

INNER CRITIC AND INNER WITNESS

[After review of the 4 styles.]

At this point we've found that people begin to criticize themselves:

Boy—I really use control talk a lot! I never use search talk.

So we talk about a voice in our head that we call the Inner Critic. It's that critical voice that wakes up when you do. Are you aware of it? [Wait 5 seconds.]

That's the one—the voice that says, "I don't get it. What little voice?" It's an internal judge and censor. It judges our thought, feelings, and actions.

What style of communication does it use? Heavy duty control talk.

It screens our experiences; censors our expressions of thoughts, feelings, and actions; tells us we're not good enough and never will be. It's a voice that began in childhood: a creation of our parents, siblings, teachers, and others who thought we needed to be criticized so we'd be good people.

What does it accomplish? It worries about tomorrow and criticizes what we did yesterday. But mostly It makes us feel bad, and we don't need it.

Demonstration of how Inner Critic Works (Get a volunteer and use pages with Self or Inner Critic on the class side and the speeches on the other side.)

SELF	INNER CRITIC
Boy, that dessert looks great!	You are the most disgusting pig. You know sugar isn't good for you. You'll never fit into your spring clothes. You have no self-control. You're like a child.
Oops! It's 7:45. Time to get going.	Can't you do even the simplest things? Like get up on time: You are a lazy good-for-nothing. You'll lose your job one of these days and be a bag lady. You're irresponsible and no good.
Where's that receipt? I thought I put it here.	You are hopeless! You lose stuff all the time. What's the matter with you? What a joke, <i>you</i> teaching organizational skills. Your filing system is a national disaster.

[To volunteer] Thank you.

What does *your* Inner Critic look like? Mine looks like. . . .

[Give paper and crayons so all can draw this monster who is never satisfied.] What does this judge look like? What does he or she say all the time? Mine says, “You jerk! You idiot! What did you do that for? You do everything wrong. Can’t you do anything right?”

[While they’re drawing] Does anyone notice your Inner Critic criticizing your drawing ability?

Now let’s hold up our drawings. Go-around. Share what your Inner Critic says.

Sometimes I think that if it weren’t for my Inner Critic I’d degenerate into an irresponsible child. No so! What happens is that my Inner Critic generates another role—an inner defender--that rebels against the critic and starts the cycle all over again.

Inner Witness

The Inner Critic was in many ways planted in our heads when we were children and like little sponges with no control over the process. Now we have the choice to develop another voice or role that can serve us better than the Inner Critic. It is called the Inner Witness.

The Inner Witness is a voice or role or way of thinking that we can treat as a personality the way we do the Inner Critic.

The Inner Witness is a personality that is aware of and accepting of all our different aspects, whether we are operating as a son or daughter, friend, spouse or partner, friend, worker, trainer, citizen, or whatever. Its attitude is one of total non-judgment. It is neutral, like Switzerland. The Inner Witness is a curious observer, a scientist, an anthropologist, an objective journalist. “How interesting!” it says. It’s only an observer, noticing what happens. “Look what’s happening here.” “What could be the reasons for this?” “I wonder what other options I have.”

What style of communication does it use? Search talk. The Inner Witness doesn’t argue with the Inner Critic or affirm our good points and accomplishments. It is above the action, just watching, curiously.

My Inner Witness is a hummingbird, hovering overhead, watching what I’m doing, or a scientist, looking through binoculars to get a closer look at what is going on with me. It says, “H’m. How interesting! Look what’s happening here.”

Demonstration of how Inner Witness Works (Get a volunteer and use pages with Self, Inner Critic, or Inner Witness on the class side and the speeches on the other side.)

Self	Inner Critic	Inner Witness
I’d really like a beer right now.	You drink too much. You’re never going to finish painting this room.	H’m. Isn’t that interesting. I’m criticizing myself for wanting to relax this evening.
I just used control talk with my son.	You use control talk too much. You’re not a good parent.	H’m. That’s interesting. I’m really beating myself up.

[To volunteer] Thank you.

What does *your* Inner Critic look like? Mine looks like. . . .

Now you'll have a chance to draw your Inner Witness and write what it would say—something like “Fascinating!” or “Look what’s happening here.” [Write on the board, along with “tentative, curious, observing.”]

Go-around. [Emphasize the courtroom metaphor—the difference between the defense attorney and a witness, who says what he saw, did, experienced, heard.]

[Here we move on to conflict.]