

Mindfulness Meditation for the Inner Critic

Using Mindfulness to Embrace Your Inner Critic

The inner critic is that voice in your head that judges, criticises, and doubts you. It can feel overwhelming, but mindfulness offers a way to relate to it differently. Instead of believing or fighting it, you can learn to observe it with curiosity and compassion. This meditation helps you acknowledge your inner critic, understand its intentions, and respond with kindness.

Mindfulness Meditation: Embracing Self-Compassion for Your Inner Critic

Begin by gently closing your eyes or softly gazing at the floor. Take a moment to feel your body supported by the chair beneath you. Acknowledge all the points of contact your body has with the chair. Notice how your feet rest firmly on the ground. Allow yourself to sink slightly into this space, feeling the comforting support from the chair and the floor, cradling you. Take a deep breath, letting it expand and deepen. Spend a few moments settling into a peaceful, introspective state.

Now, visualise yourself driving a bus along a road leading to a life you love. This life is filled with what matters most to you—loving connections, fulfilling and stimulating work, and making a positive impact on others and the world around you. Inhale deeply, savouring the sweetness of this envisioned life ahead.

On this bus, you have several passengers. Among them is your ‘Inner Critic,’ who leans forward, glaring at you, ready to criticise and insult. It tells you what you can and cannot achieve.

Picture this passenger in your mind. What do they look like? Observe their posture, facial expression, and overall demeanour towards you. Pay attention to the harsh and unkind remarks they make. Reflect on whether you find yourself believing these comments.

This passenger can be so loud and abrasive that you instinctively try to silence them. One approach is to comply with their demands. So, when they shout, “Stop that! You could fail!” you follow their instructions. They may quiet down temporarily but consider how much progress you’re actually making toward your future filled with what you truly value while adhering to their demands.

Another tactic is to argue back. However, realise that in doing so, you take your hands off the wheel. What forward momentum are you achieving when you're preoccupied with a debate? Reflect on your experiences—have you ever won an argument with this inner critic? Does it ever relent or concede defeat?

There's a different approach. Acknowledge that your passenger isn't going anywhere and that fighting or criticising them only fuels the problem—you're battling fire with fire. What if you allowed this self-critical passenger to accompany you on your journey?

Consider the underlying motivations behind their negativity. Beneath their harsh demeanour lies a desire for your well-being. After all, this critic is a part of you. Perhaps it seeks to protect you, to shield you from pain, or to help you achieve great things, albeit in an unhelpful manner.

Speak gently to your self-critical passenger, using a compassionate tone, and say:

May you be well.

May you find happiness.

May you be free from suffering.

Envision warmth, kindness, and understanding flowing from you to this critical part of yourself. If this feels challenging, concentrate on your intention to show compassion to your inner critic. Notice the sensations that arise as you offer this part of yourself warmth and kindness and allow yourself to absorb those feelings.

Now, gradually let these images fade from your mind, taking with you this warm sense of self-compassion. Feel your feet grounded on the floor and your body supported by the chair. When you feel ready, gently open your eyes and return to your day, carrying this warmth within you.