

Working with your Inner Critic

Have you ever thought about doing something new, risky or different? Maybe you imagined quitting your job to start your own business. Or maybe it was something simple like walking over to a group of strangers at a social function. Just as you're about to take that first step out of your comfort zone up pops a voice in your head giving you a dozen compelling reasons why you should hold back. "You don't know anything about running a business! Besides, you don't have enough money." "You're going to look like a fool for interrupting them!" For many of us, that can be compelling enough to send us running back to our comfort zone.

So where does the voice come from? Often, it's simply a throw-back to our childhood where it developed to help us navigate painful and often unpredictable family dynamics. Maybe we watched an older sibling being ridiculed for sharing their opinion at the dinner table. Our "inner critic" emerged to serve as a reminder to keep our opinions to ourselves so we wouldn't be ridiculed. Unfortunately our "inner critic" becomes entrenched in their original role and doesn't evolve, change or disappear as we grow into capable adults. (Kind of like the Japanese soldiers who continued to patrol the South Pacific Islands long after WWII ended).

In the **"Inside/Out"** approach to life, we determine our own sense of value, instead of waiting for people and situations to validate and approve of us – something we have no control over. Disempowering our "inner critic" is one of the most important steps in our quest to live "Inside/Out." Here are 4 simple solutions for working with your "inner critic."

- **Notice it!** Start flexing your awareness muscle and unpacking the noise in your head. What are simply aimless thoughts and what carries the nagging tone of your "inner critic." Keep a log. I once kept a log of how many times I heard my "inner critic" in a day and gave up at 75!!
- **Name it!** Most people don't even realize that they are reacting to their "inner critic." Once you have learned to recognize the voice, give it a name. I call mine "Goliath" because it is many little voices that stack on top of each other to form a giant! Naming something takes its power away by helping you to recognize it.
- **Thank it!** I once read that you should invite your "inner critic" for tea and thank it for protecting you when you were young. Once it is feeling acknowledged, you can ask it to leave. Say, "thanks for sharing, now would you mind getting me a cup of coffee while I decide what to do?"
- **Zoom past it!** The fastest and easiest way to get out from under your "inner critic's" thumb is to do something that makes you come alive – listen to a fabulous piece of music, watch the sunset, hike in the mountains. "Inner critics" can't exist in this powerful energy and simply vanish in a puff of smoke!