

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING

III. Cognitive Restructuring Techniques

D. Communication

- a) Soft Startups**
- b) Active Listening**
- c) How to Apologize**
- d) Reflections (communication skill)**
- e) Relationship Growth Activity**
- f) Fair Fighting Rules**
- g) "I" Statements**
- h) Lori's Communication**
- i) Relationship Conflict Resolution**
- j) Passive, Aggressive and Assertive Communication**
- k) Critical Inner Voice**
- l) Assertive Communication**
- m)**

Soft Startups

communication skill

When bringing up a problem to your partner, the first three minutes are crucial. A **soft startup** sets a positive tone and helps resolve conflict. By starting a conversation calmly and respectfully, you and your partner are more likely to focus on the *problem*, rather than who's to blame.

Save the conversation for a calm moment.

- Wait for a time when you and your partner are alone, without distractions or interruptions.
- Make sure you and your partner are relaxed, and not tired, hungry, or stressed.

Use gentle body language and tone of voice.

- Take an attitude of teamwork and problem-solving, rather than arguing or blaming.
- Speak calmly, without raising your voice.
- Avoid hurtful body language, such as eye rolling, scowling, or mocking.

Use "I" statements to express how you feel.

- Focus on how a problem is affecting you, rather than assigning blame.
- Say: "I feel [emotion] when [situation]."

Example **Without "I" statement:** "You're so closed off. We need to talk more."
 With "I" statement: "I feel *lonely* when *we don't talk*."

Describe the problem clearly.

- Discuss only one problem at a time.
- Be specific. Broad complaints like "the house is a mess" may be misunderstood.

Be respectful.

- Make a polite request, rather than a demand.
- Thank your partner for listening and addressing a problem.

Example "Could you please..." "Thank you for..."
 "I would appreciate if..."

Active Listening

Communication Skill



Active Listening: Treating listening as an active process, rather than a passive one. This means participating in conversation, rather than acting as an audience. Active listeners show they are listening, encourage sharing, and strive to understand the speaker.

Show You're Listening

Put away distractions. Watching TV, using your phone, or doing other things while listening sends the message that the speaker's words are not important. Putting away distractions allows you to focus on the conversation and help the speaker feel heard.

Use verbal and nonverbal communication. Body language and short verbal cues that match the speaker's affect (e.g. responding excitedly if the speaker is excited) show interest and empathy.

Verbal:	"mm-hmm" / "uh-huh"	"that's interesting"	"that makes sense"	"I understand"
Nonverbal:	nodding in agreement	reacting to emotional content (e.g. smiling)	eye contact	

Encourage Sharing

Ask open-ended questions. These are questions that encourage elaboration, rather than "yes" or "no" responses. Open-ended questions tell the speaker you are listening, and you want to learn more.

"What is it like to ___?"	"How did you feel when ___?"	"Can you tell me more about ___?"
"How do you ___?"	"What do you like about ___?"	"What are your thoughts about ___?"

Use reflections. In your own words, summarize the speaker's most important points. Be sure to include emotional content, even if it was only communicated through tone or body language.

Speaker: *I've been having a hard time at work. There's way too much to do and I can't keep up. My boss is frustrated that everything isn't done, but I can't help it.*

Listener: *It sounds like you're doing your best to keep up, but there's too much work. That sounds stressful!*

Strive to Understand

Be present. Listening means paying attention to body language, tone, and verbal content. Focus your attention on listening, instead of other mental distractions, such as what you want to say next. When possible, save sensitive conversations for a quiet time with few distractions.

Listen with an open mind. Your job is to understand the speaker's point of view, even if you don't agree. Avoid forming opinions and making judgments until you fully understand their perspective.

How to Apologize

Apologizing means expressing regret for something you did. A sincere apology involves reflecting on your actions, taking responsibility for them, and making changes to improve things in the future. Giving an apology can help repair a damaged relationship while showing care and respect for the other person.

Reflect on your Actions

Think about how your actions contributed to a problem, even if they were not the sole cause.

Even if someone else also contributed to the problem, what was *my* role?

