

IS YOUR INNER CRITIC WORKING OVER-TIME?

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By Rhoberta Shaler

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Do you have an Inner Critic who seems to always be on duty? It is that voice that sounds so sure and authoritative as it tears at your self-esteem and whittles away at your self-confidence. You can actually look spectacular, healthy and fit and it will fixate on the part of your body you like the least. Sound familiar?

It is not the exact words that this voice utters that matter. It is the quality of the energy behind the words...and it is often not positive. Interestingly enough, the voice is usually not telling the truth. In fact, it is not even close to being based in reality. It is such a strange phenomenon. A hundred people could tell you that you look terrific today, and that one lonely, miserable Inner Critic can cause you to decide that all one hundred of those folks are wrong! When you look at it that way, it seems ludicrous, doesn't it?

Let me tell you a story from my own life. From the time I was nine years old, I was told that I needed to diet, change, do more, do less, reach, settle, conform, stretch. The message from my folks was that no matter what I did I would never be good enough. Sound familiar again? Once I was an adult, the content of that message shifted from my weight to my career and mothering ability, but the outcome was the same--no matter what I did I would never be good enough. If I paid attention to my career--and, as a single mother of three, there was no choice if we wanted to eat--my parents insisted that I was not giving my children enough of my time. If I paid attention to my children, I was wasting my life being a mother. What a

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Catch-22! My parents were invested in control. Making it impossible for me to "win" allowed them to think they were in control. Fortunately, I saw their game when I was seventeen and gave their opinions less weight than they thought. Or, at least, that is what I thought!

At forty or so, I was making photograph albums for my three children. As I went through all the photos from my parents' home and mine, I found myself in tears. Why? Because, in looking at forty years of photos of me, I could see no evidence of the person they described when I looked at myself. The person in those photos was just fine just the way she was.

And yet, that Inner Critic had been well-informed with those repeated messages. My tears were for the early years of striving to gain the approval of folks whose opinions I really did not value. I tell that story because I know it is a common one. Fortunately, at age nineteen, Maxwell Maltz and I became friends through his books. Everything changed!

If your Inner Critic has way too much to say, consciously turn it off. When it begins, change the channel to one that is supportive, one that encourages you to live fully, stretch and grow—all on your own terms. You can do this!

**REMEMBER, WHAT YOU PAY ATTENTION TO EXPANDS!**

Dr. Shaler is the creator of the Living Richly™ Programs. For further articles, free ezines, upcoming teleseminars and booking information, visit [www.OptimizeLifeNow.com](http://www.OptimizeLifeNow.com) today!

### **Banishing Your Critic**

**By Lynn Cutts**

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Whenever we start a new creative project, it's always a little scary. We're never sure how it's going to turn out. And that element of uncertainty is just the thing we need to get our Critic up and hollering at us.

The Critic also comes to visit when we start thinking about tomorrow's work, or yesterday's work, or the end result, instead of what we are doing here and now. Sometimes, it comes calling immediately after a visit with a well-meaning friend or relative, or when we are hungry or tired. My Critic likes to visit about 3:30 in the morning, frequently waking me from a sound sleep.

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You know what I mean. Your Critic is that voice that echoes inside your head, telling you your work isn't good enough, you're not good enough, it's all a waste of time, it's trivial, no one will come, it will never sell. Everyone's Critic has its own favorite issues. And our Critic's issues often get in the way of our work.

So we need to banish our Critic from our work space, whether that's a painting studio, a writing office, or a stage. But that's not easy to do. The Critic is stubborn, and usually returns after you think you've got rid of him for good. Here are some suggestions that might work for you.

1. Have a concrete representation of your Critic in your work space. When you start to work, move it out of the space or put it in a drawer.
2. Sit and listen to your Critic. Write down every negative thing it says, then either verbally or on paper refute each statement, whether you agree with it or not.
3. When your Critic starts to sit on your shoulder and whisper in your ear in the middle of your working, stop for a minute. Take a deep breath, then concentrate on all your five physical senses. What do you smell? What do you hear? What do you see, feel, and taste? By really paying attention to your physical surroundings, you get yourself out of your head, and into the moment.
4. Using a smudge stick, candle, or incense, devise a ceremony to purge your Critic from your work space. Perform your banishing ceremony whenever its voice gets a little too loud.
5. Draw a picture of your Critic, with a balloon coming out of his mouth. Write its favorite negative phrase in that balloon. Then burn the picture, rip it into shreds, or crumple it into a ball and step on it.
6. Talk to your Critic. Thank it for caring, but it needs to go away now. Politely but firmly ask it to leave. Keep asking until it goes.
7. Take a break. Go outside, and reconnect with the creative energies that flow all around you.
8. Go for a walk or a run. Go to the gym. Do something physical that will help you focus on now.

So the next time you hear that little voice whispering not-so-sweet nothings in your ear, get rid of it! Quickly. Then get back to work on what really matters.

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help you create your own boundless life. Lynn is certified by the Coaches Training Institute, and is a member of the International Coaches Federation.



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