



## Answering My Inner Critic

Seven short steps to take one harsh thought from 'that's just the truth' to a fairer answer you can actually believe.

### 01 Catch the thought

You can't answer a thought you haven't noticed. Start with the moment the voice piped up, and write its exact words down.

What happened? The situation, in one line:

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The exact words my inner critic said (write them as they came, not tidied up):


How strongly do I believe it right now?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Not at all

Completely

## 02 Name what it's doing

The critic almost always breaks a rule of fair thinking. Naming the move takes away a lot of its authority. Tick any that fit.

- All-or-nothing: one stumble means 'I always fail'.
- Labelling: turning what I did into what I am, 'I'm an idiot' instead of 'I made a mistake'.
- Mind-reading: deciding I know what others think, with no real evidence.
- Catastrophising: jumping to the worst possible outcome.
- Discounting the good: waving away anything positive as luck or 'they were just being nice'.
- Should-statements: a running list of how I ought to be, each one a stick to beat myself with.
- Overgeneralising: one event becomes 'always' or 'never'.

### 03 Check it against the evidence

Not what feels true, what you could actually show someone. Usually the 'against' column is longer than the voice would have you believe.

Evidence the thought is true

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Evidence it isn't (or is exaggerated)

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### 04 The friend test

Imagine someone you care about said this exact thing about themselves, after the exact same event. You'd see it more fairly and more kindly at once. Say that to yourself.

**What would I say to a friend who said this about themselves?**

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### 05 Answer back fairly, not falsely

The fix for 'I'm useless' is not 'I'm amazing', a statement you don't believe just highlights the lie. Write the fair, believable version a fair observer would give.

The harsh thought

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The fair, believable answer

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### 06 Unhook from it

When a thought is too sticky to argue with, put some distance between you and it, so you can see it as mental noise rather than fact.

Rewrite the thought starting with 'I'm having the thought that...':

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If it helps, a name for this voice (so it's a voice in the room, not the truth):

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## 07 How do you feel now?

Re-rate the original thought. It rarely drops to zero, and it doesn't need to. A little more distance is the win.

How strongly do I believe the original thought now?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all Completely

Anything I want to remember for next time the voice shows up:

  
  

### When you're done, a moment to reflect

- Whose voice does your inner critic sound like? Where might it have first learned to talk to you this way?
- What is the critic trying to protect you from, and is that fear still accurate today?
- If you spoke to yourself this week the way you'd speak to a good friend, what would actually change?

Free worksheet from [selfgrowth.org](https://selfgrowth.org). Free self-growth worksheets for real life.

### If things feel heavier than a worksheet can hold

These are self-reflection tools, not therapy. If you're struggling, especially if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, please reach out to someone now. In the US, call or

text **988**. In the UK & Ireland, call **116 123** (Samaritans). Elsewhere, find a free helpline at [findahelpline.com](https://findahelpline.com). If you're in immediate danger, call your local emergency number.