Try taking the other person's perspective. How do my actions look from their side?

As a result of my actions, how might the other person feel?

Take Responsibility

Say "I'm sorry" (or some version of this phrase) and show regret for your actions. It's important to speak clearly and sincerely. In most cases, it helps to identify the actions you are apologizing for.

Example: "I'm sorry for the language I used during our argument. It was disrespectful, and it was wrong."

I'm sorry for...
It was wrong of me to...

I apologize for...
I feel terrible. I shouldn't have...

I take responsibility for...
This was my fault. I should have...

⚠ Never make excuses or try to justify your behavior (e.g. "I'm sorry, but I was tired!").

Listen and Improve

Give the other person a chance to respond without interruption. Forgiveness may take time and is not guaranteed. Be prepared to discuss changes you will make to avoid repeating the problem.

Myths vs. Reality

Myth: Love means never having to say you're sorry.

Reality: Apologies can be particularly important when you love someone. An apology communicates you care about the other person and want them to feel better.

Myth: Apologizing is as simple as saying "I'm sorry."

Reality: Merely saying the words "I'm sorry" is not a complete apology. An apology requires remorse, an attempt to right the wrong, and taking steps to make sure the problem is not repeated.

Myth: Apologizing will make me look weak.

Reality: An apology shows you are secure enough to admit when you've done something wrong. It also shows you have respect for yourself and the other person.

Reflections

Communication Skill

Using a technique called **reflection** can quickly help you become a better listener. When reflecting, you will repeat back what someone has just said to you, but in your own words. This shows that you didn't just hear the other person, but you are trying to understand them.

Reflecting what another person says can feel funny at first. You might think the other person will be annoyed at you for repeating them. However, when used correctly, reflections receive a positive reaction and drive a conversation forward. **Here's an example:**

Speaker: "I get so angry when you spend so much money without telling me. We're trying to save for a house!"

Listener: "We're working hard to save for a house, so it's really frustrating when it seems like I don't care."

✓ Quick Tips

The tone of voice you use for reflections is important. Use a tone that comes across as a statement, with a bit of uncertainty. Your goal is to express: "I think this is what you're telling me, but correct me if I'm wrong." Your reflections don't have to be perfect. If the other person corrects you, that's good! Now you have a better understanding of what they're trying to say.

Try to reflect emotions, even if the person you're listening to didn't clearly describe them. You may be able to pick up on how they feel by their tone of voice or body language.

Switch up your phrasing, or your reflections *will* start to sound forced. Try some of these:

- "I hear you saying that..."
- "It sounds like you feel..."
- "You're telling me that..."

Focus on reflecting the main point. Don't worry too much about all the little details, especially if the speaker had a lot to say.

Reflections

Communication Skill

Practice

“I was in a bad mood yesterday because work has been so stressful. I just can’t keep up with everything I have to do.”

Reflection:

“I feel like I’m doing all of the work around the house. I need you to help me clean and do the dishes more often.”

Reflection:

“I’ve been worried when you don’t answer your phone. I always think something might’ve happened to you.”

Reflection:

“I don’t understand what she wants from me. First she says she wants one thing, then another.”

Reflection:

Relationship Growth Activity

Discovery Questions

Instructions: Sometimes in relationships we become so focused on the problems that we forget to see our partner as a person. You can strengthen your relationship by learning more about your partner, and discussing their thoughts and feelings.

Take turns selecting a question from each section below to ask your partner. If you believe you know all of the answers in a section, see if you can answer each one correctly!



The Fun Things

What was your partner's favorite TV show when they were a child?

Where would your partner most like to visit on a vacation?

What song is your partner into right now?

Are there any movies your partner is excited to see?

Has your partner ever read a book that had a major impact on their life?



About Us

When did your partner realize they were interested in you? Was there a specific moment?

What motivates your partner to keep working on your relationship?

What does your partner want your relationship to look like in 5 years?

When was a moment that your partner felt happy about your relationship?

What is your partner's favorite thing to do, or place to go, as a couple?



Hopes & Dreams

How does your partner hope to change over the next year? 5 years? 20 years?

