

An Inner Coach Instead of An Inner Critic

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Each of us has an Inner Critic. It's that voice you hear telling you that you cannot do what it is you want to do-or need to do, in some cases. That voice says horrible things to you, like "You are going to fail because you are not smart enough to do this. The people who are doing what you want to do all know way more than you." The Inner Critic sows the seeds of doubt-and fear.

The Inner Critic, never satisfied that it has protected you from harming yourself, continues, "You are going to make a fool of yourself, and people are going to judge you when you fail." The Inner Critic then calls forth evidence to make sure it controls you with the reminder that, "You failed before, and you were mortified. What are you going to do when you fail again?"

This voice, the Inner Critic, is a composite. It is, in part, your fears and doubts. When we humans gained consciousness, we also gained self-consciousness, the ability to feel shame. It is also the voice of your parents who tried to protect you from hurting yourself, which may have worked in the short term but harmed you in the long run, depriving you of the *hormesis*, the adaptation to small doses of adversity and discomfort that increase your adaptation to these things in higher doses.

Thinking is mostly made up of talking to yourself. You ask yourself questions and you answer them. None of us hear what you are saying to yourself unless you speak the words out loud. One of the dominant voices for some of us is the Inner Critic, but it doesn't have to be the dominant voice you hear.

You can also have the voice of an Inner Coach. That voice is the polar opposite of the Inner Critic and, when it's strong enough, it crowds out the Inner Critic. The Inner Coach says, "If other people are smart enough to figure this out, you're smart enough to figure it out, too. Get busy working." Instead of fear and doubt, the Inner Coach provides the confidence to try.

Your Inner Coach won't tell you that you are going to fail and embarrass yourself. Instead, what you'll hear is: "This is going to work, and if it doesn't you can make adjustments and try again. It isn't the end of the world." Your Inner Coach recognizes that the journey to success is fraught with failure along the path, and that no failure is final. Where the Inner Critic counsels you to, "Stop. Be safe," the Inner Coach, says, "You've got this. Go!"

Your Inner Critic is the voice of fear and self-doubt and scarcity and cynicism and pessimism. It is here to protect your ego from harm. Your Inner Coach is the voice of confidence and abundance and optimism and empowerment. Both of these voices are yours. Because thinking is made up of talking to yourself, the reply to all the statements from your Inner Critic can come from that bigger part of you that is your Inner Coach, the part of you that knows that you can be more, do more, have more, and contribute more.

Becoming the best version of yourself is going to require that you liberate yourself from fear and self-doubt. You get to decide what each of these voices say to you and whose counsel you take. My Inner Coach duct-taped my Inner Critic to a chair and locked him in a closet a long time ago. I haven't heard from him since (although I occasionally hear a small murmur from time to time, it's hard to make out).