KESTON SCHOOL

MIND & EMOTIONS · FREE SAMPLE

Quiet Your Inner Critic

Turn harsh self-talk into steady, useful inner coaching

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will be able to catch your inner critic in the moment, answer it fairly instead of obeying it, and talk yourself through mistakes and challenges the way a good coach would.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Quiet Your Inner Critic Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CONTENTS

Quiet Your Inner Critic

01 The Voice That Never Rests 4

Your next step 9

01

CHAPTER 1

The Voice That Never Rests

Recognize the inner critic in your everyday life and see why ignoring it, fighting it or forcing positive thoughts rarely works.

You send an email to your team and notice a typo in the second line. Nobody mentions it. Nobody probably even saw it. But for the next hour a voice in your head keeps going: *Sloppy. You always rush. They must think you are careless.* By lunch you have reread the email six times, apologized for nothing in a follow-up message, and lost the energy you needed for the work that actually mattered.

Later, a friend makes the same kind of slip in a message to you. You do not even register it. If you did, you would think nothing of it. The standard you hold for yourself and the standard you hold for everyone else live in two different worlds.

That gap is what this book is about.

Meet the inner critic

Most people talk to themselves all day, mostly without noticing. Some of that inner talk is neutral: reminders, plans, running commentary. Some of it is helpful: *Slow down, check the numbers again.* And for many people, a large share of it is harsh. It judges, predicts disaster and keeps score.

This book calls that harsh part the inner critic. It is not a separate person and it is not a sign that something is wrong with you. It is a habit of thinking that almost everyone has to some degree. What varies is the volume and the tone.

You might recognize your critic in lines like these:

- *Who do you think you are to try that?*
- *Everyone else has it figured out by now.*
- *You should have known better.*
- *Do not say anything, you will sound stupid.*
- *Typical. You ruin everything.*

Notice two things about these lines. First, they are fast. They arrive before you have time to think. Second, they are rarely specific. They do not say *the second line of that email had a typo*. They say *you are careless*, as if one moment were proof of who you are.

The three responses that do not work

When people notice how harsh their inner voice has become, they usually try one of three things. Each makes sense. Each tends to backfire.

1. Ignoring it. You tell yourself not to think about it and push the thought away. The trouble is that pushed-away thoughts tend to bounce back, often louder. And while you are busy not listening, you are still following the critic's advice: you skip the meeting, delete the post, stay quiet.

2. Arguing with it. You try to win the debate. *I am not careless, I am actually very careful, remember the project last spring…* The critic has an answer for everything, and now you are in a long, tiring argument inside your own head. Even when you win, you have spent your morning in court.

3. Forcing positive thoughts. You repeat bright statements you do not believe. *I am brilliant. Everything I do is excellent.* For many people this feels hollow, and the gap between the statement and how they feel can make the critic sound even more convincing. The critic loves an easy target.

> **Key idea:** The aim is not to silence your inner voice or replace it with cheerleading. The aim is to make it fair, specific and useful, the way a good coach talks.

What this book will help you do

Over the next chapters you will learn a simple sequence you can use in the moment:

1. **Catch** the critic when it speaks, instead of hearing its lines as plain truth.
2. **Answer** it with a few fair questions rather than a full argument.
3. **Coach** yourself with a short, practical script that points at the next step.

You will also see why the critic talks the way it does, what it has been costing you, and how to make a kinder, steadier tone your default rather than something you have to remember.

None of this means lowering your standards. Many people hold on to their critic because they believe it keeps them sharp. You will see in chapter 4 that you can keep high standards and still drop the cruelty. Most people find they do better work, not worse, once the voice in their head stops attacking them.

A note on what this book is and is not

This book works at the level of everyday self-talk: the harsh commentary that makes you hesitate, overwork, avoid new things or replay mistakes. It is practical, not clinical.

For some people, self-criticism is part of something heavier. If your inner voice is constant and crushing, if it comes with long periods of low mood, hopelessness or thoughts of harming yourself, or if it is making it hard to work, sleep or connect with people, please talk to a doctor or a qualified

mental health professional. That is a sensible, practical step, the same way you would see a doctor for a physical problem that will not go away. The tools in this book can sit alongside that support, but they do not replace it. If you are ever in immediate danger, contact your local emergency number.

Try this

Over the next three days, carry a small note on your phone titled **Critic Lines**. Each time you notice a harsh thought about yourself, write down the exact words, as close as you can, plus one word for the situation (*email*, *mirror*, *meeting*, *dinner*). Do not argue with the thoughts or fix them. Just collect them. Spend no more than thirty seconds per entry.

At the end of day three, read the list once, from top to bottom, and answer two questions in your workbook:

- Which line showed up most often?
- Would you ever say that line, in those words, to a friend?

Most people are surprised by two things: how often the critic speaks, and how much harsher it is than anything they would say out loud to someone they care about. Both are useful to know. You cannot change a voice you have never really listened to.

In the next chapter we look at where that voice comes from and why, strange as it sounds, it is usually trying to protect you.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Everyone has an inner critic; the problem is how loud and harsh it gets.
- Ignoring, arguing and forced positivity usually make the voice stronger.
- The goal is a fairer inner voice, not a silent one.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 The Voice That Never Rests

Collect your critic's lines for three days and see how it really talks to you.

FILL IN

My Critic Lines (3 days)

Day	Exact words	Situation

Which line showed up most often?

Would you say that line, in those words, to a friend? What would you say instead?

CHECKLIST

What I have tried so far

- [ ] Ignoring it
- [ ] Arguing with it
- [ ] Forcing positive thoughts
- [ ] Something else: _____

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Quiet Your Inner Critic and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 The Voice That Never Rests

02 Why the Critic Talks

03 What Harsh Words Cost

04 Standards Without Cruelty

05 Catch the Critic

06 Answer, Don't Argue

07 Become Your Own Coach

08 Four Moments It Strikes

09 When the Critic Pushes Back

10 Build a Kinder Default

11 A Voice Worth Keeping

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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