

EXERCISE THE INNER CRITIC QUESTIONNAIRE

We have devised a questionnaire to help you determine which of the seven types of Critics are problems for you. It is short and easy, usually not taking more than five or six minutes. After reading each of the statements, write the number that corresponds to the following:

0=Never 1=Not often 2=Occasionally 3=Frequently 4=Always

1. I feel like I am intrinsically flawed. _____
2. I set high standards for myself. _____
3. I feel terrible about myself when I get out of control. _____
4. I push myself to work very hard so I can achieve my goals. _____
5. When I think of trying something new and challenging, I give up before I begin. _____
6. I am ashamed of everything about myself. _____
7. I am troubled by something I have done that I cannot forgive myself for. _____
8. I know who I ought to be, and I'm hard on myself when I act differently. _____
9. I expend a great deal of effort trying to control my impulsive behaviour. _____
10. My self-confidence is so low that I don't believe I can succeed at anything. _____
11. I attack myself when I make a mistake. _____
12. I have trouble holding onto a positive sense of myself. _____
13. I have a hard time feeling OK about myself when I'm not acting in accordance with my childhood programming. _____
14. There is no end to the things I have to do. _____
15. I do things to people that I feel terribly guilty for. _____
16. There are indulgent parts of me that take over and get me into trouble, and then I punish myself for it. _____

17. I believe that it is safer not to try than to fail. _____
18. I get anxious and self-critical when things don't come out just right. _____
19. I feel ashamed when I don't measure up to others' expectations. _____
20. I tell myself that, if I were a good person, I would take better care of people I care about. _____
21. At a deep level I feel like I don't have the right to exist. _____
22. I feel bad because I am too lazy to really make it in the world. _____
23. I feel really ashamed of some of my habits. _____
24. I spend much more time than is needed on a project in order to make it as good as possible. _____
25. I have a nagging feeling that I am bad. _____
26. I try really hard to overcome my tendency to avoid doing tasks. _____
27. I feel bad because I can't be what my family or culture expects of me. _____
28. I feel that I don't have what it takes to succeed. _____

Now fill in your numerical answers from above in the blanks below and add up each line to get a total score for each group of four questions. This gives you a numerical score from 0 to 16 for each of the seven types of Critics.

Questions 2 _____ + 11 _____ + 18 _____ + 24 _____ = _____ Perfectionist Score

Questions 3 _____ + 9 _____ + 16 _____ + 23 _____ = _____ Inner Controller Score

Questions 4 _____ + 14 _____ + 22 _____ + 26 _____ = _____ Taskmaster Score

Questions 5 _____ + 10 _____ + 17 _____ + 28 _____ = _____ Underminer Score

Questions 1 _____ + 6 _____ + 12 _____ + 21 _____ = _____ Destroyer Score

Questions 7 _____ + 15 _____ + 20 _____ + 25 _____ = _____ Guilt Tripper Score

Questions 8 _____ + 13 _____ + 19 _____ + 27 _____ = _____ Molder Score

If you scored 9 or higher for a Critic, there is a good chance that it is causing problems for you. Those for which you scored 7 or 8 might be problematic. Those with scores 7 or less are less likely to be troublesome.

Most people have a number of self-judging Inner Critic parts. For example, you might have one Critic that attacks you for how you overeat and how much you weigh, and another Critic that tells you that you're lazy and should be working harder.

THE SEVEN TYPES OF INNER CRITICS

We have identified seven specific types of Critics: • The Perfectionist • The Inner Controller • The Taskmaster • The Underminer • The Destroyer • The Guilt Tripper • The Molder. Each type of Critic has a different motivation and strategy, and identifying which Critics are affecting you can be useful.

The Perfectionist tries to get you to do everything perfectly. It has very high standards for behavior, performance, and production. When you don't meet its standards, the Perfectionist attacks you by saying that your work or behavior isn't good enough, which makes it hard to finish projects. Sometimes the Perfectionist even makes it difficult to get started, as with writer's block. Our clients with Perfectionist Critics have pictured them in a variety of ways—a crab with pincers, a schoolmarm with super-high standards, a magnifying glass, and an inspector, especially El Exigente, “the demanding one,” from a 1970s coffee commercial.

