



## Episode 30: Three Ways to Lessen Your Inner Critic

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Are you ready to be vulnerable and courageous? I hope so, because today, we're talking about the inner critic. The inner critic, in case you're not familiar with that phrase, is the voice in our heads that causes us pain. It says hurtful things about what who we are and what we're doing. We all have one.

We need to talk about the inner critic, because this voice can hold us back. It can undermine our confidence, and keep us from speaking up, taking risks, and shining our light.

Today, I'm going to share 3 strategies to lessen your inner critic, so that you feel more confident and empowered, and it's easier to be the leader you want to be, and have the impact you want to have.

First, I want to reassure you that it's completely normal to have an inner critic. We all have that voice that reminds us that maybe we're not that great or don't actually know what we're doing.

Here's the interesting thing about the inner critic. At its core, it's not trying to be evil. It's actually trying to protect us. Your inner critic voice was likely formed earlier in your life to keep you from getting hurt. The problem is, though, that your inner critic is stuck in the past. It has not kept up with your growth and maturity. It doesn't realize how capable and resilient you are now.

Here's what I mean. I have an inner critic who often seems to work overtime. It seems to want to keep me from pursuing new ideas and projects, just so that I won't fail. My inner critic likes to remind me about the need to be perfect and how horrible I would be if I failed. For example, when I started writing and sharing podcast episodes, it was particularly loud. "What if you sound stupid?" "What if no one listens?" "What if you say something wrong?" it would say.

Because that's what inner critics do. They get loud when we step out of our comfort zone, when we dip our toe into the waters of possibility.

If I ask you what your inner critic likes to say, I'm guessing you can answer that right away. I'm sure it's familiar to you.

So, now that you know that your inner critic is simply a voice that's trying to keep you safe, let's do something about it. Let's lessen this voice so that you can have an easier time speaking up, going for that higher-level job, or creating the life you really want.

Because here's the big reveal about the inner critic. It's not the truth. It is not you. It is just a voice that sometimes gets really loud and drowns out all the other voices that you might want to listen to.

The good news is that we can do things to deliberately lessen this voice.

Let's talk about the 3 strategies to lessen your inner critic.

Ready? Strategy #1 is about acknowledging our inner critic and giving it air time in a very circumscribed way. After all, our feelings have feelings, too, and often if we shove our feelings down, they leak back out in other ways.

Strategy #1 is recognizing when your inner critic gets loud, and then giving it a set space and time to speak. It's saying to your inner critic, OK, let me set my timer on my phone and give you 30 seconds of air time. Go. Tell me all the things you want to say. Then, speak those messages out loud or write them down. Get them out of your head, because things always take up more space in our brain. When we speak things out loud, they often don't feel as monumental.

Remember to stick to your time limit. After 30 seconds, your inner critic is done for the time being.

Let's move on to strategy #2. The goal of strategy #2 is to put space between you and the inner critic so that you remember it's not the truth.

This strategy is a fun one, because it involves giving your inner critic a name and a persona.

Let me share an example of a recent way I did this with a client.

I told my client that we were going to give her inner critic a whole persona, starting with the name.

I asked, if you were going to give your inner critic a name, what would it be? She said, it would be Bob.

Where does Bob live? I asked. She said, In the depths of hell.

How does Bob emerge from the depths of hell? I asked. She said, he has an express elevator that takes him right up.

What does Bob eat for breakfast? I asked. She said, sauerkraut and other fermented foods.

My client really got into fleshing out Bob's life. We talked about what Bob does during the day, what Bob wears, and what prompts Bob to jump into his elevator. This conversation made my client smile and say that she's never thought about Bob this way before. Exactly! That's the point. Thinking about your inner critic in a new way can make you more curious and put more space between you and it.

After you have given your inner critic a persona, it's important to call your inner critic by that name in the future to remind you that it's not the truth. For example, my client might say, Oh, there goes Bob again. Of course this would make Bob speak up, because I'm being more confident at work.

Let's move on to strategy #3. The third strategy also imagines a persona – this time it's one of your inner strength and wisdom.

Just like you created a persona for your inner critic, you can create a persona for your inner wisdom and inner guide. Your inner guide or inner wisdom is part of you – it is the part that knows the truth of how amazing you are and sees your authentic, purposeful self.

Your inner guide is calm, loving, compassionate, and wise. Strategy #3 involves taking the time to connect to, name, and fully imagine this source of confidence and courage.

When I imagine my inner guide, for example, I picture an older woman with a big, warm smile on face and wearing a purple flowing robe. She says things to me like, you are enough, you are ok, and you are a

caring coach. When I picture her right now, I immediately feel calmer in my body and brain, and it's easier to feel confident of the path I'm on.

If you have never imagined or connected to an inner source of strength, I invite you to do this now. Give this part of you a name and persona that you can lean into when you need it. After you do that, you might even find a small picture or an item that reminds you of this power and essence. Put that picture or item near your work station so you can see it often.

OK, let's recap so that you can bring these strategies into your life.

The big topic today is that we all have an inner critic, and it's especially loud when we step out of our comfort zone, because it's really just trying to keep us safe.

Because our inner critic can hold us back when we have exciting things to do and important things to say, we can lessen its power and voice using 3 strategies.

First, we can give our inner critic air time in a very specific way so that we acknowledge it.

Second, we can remind ourselves that our inner critic is not the truth of us; that it's a separate voice. We can put space between it and us by naming it and giving it a persona.

Third, we can listen to the voice that will empower us. We can identify, name, and imagine our inner wisdom and inner guide, which is more powerful than the inner critic.

In the next few weeks, I invite you to think about these strategies. Try them out. See how you can lessen your inner critic so that you can speak up more easily, lead more confidently, and create the life you really want.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. I hope that your inner guide is present and encouraging during the next few weeks. If it's not, please email me at [deb@debelbaum.com](mailto:deb@debelbaum.com) for a conversation. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, to keep moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!