What are three realistic goals your partner has for their lifetime?

What is the happiest life your partner can imagine?

What is one goal your partner has for their career, family, and their personal growth?

What are five things your partner would place on their bucket list?

Relationship Growth Activity

Discovery Questions



Work Life

What's something your partner likes about their job? What's something they dislike?

Who are your partner's best friends at work, and why?

What is the most challenging task your partner has to do at their job?

Besides a paycheck, what does your partner get from their work? (E.g. respect or pride)

What's a typical day at work like, from beginning to end?



Emotions

When in your partner's life did they feel the most scared?

Overall, how has your partner been feeling during the past week?

Does your partner view themselves as a happy person? If not, how do they view themselves?

What is something that can consistently make your partner happy?

How does your partner relax after a stressful day?



Other Relationships

Outside of your relationship, who does your partner feel that they can talk to about problems?

Who is someone that your partner has a negative feeling about, or distrusts?

What is your partner's longest friendship? How have they maintained their friendship?

Who does your partner feel closest to in their family?

Does your partner prefer to spend time alone, or with others?

Fair Fighting Rules

Before you begin, ask yourself why you feel upset.

Are you angry because your partner left the mustard on the counter? Or are you angry because you feel like you're doing an uneven share of the housework, and this is just one more piece of evidence? Take time to think about your own feelings before starting an argument.

Discuss one topic at a time.

Don't let "You left dishes in the sink" turn into "You watch too much TV." Discussions that get off-topic are more likely to get heated, and less likely to solve the original problem. Choose one topic and stick to it.

No degrading language.

Discuss the issue, not the person. No put-downs, swearing, or name-calling. Degrading language is an attempt to express negative feelings while making sure your partner feels just as bad. Doing so leads to more character attacks while the original issue is forgotten.

Express your feelings with words.

"I feel hurt when you ignore my phone calls." "I feel scared when you yell." Structure your sentences as "I" statements ("I feel *emotion* when *event*") to express how you feel while taking responsibility for your emotions. However, starting with "I" does not give a license to ignore the other fair fighting rules.

Take turns speaking.

Give your full attention while your partner speaks. Avoid making corrections or thinking about what you want to say. Your only job is to understand their point of view, even if you disagree. If you find it difficult to not interrupt, try setting a timer allowing 1-2 minutes for each person to speak without interruption.

No stonewalling.

Sometimes, the easiest way to respond to an argument is to retreat into your shell and refuse to speak. This is called stonewalling. You might feel better temporarily, but the original issue will remain unresolved and your partner will feel more upset. If you absolutely cannot go on, tell your partner you need to take a time-out. Agree to resume the discussion later.

No yelling.

Yelling does not help anyone see your point of view. Instead, it sends the message that only your words matter. Even if yelling intimidates your partner into giving up, the underlying problem only grows worse.

Take a time-out if things get too heated.

In a perfect world, we would all follow these rules 100% of the time... but it just doesn't work like that. If an argument starts to become personal or heated, take a time-out. Agree on a time to come back and discuss the problem after everyone has cooled down.

Attempt to come to a compromise or an understanding.

There isn't always a perfect answer to an argument. Life is too messy for that. Do your best to come to a compromise (this means some give and take from both sides). If you can't come to a compromise, simply taking the time to understand your partner's perspective can help soothe negative feelings.

"I" Statements

When a person feels that they are being blamed—whether rightly or wrongly—it's common that they respond with defensiveness. **"I" statements** are a simple way of speaking that will help you avoid this trap by reducing feelings of blame. A good "I" statement takes responsibility for one's own feelings, while tactfully describing a problem.

"I feel *emotion word* when *explanation*."

- ✓ "I feel..." must be followed with an emotion word, such as "angry", "hurt", or "worried".
- ✓ Careful wording won't help if your voice still sounds blaming. Use a soft and even tone.
- ✓ In your explanation, gently describe how the other person's actions affect you.

Examples

Blaming	"You can't keep coming home so late! It's so inconsiderate."
"I" Statement	"I feel worried when you come home late. I can't even sleep."

