



How To **Disarm Your Inner Critic**

Includes a step-by-step process for
dealing with self-criticism

by Helen Dillon
Conscious Career Coach

CONSCIOUS CAREER COACHING
Career Confidence ~ Career Clarity ~ Career Fulfilment
www.InnerResourcing.co.uk

Important Information

Although I am a qualified coach, counsellor, and Focusing Practitioner, I am not YOUR coach or therapist. All information in this guide is for informational purposes only, and does not constitute therapeutic or mental health advice.

Working with "parts" and connecting with the body may not be appropriate for everyone, especially without professional support. If in any doubt, please consult a suitably qualified professional about your specific situation.

Please note that I can't take any responsibility for the results of your actions, and any harm or damage you suffer as a result of the use, or non-use of the information available in this guide. Please use judgement and conduct due diligence before taking any action or implementing any plan or practice suggested or recommended.

Please also note that I don't make any guarantees about the results. I share educational and informational resources that are intended to help you succeed in your career. You nevertheless need to know that your ultimate success or failure will be the result of your own efforts, your particular situation, and innumerable other circumstances beyond my knowledge and control.

Please do ask if you've any questions, you can contact me here:

<https://www.innerresourcing.co.uk/get-in-touch/>

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The approach and specific forms of language recommended in this guide come from "Inner Relationship Focusing", which is Ann Weiser Cornell & Barbara McGavin's development of Eugene Gendlin's 'Philosophy of the Implicit' and Focusing practice.

I am a British Focusing Association recognised Focusing Practitioner and a Certified Focusing Professional (via The International Focusing Institute).

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The confidence you need for the career you want

What do you do when your inner critic says you're horrible & hateful?

It's so hard to deal with because, often, it's not just a voice it's a whole body experience of anxiety & feeling bad and wrong.

Nearly everyone experiences this at one time or another. For some it's an everyday experience. It can prevent you doing the things you want to do, developing the career you desire, and simply enjoying life and work. And you can feel very alone in dealing with it.

The non-stop battle with self-doubt and self-criticism is like walking into a headwind. All the time.

I've written this guide about how inner critic attacks can be stopped and clear thinking become possible again, to support you in making the inner shifts that are needed for outer change. So you can make better decisions about your career and thrive at work.



Helen Dillon
Conscious Career Coach,
Focusing Practitioner, &
Founder of Inner Resourcing

Hi, I'm Helen

I coach women who want to feel fulfilled at work, and need clarity, confidence, and to discover who they really are.

And I get it. My inner critic used to keep me paralysed, head down, and afraid of being visible. If anything did go wrong, or god forbid I made a mistake, it would take me days if not weeks to find my equilibrium again.

That's changed. And it can change for you too.

Do try out the inner critic exercise in this guide.

What your Inner Critic most wants you to know

THIS MAY SURPRISE YOU!

Despite how it goes about things, your inner critic doesn't hate you. In fact, it needs your help.

Pretty much every parent/carer will have experienced a child, in a fraught moment, saying that they hate them.

Adults, able to see the bigger picture, know that the child doesn't really hate them. What they hate is the situation, the fear or frustration, feelings being out of control.

Children have strong feelings they don't know how to contain. They need a well-adjusted adult to help.

The inner critic is like that:

- *It's probably quite a young part of you*
- *It doesn't have the whole picture*
- *It's scared*
- *It feels like the situation is out of control*

Which is why it shouts so loud, and its teeth are so sharp.

It needs your well-adjusted-adult/ bigger/sovereign self to help it contain its feelings. Before I go into how – there's something else you need to know...





Know that Critical Inner Voices can Change

We just saw how our inner critic is like a child trying to deal with overwhelming fear and out of control feelings, which is why it lashes out at you.

The idea that the inner critic is actually in need of your help to contain and resolve its feelings may be a radical and new idea for you. That it's scared, not mean, may be hard to believe, but it's true.

But meanwhile it's shouting about how horrible and crap you are. And that can make it hard to approach it differently to how you have been doing.

I don't want to minimise the pain of your experience. Because I really get it. I don't want to be glib with "I just did this and this and it was all ok again".

And, I DO want to show you that there are ways to deal with this. I have been able to get beyond my critical inner voices telling me I'm no good, that I should just give up now, to a place of inner peace and confidence. There is hope.