The Inner Controller tries to control impulsive behavior, such as overeating, getting enraged, using drugs, or engaging in other indulgent behavior. It shames you after you binge, use, or react with rage. It is usually in a constant battle with an impulsive part of you. Our clients with Inner Controllers have viewed them as a bulldog, a lion tamer, an angry guard, and a shaming mother.

The Taskmaster tries to get you to work hard in order to be successful. It attempts to motivate you by telling you that you're lazy, stupid, or incompetent. It often gets into a battle with another part that procrastinates as a way of avoiding work. The Taskmaster might be envisioned as a demanding foreman, a vigilant watchdog, a boot in the center of your back, or someone constantly keeping a bunch of plates spinning.

The Underminer tries to undermine your self-confidence and self-esteem so you won't take risks that might end in failure. It tells you that you are worthless and inadequate and that you'll never amount to anything. It may also try to prevent you from getting too big, powerful, or visible in order to avoid the

threat of attack and rejection. The experience of being undermined can feel like a rug has been pulled out from under you or like you're walking on a treadmill where you work and sweat but go nowhere. It can also feel like you have a rope tied to your middle so you can't go forward or like you've come up against a glass wall.

The Destroyer attacks your fundamental self-worth. It is deeply shaming and tells you that you shouldn't exist. You might experience the Destroyer as a crushing force that wipes out your vitality or a pervasive negative energy that stamps out any sign of creativity, spontaneity, or desire. It might look like Darth Vader, a giant spider, a leech on the back of the neck, or an elephant crushing you underfoot.

The Guilt Tripper attacks you for a specific action you took (or didn't take) in the past that was harmful to someone, especially someone you care about. This Critic might also attack you for violating a deeply held value. It constantly makes you feel bad and will never forgive you. It might also make you feel guilty for repeated behaviors that it considers unacceptable in an attempt to get you to stop. Images of the Guilt Tripper from our clients include a nun, a judge, a despot exiling someone, a black cloud descending, and a weight on the shoulders. It can make you feel oozy and icky, heavy in the chest, or as if you are being smashed with a huge hammer.

The Molder tries to get you to fit a certain societal mold or act in a certain way that is based on your family or cultural mores. This mold can be any kind: caring, aggressive, outgoing, intellectual, or polite. This Critic attacks you when you don't fit into that mold and praises you when you do. Images for the Molder include a prison guard, a cage, a straightjacket, and a large rulebook, like a holy text, that determines what you should do at every moment.

RECOGNIZING YOUR INNER CRITICS

Let's look at some common examples of the ways Inner Critic messages manifest in our lives. You may recognize yourself and your Inner Critic in some of the following scenarios. Jill had an important date planned with someone she really liked. The night before the date, she started to feel nervous, ran to the fridge, and binged on chocolate cake. Right after she wiped away the crumbs, she looked in the mirror and heard her Critic, an Inner Controller, say, "You look fat! No man will ever marry you!" She suddenly felt uglier than she ever had in her life. She worried furiously about how she was going to look on her date, even though it was still twenty-four hours away. When the time for the date finally arrived, she was so nervous and agitated that she could barely communicate. She was less like her authentic self and ended up sabotaging her chances of making a good impression.

Charlie was sitting in front of his computer, halfway through an important project, when his Inner Critic showed up. It told him that the work he'd done so far was garbage and then made him check and recheck it, wasting his precious time. Under this pressure, he couldn't get the rest of the project done on time. If his Inner Critic, a Perfectionist, hadn't derailed his work in this way, Charlie might have done a stellar job and gotten kudos from his boss.

Jennifer's ten-year-old son, Sean, was not meeting academic standards, but Jennifer felt as though she herself was failing. She had a job outside of the house and believed that her inability to spend every afternoon with Sean was at the root of his problems at school. When he brought home his report card, Jennifer acted outwardly nurturing and caring, but on the inside she was crying, thinking it was her fault. Her Guilt Tripper Critic said, "It's your fault! You haven't helped him enough."

YOUR CRITICS ARE UNIQUE

Even though we are using these seven categories of Critics, each Inner Critic of yours is unique with its own particular characteristics. For example, your Perfectionist won't be the same as anyone else's, or you might have one Critic that has characteristics of both a Molder and Guilt Tripper. Don't pigeonhole your Critics according to our descriptions of these categories. Discover your own Critics and their unique attributes. Feel free to call your Critics by whatever names seem right; don't feel as though you must use the Taskmaster or the Underminer.