

Changing your critical self-talk

-Out of the book by Author Kristin Neff from Self Compassion stop beating yourself up and leave insecurity behind

This exercise should be done over several weeks and will eventually form the blueprint for changing how you relate to yourself long term. Some people find it useful to work on their inner critic by writing in a **journal**. Others are more comfortable taking it via **internal dialogues**. If you are someone who likes to write things down and revisit them later, journaling can be an excellent tool for transformation. If you are someone who never manages to be consistent with a journal, then do whatever works for you. You can speak aloud to yourself, or think silently.

1. The first step towards changing the way you treat yourself is to **notice** when you are being self-critical. It may be that-like many of us-your self critical voice comes up so frequently that you don't even notice when its present. Whenever you feeling bad about something, think about what you've said to yourself. Try to be as accurate as possible, nothing your inner speech verbatim.

- What words do you actually use when you self-critical? Are there key phrases that come up over and over again?

- What is the tone of your voice-harsh, cold, or angry?

- Does the voice remind you of anyone in your past that was critical of you? You want to get to know the inner self-critical very well, and to come aware when you judge is active.

2. Make an active effort to soften the self-critical voice, but do so with compassion rather than self-judgment.

3. Reframe the **observation** made by your inner critic in a kind, friendly, positive way. If you having trouble thinking of what words to use, you might want to imagine what a very **compassionate friend** would say to you in this situation. It might help to use a term of endearment that strengthens expressed feelings of warmth and care, but only if it feels natural. Even if you're having trouble calling up emotions of kindness at first, **physical gestures** such as stroking your arm or hugging your legs, can tap into the care giving system, releasing oxytocin that will help change your biochemistry. The important thing is that you start acting kindly, and feelings or true warmth and caring will eventually flow.