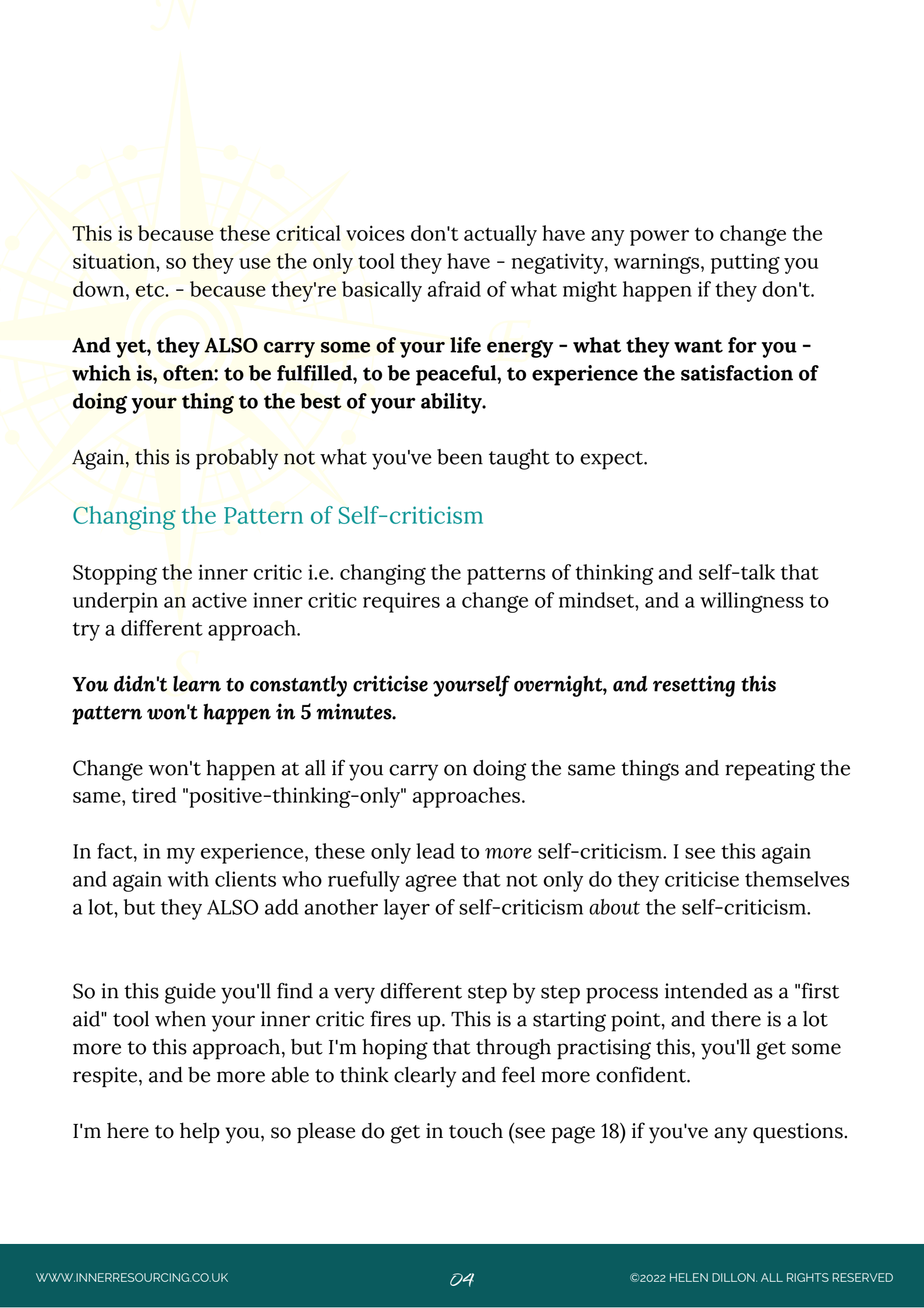
The idea that the inner critic is scared and desperately needing help to contain and resolve its feelings may be radical and new for you. How would you behave differently towards it if you knew this to be true?

What is the Purpose of the Inner Critic?

