WORKSHEET 128 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Understanding my inner critic

What it says, what it is trying to protect

AIM

Explore the function of self-criticism (often an attempt to protect oneself from rejection, failure or danger) and develop a compassionate alternative that pursues the same aim without the harshness.

WHO IT IS FOR

Intense self-criticism, shame, perfectionism, low mood.

DURATION

20-30 min

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Ask them to describe the inner critic: its words, its tone, whom it resembles.
2. Ask what it is trying to protect the person from ("if I don't criticise myself, what will happen is…").
3. Assess what it costs them (emotions, energy, motivation).
4. Look for what a compassionate voice would say to achieve the same aim.

POINTS TO WATCH

> If the inner critic literally repeats the voice of an abusive person, proceed with caution and in session. In people who are very self-critical or who have experienced abuse, self-kindness can at first bring up sadness, discomfort or mistrust (the "backdraft" described by Germer and Neff). This is to be expected: go more slowly, in small doses, and validate the difficulty.

REFERENCES

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PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 128 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Understanding my inner critic

The voice that criticises you often wants to protect you: to spare you a failure, a rejection, a moment of shame. But it does so harshly. You can keep the aim and change the manner.

1. Write what your inner critic says, in its own words.
2. Ask yourself what it is trying to protect you from.
3. Note what it costs you: emotions, energy, wanting to act.
4. Write what a kind voice would say with the same aim.

What it says	What it wants to protect me from	What it costs me	What a kind voice would say

If I thank the critic for its intention, I can answer:

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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