Discovering and Taming Our Inner Critic  
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Our inner critic shows up around the age of 6. We don’t recognize it out right, yet it develops within us regardless. It does not develop as a way to break us down or prevent us from happiness and being content in life. In fact this inner voice develops to protect us and help promote our acceptance in society. Our inner critic initially develops to help prevent us from making a statement or following through on an action that might in fact harm us, both physically and mentally. They were to be our partner in helping to avoid the feelings of pain and/or shame. This typically develops through early life experiences whether witnessed or directly experienced. It recognizes dangers and starts to help provide clarity to those dangers and how those might negatively impact us.

Along the way the voice starts to gain power and provides even more direction related to the “dangers” it recognizes. Moving from less about our physical danger, and maybe more into the space of our actual societal acceptance. Then it can even take it a step further as time progresses and get even more directive in its statements. Potentially taking us to a very negative, lonely place as we allow it to build and build. Often attachment traumas or adverse childhood experiences (ACE’s) and other aspect from our lives have an influence on how the inner critic continues to develop, potentially taking its place where it moves from being less protective, and more to a place of being demeaning and providing a negative feeling of being unworthy and therefore unaccepted. In the end, putting us into a place of shame.

The inner critic starts to adjust our natural inclination of decisions or actions, so as to help promote acceptance of us from others. This will occur through criticizing and correcting our actions before others can share feedback with us. This is not all bad, for remember the origin of the critic was to protect ourselves. The issue that develops is that the inner critic can become strong and not understand boundaries or limits. They can also start to extend the thoughts and ideas into helping us to believe that our “failures” define who we are. This can then lead to that feeling of intense fear associated with any mistake. Moving from recognizing the danger and risk of a situation, to more of a fear of the absolute truth. The key piece in beginning to accept our inner critic is to recognize that the inner critic is neither good nor bad, it is in fact a piece of our whole. Beginning to hear that voice and becoming aware of it, so as to embrace it instead of going to a place of name, blame, judge. This is the path back to contentment and connection with life and in the end leading us back to living 1 life connected.

Therefore it can become a fight between us, and our inner critic, and therefore no longer be seen as a partnership. In that place we can start to allow the inner critic thoughts to become “who” we are. Allowing the thoughts and ideas to become our inner self and we then begin to believe that the inner critic only speaks the truth. There may be truth and pieces that are valid in the statements being shared by our inner critic, this does not mean that what is shared is actual 100% fact. Peace comes back into finding how to see our inner critic as what it is, that voice that is there to protect us, not control us. To partner with us in helping us reach success and strive for excellence, not perfection.

While this can seem easy to look at from the outside, going through the process to find that partnership is unique to each of us. It begins with taking the time to quiet our brain to allow the inner critic’s voice to be clear and evident. To listen to what they tell us in all aspects of our lives. In our careers, our relationships, related to our bodies, our home life, you name it the inner critic has an opinion on the topic. It is almost like our inner critic can take on a chameleon appearance into every aspect of our life. Presenting as fear, anger, judgment, yet be very rational and provide justification for taking steps towards poor actions that are no longer there to protect us.
Often there will be a theme across the areas in which our inner critic shares its voice. Trying to hear that voice and isolate it as our inner critic, starts us to help to recognize it as a part of us, but it is in fact not all of us. Because that voice, as noted above, will adjust as we move from one situation to the next. It never really “goes away”. We cannot just tell it to shut up. That action can induce a yelling match between our inner critic and our true self. With no one succeeding and often there is then no movement forward. We can try to over talk the critic with positive affirmation, but without recognizing and embracing what it says, that will often provide short lived results.

Remembering that we developed our inner critic for our protection is key in not vilifying our inner critic. We are not to disconnect from our inner critic, or place them in some mental produced jail cell, never to be heard from again. Our inner critic is a part of us and is important to our success. They keep us in line with our social awareness and connection with society. They help us to drive for success and to reach challenging goals by forcing us to commit and stay focused. To quiet them completely would be a disservice to our own self.

In working to tame our inner critic, the goal is to see them for who they are, almost literally. Take the time to define them and personify them. To develop them in a way in which they are seen as an individual, not separate from us, but in which we can see as a partner and in fact a part of us. We will want to define our critic in the visual sense. What color are they? What shape do they form if we were to stand in front of them? Do they have a face? If so, what do they look like? Do they take the image of an object? If so, what is that object? What does our inner critic feel like? Meaning if we could touch it, is it soft, hard, cold, warm? How would it move about the room? Is it liquid in nature or does it actually have limbs that move?

Next, in looking at our inner critic, whatever form we have created for it, what do we call our critic? Does it have a name or it is just referred to as the object it represents? As we name our critic we next work to describe how it sounds. Does it have a voice? If so what does that voice sound like? Don’t start to ask what it says, just how it speaks? How does it share its voice to us?

As we work through the personification for our inner critic, we now get to meet them in the first person. The next step is to allow our inner critic to share exactly what they say. Allow them to share their voice. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. We can write their voice out and share what critic view they have of us, allowing them to be honest and share whole heartily. We can ask them what they want from us and then share that voice. Capturing also what they think they are doing for us in sharing their voice. Asking them what they are afraid of and how are they working to protect us? Putting our inner critic in a safe place to allow them to open up to us and share their thoughts and voice. In the end we want to be able to hear what they need from us.

As we allow our inner critic to become a part of us, separate but yet carrying its own voice, the next step will be to allow our true self to share its voice. Bringing that part of us back that originally made the inner critic to protect us. Allowing that inner self to share its voice of its needs and its wants. Being sure to share what we want from our inner critic. Not that we are to tell them to shut up, but really how do we want them to protect us? How do we want them to drive us to reach our dreams and goals? What would we like to hear from them? What position are they to take in our lives? This can be difficult for many of us because for a long time we allowed the inner critic to own the place of our inner self.

After we have taken the time to personify our inner critic, allow our inner critic’s voice to be heard, followed by hearing our own true voice, now the real work begins. How do we both find a place to partner with each other? This is to be a win-win place and will require some negotiation. I understand this may feel very awkward as you may feel you are having a conversation with yourself. Well you literally are. Our inner critic is not going to go away, remember, they were designed to protect us. In addition we are not
going to go away, we are our true self, I mean how could we disappear? So how do they work together? What do we need in order to find that space in the middle that allows the partnership to power through? Create the place in our mind in which we go to in order to work through when our inner critic overpowering ways, or when we need to allow the voice to be filtered.

Allowing our inner critic to once again be our best friend is a great step in being 1 Life Connected. For we developed them, therefore we can once again partner with them. Come join the 1 Life Connected Movement and start your unique journey to having permission to live for you and show up as your unique self.

We are 1 Life Connected!

We control our actions
We create our environment
We embrace our emotions
We find self-forgiveness

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