Blaming	"You never call me. I guess we just won't talk anymore."
"I" Statement	"I feel hurt when you go so long without calling. I'm afraid you don't care."

Practice

Scenario	A friend always cancels plans at the last minute. Recently, you were waiting for them at a restaurant, when they called to say they couldn't make it.
"I" Statement	

Scenario	You are working on a group project, and one member is not completing their portion. You have repeatedly had to finish their work.
"I" Statement	

Scenario	Your boss keeps dumping new work on you, with little instruction, and not enough time. Despite working overtime, you're weeks behind.
"I" Statement	

Lori Petro's Communication

When You Don't Agree with Your Partners Parenting

#1 Offer help instead of opinions:

If you see your partner reacting with blame, shame, guilt, fear, or judgment to your child.

Instead of attacking his choices or even calling them out.

Just reframe his language. You can even do that in your head if you need to. Which will give you some time to access your compassion. Then offer to step in with help. So that your partner can regroup, refocus, and have a moment to think.

You can say: "I think Daddy is feeling upset about this", and then tell your partner "I can step in if you want to take a minute".

Working together in support of each other without calling out missteps is collaborative. Still interrupting the negative pattern but stepped in consciously without blame or judgment. Giving your partner a chance to think and respond. You have presented a united front in front of your child.

#2 Say what you feel not what you think:

When we say, I think you should be.., or I need you to.. or I want you to feel... Never endears people to us.

Instead of saying "I wish you would be more patient with her" (What you're thinking, judgment, evaluation.)

Instead, try saying "I noticed you threw your arms up in the air when you noticed that Lisa didn't do her homework". Its frustrating for me too. (What you notice & how you feel, observe feelings.)

What you hope for & what's Missing

Instead of; I need you to not get so angry with her its not helping. (What you want from someone assumption and blame).

"I wish she didn't get so aggressive when we tell her to clean up her room". Its hard for me to feel calm as well.

Telling the other person how you feel about the situation instead of what you think of them. Brings you closer to that common ground. It gives your partner a chance to respond without feeling threatened or devalued.

You have only observed and shared. You haven't pointed fingers or made vague requests for your partner to be or feel a certain way.

#3 Start by mentioning something you appreciate about your partner:

Appreciation goes a long way.

Appreciating what your partner does is a great way to soften the opening and bridge that connection gap. Its much easier to solve problems together when you both feel valued by your contributions. What is one thing that your partner does that makes them capable honorable or special. Try mentioning that before starting your opening. You can say something like; I always appreciate that you come back to connect after a disagreement. I'm thankful that you are willing to hear me out in this. I love that you're so flexible. This is so important to me.

#4 Problem-solve the particulars but don't pick on personal choices

Instead of; your always so hard on her or you give in too much, you can't let her walk all over her. None of which builds up the communication. You can only get to problem solving once you have started identifying what the real problems are instead of critiquing each other's personal choices.

Instead of commenting on what you see as the problem. Try getting to the root of the problem by sharing your needs and making active requests.

Example: I want to set the boundaries with you together, so she sees we are working together. Would you be willing to talk about doing something differently?

Example: I agree what you are saying about Ellen. I think what I need is for you to hold my limit with me when she resists and runs crying to you. Would this be something you can do.

This says, I want harmony. No two people are ever going to be in total agreement on how to interact. What is important is how you use active listening skills and making actionable requests. That helps bring you closer and sets bar for children.

Relationship Conflict Resolution

Focus on the problem, not the person.

When a disagreement turns to personal insults, raised voices, or mocking tones, the conversation is no longer productive. Be careful to focus on the problem without placing blame on your partner. If a disagreement becomes personal, you should pause the conversation.

Use reflective listening.

Oftentimes during arguments we focus on getting our own point across rather than listening to our partner. Before responding to your partner, restate what they have said to you in your own words. Continue this process until your partner agrees that you understand. Next, share your side. Your partner should reflect back your ideas in their own words until they too understand. Using this technique will help both individuals feel listened to and understood, even if you disagree.

Use “I” statements.

