including any internal Self) before you can make that mistake. It is ALWAYS acting from fear.
3. The Inner Critic may sound like a big authority figure, but the Inner Critic is, emotionally, actually whatever age it was when it first showed up. (For most of us this was at or before age six.)
4. The Inner Critic will never go away, it is part of you. It is normal, and even useful if you can avoid getting hooked by its fears and judgments.
5. The Inner Critic is a chameleon – it sounds like many different things (can sound scared, angry, judgmental, very rational, like a procrastinator, etc.) and will partner with any other part of you that is feeling afraid.
6. The Inner Critic is smart and makes a great ally if you stop being hooked by the fears and judgments it is steeped in and look for the observations and fears underneath.
7. The key is to respond with curiosity and compassion (to all your Selves/all the different parts of you) – be the adult, listen well, assure the Inner Critic and all other Selves they've been heard and you are taking care of them/yourself, then do what you want to do.

### **Six Basic Steps to Changing Your Relationship to Your Inner Critic:**

- First: Notice what is happening/what triggers the Inner Critic. What does it say? Stay in curiosity, keep the perspective that the Inner Critic is just a part of you.
- Second: See the Inner Critic as the scared child; recognize the fears, acknowledge them with compassion – be the knowledgeable, dependable adult to your Inner Critic child.
- Third: Discern what truths are present in the Inner Critic's statements – there is useful information here – but without getting hooked into the Inner Critic's fear-filled interpretations.

- Fourth: Find other perspectives – explore them, find their truths too. What is another way of looking at this?
- Fifth: Decide how you want to respond. You may want to combine information and approaches from multiple perspectives, or you may decide to stick with one, but in any case, you can be compassionate with the parts of you that are scared or not getting their way, rather than judging them.
- Sixth: Find/create/use touchstones and other tools that will help you stand in the perspectives that serve you best. It's easy to fall back into habitual perspectives, so anchor new ways of being in the world with images, objects, physical stances, questions, mantras – concrete things that will remind you to come back to the way you want to approach this. (For example, I carry a green stone in my pocket when I need to be reminded to come back to stillness regularly to decide what I want to do next, rather than just getting swept up in the enthusiasm of my doer and forgetting to do things like eat lunch, or do my stretches.)

## Tools

### 1. Noticing

Notice when your Inner Critic shows up, and when it does, pause and get curious.

- A. Notice in what situations the Inner Critic most often shows up.
- B. Notice what phrases your Inner Critic tends to use.
- C. Get to know the energy of your Inner Critic, and get in the habit of responding to that energy with curiosity and compassion rather than judgment.

### 2. Getting to Know Your Inner Critic Through Visuals

- A. Draw a picture of your Inner Critic as you generally perceive it. Give that authority figure a name.
- B. Draw a picture, or find a photo, of you as the child you were when your Inner Critic first appeared. Put it up where you'll see it often, and remind yourself that your Inner Critic is this age emotionally, and has the needs (and authority) of a child this age.

### 3. Getting to Know Your Inner Critic Through Written Dialogue

One exercise you can use to get clearer about who your Inner Critic is and what it wants is to dialogue with it in writing. You might try using your

dominant hand to write the questions and your non-dominant hand to write the Inner Critic's answers.

- A. Identify an area in your life where the inner critic is very vocal.
- B. Listen to your Inner Critic for a couple of minutes – just listen.
- C. Write down what your inner critic is telling you about this.
- D. Ask your Inner Critic the following questions, writing down the answers:
  - 1) What are you trying to accomplish?
  - 2) What do you want from me?
  - 3) What do you want for me?
  - 4) What are you afraid might happen if I don't listen to you?
  - 5) What would make it easier for you?
  - 6) What would make you feel safer?

## Resources

A great deal of powerful and useful work on the Inner Critic has been done in an approach called Voice Dialogue, created by Hal and Sidra Stone. They have written books on the technique, and on the Inner Critic specifically. You will find a listing of their publications at: <http://delos-inc.com/bookshop-index.htm>

J'aime Ona Pangaea is a local teacher of voice dialogue and has written my favorite article on the Inner Critic, which can be found on her website at: [www.voicedialoguework.com/article12.php](http://www.voicedialoguework.com/article12.php).

If one of your major challenges with your Inner Critic is around body image, you may want to explore the exercises in *200 Ways to Love the Body You Have* by Marcia Hutchinson.

I teach sessions of various lengths and formats on working with the Inner Critic and related topics. Information on upcoming workshops may be found on my website, [www.LifeWorkChanges.com](http://www.LifeWorkChanges.com). If you are interested in hosting a workshop as an organization or an individual, please contact me at 503-788-2333 or [Tasha@LifeWorkChanges.com](mailto:Tasha@LifeWorkChanges.com).

© Tasha Harmon, 2010. *Feel free to share this, but please leave my name and contact information attached, and do not publish it without my written permission. Thank you.*

Tasha Harmon is a facilitator of individual and organizational development living in Portland. Her specialty is working with people reinventing themselves in or after major life changes. You'll find additional articles and much more at [www.Tasha-Harmon.com](http://www.Tasha-Harmon.com).