Some people claim that the purpose of the inner critic is to get you to conform. While that may be its effect, instead I believe that the *intent* of these criticising parts is to protect you from experiences that *they* don't believe you can handle.

This intent is basically positive, but it is *framed* negatively.

(...cont...)



This is because these critical voices don't actually have any power to change the situation, so they use the only tool they have - negativity, warnings, putting you down, etc. - because they're basically afraid of what might happen if they don't.

And yet, they ALSO carry some of your life energy - what they want for you - which is, often: to be fulfilled, to be peaceful, to experience the satisfaction of doing your thing to the best of your ability.

Again, this is probably not what you've been taught to expect.

Changing the Pattern of Self-criticism

Stopping the inner critic i.e. changing the patterns of thinking and self-talk that underpin an active inner critic requires a change of mindset, and a willingness to try a different approach.

You didn't learn to constantly criticise yourself overnight, and resetting this pattern won't happen in 5 minutes.

Change won't happen at all if you carry on doing the same things and repeating the same, tired "positive-thinking-only" approaches.

In fact, in my experience, these only lead to *more* self-criticism. I see this again and again with clients who ruefully agree that not only do they criticise themselves a lot, but they ALSO add another layer of self-criticism *about* the self-criticism.

So in this guide you'll find a very different step by step process intended as a "first aid" tool when your inner critic fires up. This is a starting point, and there is a lot more to this approach, but I'm hoping that through practising this, you'll get some respite, and be more able to think clearly and feel more confident.

I'm here to help you, so please do get in touch (see page 18) if you've any questions.

Dealing with an Inner Critic Attack

INTRODUCTION

So how DO you deal with the Inner Critic?

The short exercise on the next few pages is a step by step guide to what you can do whenever the Inner Critic starts giving you grief.

I suggest you read through the steps, then read the notes in the rest of this guide, which will give you context and help shift your mindset about dealing with difficult parts.

Then come back and work through the steps.

You can use it if you're feeling self-criticism taking hold right now, or make it part of your regular journal practice.

Ideally, you'll have a pen and paper available. We'll be working on changing the language you use in order to change how you approach the inner critic. So it's helpful to be able to write a few things down.

(NB If you're not able to do the writing part right now, you can absolutely do this in your head, it's just easier at first if you write it down.)

Use this in the moment when you feel your inner critic getting going.

It's probably a good idea to PRACTICE it in advance, if you can.



Dealing with an Inner Critic Attack

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Note - there's a one page summary of the steps on page 11, which is also print friendly.

We begin by getting grounded and remembering our resources. Don't skip this step, as it supports everything else.

STEP 1 - Grounded and Resourced

It's always a good idea to bring your attention to your resources, both inner and outer, before doing any kind of inner work.

Begin by looking around your location. Notice how your room helps you be safe and comfortable. Notice - *what here can be a resource.*

Feeling your feet flat on the floor, notice how they are being supported...

- Feel how the weight of your body is being supported by your chair...
- Notice how the chair is supported by the floor and floor by the structure of the building....
- Sense how the building is supported by the earth...
- Sense into that huge solid holding the earth provides....
- Notice how you can settle into that big support a little bit more.... *see if you can experience this as a resource...*

Now bring your attention to the wider world, and nature, and notice how you are connected to everything that lives. This can be a resource.

Think about the people who love you, and who have ever loved you. This can also be a resource.

This guide itself is a resource and has been created to support you in your growth and career success.

These resources are available to you whenever you need them. At any point in the following process you can bring your attention back to these resources and any others that occur to you. (This resourcing process can be a standalone practice too.)

Dealing with an Inner Critic Attack (cont.)

STEP 2: Support the criticised "part"

Pick the main critical thought that's circulating right now. Or, if you're just practising, the kind of thing your inner critic is inclined to say. (If there are several, just pick one that has energy in it right now.)

Write it down, and have a look at it.

Notice where, in your body, contracts or feels bad when you read it. (If it's an all over feeling, sense for where it's strongest.)

Let a gentle hand come to that place on your body to let it know that you're with it.

Say to yourself "Something in me is feeling very criticised by this."

Please pay careful attention to the "something in me" part of this sentence. Avoid simply saying "I feel very criticised by this."