When sharing a concern, begin your sentence with “I”. For example: “I feel hurt when you don’t tell me you’ll be late”. With this sentence format we show that we are taking responsibility for our own emotion rather than blaming our partner. The alternative sentence—“You never tell me when you’re going to be late”—will often cause a partner to become defensive.

Know when to take a time-out.

When you and your partner are becoming argumentative, insulting, or aggressive, it’s a good idea to take a time-out. Have a plan in place so you or your partner can call for a break when needed. Spend some time doing something **alone** that you find relaxing. When you’ve both calmed down, you and your partner can return to solving the problem. Be sure that you do return—it isn’t a good idea to leave these issues unaddressed.

Work toward a resolution.

Disagreement is a normal part of a relationship. If it becomes clear that you and your partner will not agree, focus on a resolution instead. Try to find a compromise that benefits both individuals. Ask yourself if this disagreement really matters to your relationship, and let yourself move on if not.

Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication

Passive Communication

During passive communication, a person prioritizes the needs, wants, and feelings of others, even at their own expense. The person does not express their own needs, or does not stand up for them. This can lead to being taken advantage of, even by well-meaning people who are unaware of the passive communicator's needs and wants.

- Soft spoken / quiet
- Allows others to take advantage
- Prioritizes needs of others
- Poor eye contact / looks down or away
- Does not express one's own needs or wants
- Lack of confidence

Aggressive Communication

Through aggressive communication, a person expresses that only their own needs, wants, and feelings matter. The other person is bullied, and their needs are ignored.

- Easily frustrated
- Speaks in a loud or overbearing way
- Unwilling to compromise
- Use of criticism, humiliation, and domination
- Frequently interrupts or does not listen
- Disrespectful toward others

Assertive Communication

Assertive communication emphasizes the importance of *both* peoples' needs. During assertive communication, a person stands up for their own needs, wants, and feelings, but also listens to and respects the needs of others. Assertive communication is defined by confidence, and a willingness to compromise.

- Listens without interruption
- Clearly states needs and wants
- Willing to compromise
- Stands up for own rights
- Confident tone / body language
- Good eye contact

Examples

Scenario	A friend asks to borrow your car. This will be a big inconvenience for you.
Passive	Umm, yeah, I guess that's fine. Do you need me to fill the tank?
Aggressive	No way! Why would I let you borrow my car? You're crazy to even ask.
Assertive	I need my car that day, but I'll have time to drop you off.

Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Communication

Practice

Scenario	Your boss asks you to stay late, while everyone else leaves. You're always the one who stays late, and tonight you have plans.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	Your partner left a mess in the kitchen, and you're too busy to clean.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	You're at a restaurant, and the server brought you the wrong dish.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

Scenario	A friend showed up at your house uninvited. Usually you would be happy to let them in, but this time you're busy.
Passive	
Aggressive	
Assertive	

What is the Critical Inner Voice?

The critical inner voice is a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others. The nagging “voices,” or thoughts, that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behavior.

The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head. This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages individuals from acting in their best interest.

How Does the Critical Inner Voice Affect Us?

The critical inner voice is an internal enemy that can affect every aspect of our lives, including our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships, and our performance and accomplishments at school and work. These negative thoughts affect us by undermining our positive feelings about ourselves and others and fostering self-criticism, inwardness, distrust, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities.

What Are Some Examples of Common Critical Inner Voices?

Some common voices include thoughts like “You’re stupid,” “You’re not attractive,” or “You’re not like other people.”

Some people have voices about their career, like “You’ll never be successful,” “No one appreciates how hard you work,” or “You are under too much pressure, you can’t handle this stress.”

Many people experience voices about their relationship, such as “He doesn’t really care about you,” “You’re better off on your own,” or “Don’t be vulnerable, you’ll just get hurt.”

Where Do Critical Inner Voices Come From?

These inner voices usually come from early life experiences that are internalized and taken in as ways we think about ourselves. Often, many of these negative voices come from our parents or primary care takers, as children we pick up on the negative attitudes that parents not only have towards their children but also toward themselves. Our voices can also come from interactions with peers and siblings, or influential adults.

