

## How to Respond to the Punitive Inner Critic

### 1. Notice It (Defusion)

**Acknowledge the critic's presence without judgment. For example:**

- Say, "I'm having the thought that I'm a failure."
- Imagine the critic as a grumpy character in a movie, observing it with curiosity.

**Punitive Critic Dialogue Examples:**

- "You're such a loser. You'll never amount to anything."
- "Why even try? You're just going to fail anyway."
- "You're so stupid. No one could ever love you."

**Healthy Adult Response:**

- "I'm noticing the thought that I'm a loser. It's just a thought, not a fact."
  - "I hear you, but I'm choosing to focus on what I can do right now."
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### 2. Thank It (Acceptance)

**Recognise its intentions without agreeing with it. For example:**

- Say, "Thanks, mind, for trying to protect me."
- Acknowledge that it's trying to help, even if its methods are unhelpful.

**Punitive Critic Dialogue Examples:**

- "You're so lazy. You'll never get anything done."
- "You're a burden to everyone around you."
- "You're not good enough. Why even bother?"

**Healthy Adult Response:**

- "I see you're trying to motivate me, but I'm choosing to be kind to myself instead."

- “Thanks for the input, but I’m focusing on what I can control right now.”
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### **3. Reframe It (Self-Compassion)**

**Challenge its messages with kindness. For example:**

- Instead of “I’ll fail,” try, “I’m learning, and that’s okay.”
- Replace “You’re worthless” with “I’m doing my best, and that’s enough.”

**Punitive Critic Dialogue Examples:**

- “You’re so ugly. No one could ever want you.”
- “You’re a failure. You’ll never succeed.”
- “You’re so pathetic. Just give up already.”

**Healthy Adult Response:**

- “I’m feeling insecure right now, but I know my worth isn’t defined by my appearance.”
  - “I’m learning and growing, and that’s what matters.”
  - “I’m choosing to focus on my strengths and what I can do today.”
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### **4. Stand Up to It (Assertiveness)**

**Respond calmly and firmly to show the critic that you’re in charge. For example:**

- Say, “I hear you, but I’m making my own decisions now.”
- Set boundaries with the critic, just as you would with a harsh person.

**Punitive Critic Dialogue Examples:**

- “You’re so disgusting. You’ll never get this right.”
- “You’re a disappointment to everyone.”
- “You’re so weak. You can’t handle anything.”

### **Healthy Adult Response:**

- “I’m doing my best, and that’s enough.”
  - “I’m not perfect, and that’s okay. I’m still learning.”
  - “I’m choosing to focus on my progress, not your criticism.”
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## **5. Practice Self-Compassion**

### **Respond to the critic with warmth and understanding. For example:**

- Say, “May you be well. May you find peace.”
- Imagine sending kindness to the critic, recognising it as a part of you that’s hurting.

### **Punitive Critic Dialogue Examples:**

- “You’re so worthless. You don’t deserve happiness.”
- “You’re a failure. You’ll never be good enough.”
- “You’re so stupid. You’ll never figure this out.”

### **Healthy Adult Response:**

- “I know you’re trying to help, but I’m choosing to be kind to myself right now.”
  - “I’m doing my best, and that’s enough.”
  - “I’m choosing to focus on what I can do, not what you’re saying.”
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## **Key Takeaway**

The punitive inner critic can feel relentless, but as a healthy adult, you have the power to respond differently. By noticing its presence, reframing its messages, and practicing self-compassion, you can reduce its intensity and focus on living a life that truly matters to you.