(NOTE You might have a different experience of/word for "criticised" e.g. "hated on", "made small", "beaten up", "derailed", ... use the word or phrase that fits for you.)

Send some loving energy to that place that feels criticised, like you might do when stroking a pet, or comforting a child. Take your time with this (as long as you wish) - sending love to that place that's feeling very criticised/[your word] right now. Don't try to change it. See if you can be with it exactly as it is.

You might say to it: "Hello, I know you're there. I know you're hurting. I'm here with you."

Important: Some approaches encourage you to push away negative thoughts and only focus on the positive. This process is different - it doesn't require you to pretend the bad feeling isn't there.

*At the same time, please notice that you are not focusing on the feeling bad. Instead you are focusing on lovingly **being with** the something in you/place in you that feels bad. You are not wiring in negativity, you are wiring in self-compassion.*

And your compassionate presence is what it needs more than anything else.

Dealing with an Inner Critic Attack (cont.)

STEP 3: Identify the content

When it feels right, bring your attention back to the words you've written down.

It's probably a very black and white, "you'll never" or "I always" type of statement, perhaps predicting catastrophe. These inner critics/voices tend to see things in a very extreme kind of way. Examples might be along the lines of:

- I'll never be able to do this.
- I've completely screwed up. Everyone will hate me.
- You're going to fail. Why are you bothering? Better give up now.
- Why do I always get it wrong

But remember, as we saw earlier, the inner critic is really like a scared youngster, left to deal with things that are too big and complex for it. It's scared. That's why it's striking out.

It's trying to keep you safe, even though the way it goes about it leads you to more pain.

All parts of you want good things for you.

It's like a parent saying "You'll never amount to anything if you don't do your homework."

It's a statement, meant to be motivating, or protective, that comes from fear and worry.

It's not what they *want* for you, it's what they *fear* for you. The same is true of the inner critic.

TRUTH: The inner critic isn't critical because it's mean, it's critical because it's scared. There are no monsters within, just forsaken parts of yourself that need your love and understanding.

Look at your sentence and ask yourself:

What if what my inner critic is saying about/to me is really what it's afraid of and doesn't want for me? So ask yourself: what is it that it doesn't want for me?

Dealing with an Inner Critic Attack (cont.)

STEP 4: Flip the script

Now write a new sentence that begins like this

Something in me is worried/afraid that ... [what it doesn't want]

Using the examples above, this might look something like:

- Something in me is worried that I'll never be able to do this.
- Something in me is scared that I've completely screwed up and worries that everyone will hate me.
- Something in me is worried that I'll be so disappointed if this fails that it thinks giving up now is better
- Something in me is terrified of getting it wrong

Say your sentence back to yourself.

Notice how different this feels to saying "I am (this)" or "I will never (that)" to yourself.

Can you tell how scared that part of you is?

STEP 5: Keep it company

Write your sentence again, adding a bit onto the beginning:

"I'm sensing something in me that is worried/afraid that [your words here]"

Using this language helps you be with the part that's feeling worried/scared, without being overwhelmed by it.

You're with it, just touching into it slightly, not letting it walk over you, not playing your inner "tape", not agreeing with it, but also not trying to do anything to it.

(Note this can take practice. Don't worry if you struggle the first times you try this. Remember you can repeat your resourcing and grounding moves from Step 1 at any time.)

Dealing with an Inner Critic Attack (cont.)

Then try saying to that place, as you did with the part that was feeling criticised:

“Hello, I know you’re there and I know you’re scared. I’m with you.”

See if it feels good to also send some love to that place. If that feels too hard as yet, just stick with knowing it's there, knowing it's scared, and keeping it company.

Step 6: Notice the shift

Notice what feels different since you began this process. For some people there comes a sense like fresh air in a stuffy room, for others change is more subtle, and takes time and patience. If it feels ok, see if you can receive whatever new feeling or understanding is there.

Remember too that you may need to repeat this process many times, before this part of you begins to trust you and release its hold.

Read on for a summary and some background context.



"What is true is already so.