How is the Critical Inner Voice Different Than a Conscience?

Many people think if they stop listening to their critical inner voice, they will lose touch with their conscience. However, the critical inner voice is not a trustworthy moral guide like a conscience. On the contrary, the critical inner voice is degrading and punishing and often leads us to make unhealthy decisions. These negative voices tend to increase our feelings of self-hatred without motivating us to change undesirable qualities or act in a constructive manner.

How Can I Conquer My Critical Inner Voice?

In order to take power over this destructive thought process, you must first become conscious of what your inner voice is telling you so you can stop it from ruining your life. To identify

this, it is helpful to pay attention to when you suddenly slip into a bad mood or become upset, often these negative shifts in emotion are a result of a critical inner voice. Once you identify the thought process and pinpoint the negative actions it is advocating, you can take control over your inner voice by consciously deciding not to listen. Instead you can take the actions that are in your best interest.

Read More About the Critical Inner Voice

We are all aware of those nagging thoughts and doubts that increase our nervousness and interfere with our performance at various times. However, most of us are unaware that these sneering, belittling self-criticisms are only the tip of an iceberg. They are merely the more obvious fragments of a larger, well-hidden enemy within each of us that influences our actions, interferes with the pursuit of our personal and career goals, and has an overall negative impact on our lives.

What is the Critical Inner Voice?

The critical inner voice can be thought of as the language of the defensive process. It has been defined as an integrated system of thoughts and attitudes, antithetical toward self and hostile toward others that is at the core of an individual's maladaptive behavior. The concept of the "voice" is not restricted to cognitive processes but is generally associated with varying degrees of anger and sadness. The term "voice" is used to describe a form of intrapsychic communication that represents a split within the individual between forces that are life-affirming and those that are antagonistic to the self. "Listening" to the voice, that is, believing its prescriptions and prohibitions leads to self-limiting behavior and negative

consequences. In other words, people often make their actions correspond to their self-attacks. See Video Clip.

Watch Lisa Firestone, Ph.D. Introduce the Concept of the Critical Inner Voice

Being for Yourself or Against Yourself

All of us are divided within ourselves. On the one hand, we have self-regard—we have traits and behaviors that we like or feel comfortable with. We have natural tendencies to grow and develop and to pursue our personal and vocational goals, as well as desires to be close in our relationships and to search for meaning in life. These qualities all make up who we really are; they reflect an undefended part of our personality and a friendly, compassionate view of our self.

The positive part of us consists of our unique characteristics—physical abilities and attributes, and emotional temperament, as well as positive traits that we naturally incorporated from our parents. It first develops and grows as a result of our parents' and other concerned adults' nurturing qualities and behaviors, and the love and care they direct toward us. Then it is further influenced by what we learn, what we enjoy, and the experiences that facilitate our personal growth.

The Critical Inner Voice

The Critical Inner Voice is the part of us that is turned against ourselves. It is the defended, negative side of our personality that is opposed to our ongoing development. The voice consists of the negative thoughts, beliefs and attitudes that oppose our best interests and diminish our self-esteem. It encourages and strongly influences self-defeating and self-destructive behavior. This hostile, judgmental advisor also warns us about

other people, promoting angry and cynical attitudes toward others and creating a negative, pessimistic picture of the world.

The critical inner voice exists to varying degrees in every person. It undermines our ability to interpret events realistically; it triggers negative moods and sabotages our pursuit of satisfaction and meaning in life. These destructive internalized thoughts lead to a sense of alienation—a feeling of being removed from ourselves and distant from those we love. The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head. If we “listen” to its destructive point of view and believe what it is telling us, we will fail to challenge it and instead we will act on it. This process has a seriously negative consequence on our lives.

Although most of us are conscious of some aspects of this inner voice, many of our negative thoughts exist on an unconscious level. At times, we may recognize what our critical inner voice is telling us, while at other times, we may be unclear about our negative thinking and simply accept it as being true. We are often unaware of the destructive impact that these thoughts are having on our emotions, actions, and the overall quality of our lives.

