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**Inner Critic Exercise**

It is so powerful to personify the “inner critic” voice that dominates so much of our thinking to take it outside of our head and look at it.. like the curious observer - "huh, there's that voice again." Some of us may actually have TWO inner critics, with one dominating more than another at various times.

**Step 1: Reflect on these questions and write your responses (a paragraph or two for each should work).**

1. What does the inner critic say to you?
2. Consider when it shows up..
3. Isolate what its values are..

**Step 2: write a biography of the Inner Critic**

Get creative, get as specific and detailed as possible and do it to the point of laughter – almost a characterization of her)! What does s/he do for fun? Where does s/he live/work?

**Step 3: Write a “separation agreement” or letter**, letting her know you appreciate her “help”, but that it’s time for you to move on and you won’t be needing her there with you any longer.. You’ve got it covered from here on.. you’re all set, thank you!

**Step 4:** **Come up with a** **“back pocket phrase”** to dismiss her when she shows up (which she will) is really helpful, because it becomes code for you both.

**Step 5:** **Share both the bio and the letter with me (you can email it to me). And read them to a trusted person/people in your life.** It’s powerful to make Inner Critics public (it puts them out there into the world – shines a spotlight!). Chances are they will recognize her in you and give you a good laugh. It’s also really powerful to share that language because it can become sort of code between you –  i.e. they can say, “that’s just \_\_\_\_ talking” or something to jolt you awake when she starts to resurface!

**Step 6:** **How do you feel after doing this work**…literally. Do you feel more free, happy, healthy, better rested? Uninhibited? Are your thoughts clearer? Do you have more energy, feel up to anything? Are you less worried or less full of the “should”? How often do you hear her voice “helping you” and what’s your response?

SAMPLE:

Biography of Betty:

Betty was born in the Midwest in the mid 1940s. She grew up in a small town, and stayed there, because it was easier that way. Betty always cared a lot about what other people thought. She always wore solid colors and hose because she did not want to stand out. She went to church every Sunday since everyone else in town did and she did not want others to talk about her being a “god-less” woman. Betty loves to clip recipes from any magazine she can find, and makes too many of them (she needs to lose a few dozen pounds). After 40 years of working for her brother’s cousin Bob in bookkeeping as an assistant, Betty decided it was time to retire. Her husband, Randall, has worked all his life at the phone company. He is the “quiet one” in the relationship, spending his days watching whatever happens to be on TV while Betty chats to her friends about the latest scandal with the new young, pretty neighbor down the street who MUST be up to something since she always has the nicest new clothes and is always traveling around all over the place.

Always worried about what other people think, Betty keeps a tidy little house with figurines and knick-knacks from whatever holiday is closest prominently displayed. She plays Bingo every Saturday, although she never wins, and is convinced it’s because the Bingo caller doesn’t like her. She likes to scrapbook and crotchet “Welcome Friends” signs to sell at the church fair every spring. Betty also likes to sneak cigarettes out in the garage every once in a while, even though she makes sure every knows what a vile habit smoking is.

Betty has two children, Susan and Tom. Both Susan and Tom moved far away from home, to Chicago and San Francisco, and visit when they can. Truth be told, they could probably visit more often but sometimes choose to go hiking for the weekend with friends to avoid the nagging that Betty is so known for.

Betty has saved almost a million dollars over the years, but she never spends it, just “in case” she might need it for something. She also does not share with her children or with anyone else in the town since she is convinced that she will need it someday, although that day never seems to come. Poor Betty has never even been to see the ocean, or to either coast, since she is afraid to fly on airplanes.

I’ve learned a lot from Betty over the years. Being responsible with money, staying true to one’s values, and the importance of maintaining a strong family structure. That has served me well, but too much of Betty’s influence will not. Betty has not really learned to enjoy life, being constantly worried about appearances and money and basically anything else she can find to worry about. Poor Betty hasn’t really lived the life that is possible for her.

SAMPLE:

Separation Letter to Betty

Dear Betty:

It’s time for me to move away… I have been thinking about this for a while, and I think I’m ready. I wanted you to know as soon as I had a chance to write. I want you to know that you’ve been a wonderful influence on me. If it weren’t for your sage advice, I would not have opened a retirement account at age 21, or remembered to always wear sunscreen or never ride in the back of an open pickup truck. You helped keep me safe and gave me some street smarts.

However, I am feeling like I need to grow, try new things, travel and experience the world in a different way now, and I need to say goodbye. I must admit, that we’ve spend so much time together over the years, that it is hard for me to do this, but I don’t see any other way. I really do believe that we will both benefit from it in the long run. You probably are wondering how I could have changed so much, but the thing is, I’ve always had this wanderlust and thirst for adventure in me, I just have done a pretty good job of hiding it for a while. In a sense, part of my old self is dying.. but the new one that is being born is pretty awesome. I think you’ll be secretly pleased in the long run.

I know how much you like collecting things so I will be sure to send you postcards from each new place I check out, and I will update you on how my new adventures and projects are working out. Maybe I will even have painted the picture that you decide to hang on your kitchen wall someday!

Please try not to worry about me, but if you must, know that I will be fine no matter what happens. I’ve thought about this for some time now, and that I’m making plans for my next steps. You’d be proud to know that I have been doing some research to test the waters before jumping in… Although at some point I will just need to dive in head first… and I’ll let you know how cool and refreshing the water feels. (That reminds me: remember the trip we took to the lake that year and we swam out to the dock? I know you enjoyed that.)

I will think of you fondly and the good times we had together. Say hi to Randall and the kids for me and the ladies down at the Grange Hall.

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye,

(your name here!)

**SAMPLE:**

**Back Pocket Phrase to know when that’s your Inner Critic talking:**

Betty, go over to the BINGO hall and gossip with your lady-friends.