*Owning up to it doesn't make it worse. Not
being open about it doesn't make it go away.*

*And because it's true, it is what is there to be
interacted with.*

*Anything untrue isn't there to be lived.
People can stand what is true, for they are
already enduring it."*

*Dr Eugene
Gendlin*

Dealing with an Inner Critic Attack

A print-friendly summary

1. **Ground and resource yourself**
2. Give **some loving attention** to the something in you that's feeling criticised
3. **Identify the content** - what is the negative voice trying to get you to pay attention to?
4. **Flip the script** by changing the wording from "I..." to "something in me is scared that I..."
5. **Keep it company** in a friendly way... "I'm sensing something in me..." Let it know that you're with it - it's not alone anymore
6. **Notice** how this shifts how you carry this issue. Be receptive to what's changed.

That's it. That's the process.

When I teach this approach in workshops participants say things like:

*"I felt like my problems got smaller and smaller."
"I feel so much more like I can handle things"*

I hope you'll try it out and let me know how you get on, and if you have any questions. I'm here to help.



Another helpful "first aid" sentence in these situations, especially when you don't feel up to the other steps is simply to say to yourself:

"I'm sensing something in me that's feeling very critical right now, AND, something else in me that's feeling criticised, AND I am with both of them."

These deceptively-simple steps are very helpful in stopping an inner critic attack.

I hope you can sense how different (and powerful) this approach is:

- > You're not taking sides, or trying to shut off parts of yourself
- > You can change your habitual way of interacting with yourself

You can have your problems, feelings, and emotions, without them having you.

On the next few pages, I talk a little about Inner Relationship Focusing and the ideas and mindset shifts that underpin this process.





Inner Relationships & Working with Parts

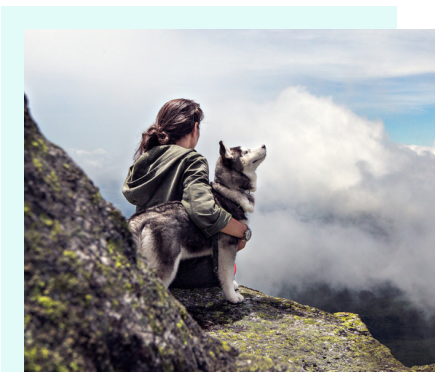
You might notice that the process outlined above takes a different approach to the Inner Critic than you may have come across before. There are some key assumptions that underpin this *Inner Relationship Focusing* approach (and the wider Focusing philosophy of personal change and inner healing on which it is based).



You are more than one "I"

Inner Relationship Focusing (IRF) is a type of "parts" work, which takes the view that you are not a single "I", but rather a constellation of "parts" or "partial selves" with their own agendas and ideas about the world. Sometimes these parts work together, sometimes they pull against each other.

This mindset empowers how I work because it allows my clients to understand and resolve otherwise confusing conflicts between, for example, what they say they want, and what they actually do.



All parts have positive intent

There are no monsters within, only partial selves, trying to protect you, while really wanting you to thrive and fulfil your potential. It's just that how they go about this isn't always helpful.

Begin with the knowledge that everything in you has your best interests at heart and is coming with *positive intentions*, even if its voice and manner feels less than loving and helpful.

If you can approach your feelings with curiosity and intending to understand, it makes a huge difference.

THE POWER OF RADICAL PRESENCE

Previously we saw how the inner critic is a child-like part that reacts from fear, not from nastiness. Yet it can still disrupt & derail you. Key to resolving this is to *be with* the parts involved, rather than being blown about by their storms. Therefore **Inner Presence** is a key idea in Focusing.



Presence language

The particular language outlined above - i.e. using "something in me thinks/feels/worries...." instead of "I feel/think/worry..." was developed by Ann Weiser Cornell. **It helps you be with, instead of being in.**

So you are not taken over by feeling critical of yourself, but can be with the part of you that is feeling that way. Similarly, you are less overwhelmed by a feeling of being criticised, but you can be with the something in you that is feeling criticised.



The "target" of the Inner Critic

As well as the critical part/voice, notice that there's also a part that feels criticised. While the inner critic itself needs compassion, the part that's feeling criticised also needs that.

So before bringing compassion, deep listening, & acceptance to the criticising part of you, so it can feel seen and safe, be sure to do the same to the part that is on the receiving end of the Inner Critic's negativity.