The Critical Inner Voice is Not a Conscience

The critical inner voice is not a conscience or a moral guide. What most distinguishes the inner voice from a conscience is its degrading, punishing quality. Its demeaning tone tends to increase our feelings of self-hatred instead of motivating us to change undesirable actions in a constructive manner.

Challenging your Critical Inner Voice

You can take power over your critical inner voice. When you become conscious of what it is telling you, you can stop it from running your life. The challenge is to identify and 'flush out' this internal covert operation. To do this, be on the lookout for when you slip into a bad mood or become upset. Investigate: what caused the shift? What happened and, most importantly, what did you start telling yourself after the event? The fact that your mood shifted from feeling optimistic or relaxed to feeling down or irritable is probably a sign that you are interpreting the event through your critical inner voice.

Now that you have identified that your critical inner voice is advising you, what is it trying to get you to do? When you pinpoint the actions that it is advocating, you can take control over your critical inner voice. You can consciously decide to take action against its directives, thereby acting in your own interest.

Staying on the Right Side of Yourself and Not Listening to Your Critical Inner Voice

The balance between our two different sides is delicate and can be easily tipped. However, we don't need to be the victims of our moods as they tip back and forth between our positive and negative feelings about ourselves. By identifying the critical inner voice and the role it plays in supporting our negative self-image, we can take action against it and significantly change our lives. We can reject attitudes that oppose our best interests and diminish our self-esteem. We can stop self-defeating and self-destructive behavior. We cannot tolerate angry, cynical attitudes toward others that turn us against people.

As you emancipate yourself from your critical inner voice, you will be free to engage in your pursuit of satisfaction and meaning in life. You will feel at peace with yourself and close to those you love. You will enjoy a compassionate view of the world and an optimistic outlook on life.

Critical Inner Voice, Differentiation, Parenting, Relationships, Self Development, Self-Esteem By PsychAlive

Assertive Communication



Assertive Communication: A communication style in which a person stands up for their own needs and wants, while also taking into consideration the needs and wants of others, without behaving passively or aggressively.

Traits of Assertive Communicators

- Clearly state needs and wants
- Eye contact
- Listens to others without interruption
- Appropriate speaking volume
- Steady tone of voice
- Confident body language

Assertiveness Tips

Respect yourself. Your needs, wants, and rights are as important as anyone else's. It's fine to express what you want, so long as you are respectful toward the rights of others.

Express your thoughts and feelings calmly. Giving the silent treatment, yelling, threatening, and shaming are all great examples of what not to do. Take responsibility for your emotions, and express them in a calm and factual manner. Try starting sentences with "I feel..."

Plan what you're going to say. Know your wants and needs, and how you can express them, before entering a conversation. Come up with specific sentences and words you can use.

Say "no" when you need to. You can't make everyone happy all the time. When you need to say "no", do so clearly, without lying about the reasons. Offer to help find another solution.

Examples of Assertive Communication

"I've been feeling frustrated about doing most of the chores around the house. I understand that you're busy, but I need help. How can we make this work?"

The speaker takes responsibility for their feelings without blaming, and clearly describes their needs.

"I won't be able to take you to the airport on Friday. I've had a long week, and I want to rest."

The speaker respects their own needs and wants by clearly saying "no".

"I'm having a hard time sleeping when your music is on. What if you use headphones, or I can help you move the speakers to another room?"

The speaker describes their needs, while also considering the needs and wants of the other person.

Assertive Communication

Practice

Tip: Before responding, consider what your wants and needs might be in each situation.

Your Partner: "I know you have plans for the weekend, but I really need you to watch the kids. I have a friend coming to town, and we made plans."

Assertive Response:

Situation: You've just received your food at a restaurant, and it was prepared incorrectly. Your sandwich seems to have extra mayo, instead of no mayo.

Assertive Statement:

Your Friend: "Hey, can I borrow some money? I want to buy these shoes, but I left my wallet at home. I'll pay you back soon, I swear. It won't be like last time."

Assertive Response:

Situation: Your neighbor is adding an expansion to their house, and the crew starts working, very loudly, at 5 AM. It has woken you up every day for a week.

Assertive Statement: