Getting to know my inner critic

A close look at your self-critical voice: what it says, when and how.

Name _____ Date _____

Most of us have a critical voice. For some it is constant and vicious. The first step is to notice it as a voice, and to stop treating what it says as fact.

What does it say? Write its typical lines, word for word.

How does it say it?

- ☐ Cold
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Contemptuous
- ☐ Disappointed
- ☐ Mocking
- ☐ Loud

When does it turn up?

Situations, moods, times of day

Whose voice does it remind me of?

How do I feel when it speaks?

In my body and mood

What do I think it is trying to do for me?

- ☐ Keep me safe from failure
- ☐ Protect me from rejection
- ☐ Make me try harder
- ☐ Keep me in line

Does it work? What does it cost?

If I spoke to a friend the way it speaks to me, what would happen to that friendship?

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Critic or coach?

Compare what your inner critic says with what a good coach would say.

Name _____ Date _____

Many people fear that without self-criticism they would become lazy or selfish. Think about who gets the best out of a child learning something hard: the teacher who shouts and shames, or the one who believes in them and shows them how?

The critic

- Attacks who I am
- Looks backwards at the mistake
- Harsh, contemptuous tone
- Says "you always" and "you never"
- Leaves me anxious, ashamed and stuck

The coach

- Looks at what I did
- Looks forwards to what would help
- Warm, firm tone
- Says "this time" and "next time"
- Leaves me able to try again

What my critic says	What a good coach would say
"You idiot. You have ruined it, as usual."	*"That did not go the way you wanted. It is one mistake. What would help put it right?"*

What does my coach sound like? Whose voice could I borrow?

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