Being aware of inner bias

Notice where you have a preference for one side or the other. It might be easy to feel compassion for the criticised parts, less so for the critic. Yet all sides can relax and disarm only when they've been fully heard in their true feelings. Like the well-adjusted adult who treats an angry or frustrated child with calm kindness you contain and validate the feelings of BOTH sides.

What's radical here is that you are not participating in the name calling, not telling the inner critic to shut up and go away, & *not collapsing either*. It's vital therefore to be aware of when you have an inner bias towards, or preference for, one or the other.

All this requires that you step into your larger/higher/sovereign self – the self that is able to be present, facilitative, compassionate, accepting, containing of all of the other parts.
More about this next...



Your Sovereign Self

A key step in disarming the inner critic is bringing a radically accepting, compassionate, unbiased, and facilitating “Self” to the process. The founders of Inner Relationship Focusing (Ann Weiser Cornell & Barbara McGavin) call this “Self-in-Presence”.

I use the term “Sovereign Self” because for me this larger self also connects to self-leadership and a purposeful life.

Whatever you call her, before you can reliably embody her, you may first have to develop her. That's because a strong, compassionate, and grounded Self isn't something we are routinely taught to develop and, in fact, we may be actively *discouraged* from developing.

Because of the disruptive effect of the inner critic, being able to step into this larger presence of your sovereign self happens fastest, easiest, most reliably, in a supportive relationship with someone who understands this overall process.

Essentially the other person creates safety and models/reinforces this “self-in-presence” until you are able (while you learn) to embody it for yourself.

This approach underpins my career coaching and is how I help clients access their inner compass, as well as disarm their inner critic and resolve chronic self-doubt. When this happens they can feel more confident at work, and have more career clarity.

I also teach Focusing to clients for their own use.

I know this works, because I use it for myself to return to equilibrium without denying lessons or losing myself.

The Sovereign Self can be called forth in many different ways depending on the situation, and, on you.





Next Steps for Career Confidence

Creating a more fulfilling career often means taking leaps of faith and investing trust in yourself and your abilities. Lack of confidence and self-belief, and constant buffeting from the Inner Critic, can block progress, even when you are clear about what you want to do, and you feel you are on your right path.

If confidence, the inner critic, and self-belief are issues holding you back at work, you might be interested in my specialist programme *Confidence Rising*:



Confidence Rising

THE CONFIDENCE TO DO WORK THAT MATTERS

End the non-stop battle with yourself.
Overcome imposter syndrome and
breakthrough to lasting confidence

An experiential, deep-dive, and
transformative process.

This is the exact process I used to make
friends with my inner critic and
rediscover my inner sovereignty.

8 sessions over up to 16 weeks

Full details:

<https://www.innerresourcing.co.uk/overcome-imposter-syndrome-coaching-programme/>

Additionally, I've written a number of articles about self-belief, the inner critic, and confidence at work. You might like to check them out here:

<https://www.innerresourcing.co.uk/category/confidence-self-belief/>



Other Conscious Career Coaching options...



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(Takes you to my contact page on website)

[Get in touch](#)



FINDING & LIVING FROM YOUR AUTHENTIC SELF

Finding your true self isn't a one time thing. It's a continuous and repeating process of connecting with, and listening to, your authentic inner wisdom and guidance systems. And of stepping into your truth in any situation.

But this is made more difficult by distracting outer voices. And inner critics can get in the way and make it uncomfortable to go inside at all.

Learn a more reliable process for accessing your embodied wisdom whenever you need it. Be authentic and true to yourself

(Takes you to the dedicated page for this programme on my website)

[Find out more](#)



And finally...

Hopefully this guide has given you plenty of food for thought about the Inner Critic as well as practical help around how you can feel more empowered in how you interact with it.

Please do get in touch and let me know how you've got on with the information in this guide, and of course if you've any questions or comments I'd be happy to help.

I'm on a mission to reconnect women over 45 to the source of their wisdom and power, so they have the confidence and clarity to navigate their career crossroads and feel fulfilled at work.

Because I believe this world needs more confident, fired-up, purposeful, resourced, and up-to-something women.

To your success!

Warmly, Helen



Contact Information

Email: helen@innerresourcing.co.uk

Website: www.innerresourcing.co.uk



fb/innerresourcing



linkedin.com/in/helenrh Dillon