

A Kinder Inner Voice

Talk to yourself the way you would talk to a respected colleague

Many high performers have an inner critic that is harsher than anything they would say to anyone else. It often feels like the thing that keeps standards high. In practice, harsh self-criticism tends to increase anxiety, make mistakes more frightening and make people less willing to try.

Being kinder to yourself is not the same as letting yourself off. It means responding to setbacks the way a good manager would: honestly, and in a way that helps you do better next time.

IF SOMEONE NEEDS HELP NOW

If there is an immediate risk to life, call **999**. Samaritans are available free, 24 hours a day, on **116 123**. In England, NHS 111 (option 2) connects to an urgent mental health service.

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What does your critic say?

SITUATION	WHAT MY INNER CRITIC SAID	HOW IT MADE ME FEEL AND ACT

Test it:

- Would I say this to a colleague I respect, in the same situation?
- Is it accurate, or is it exaggerating?
- Did it help me fix the problem, or just make me feel worse?
- Whose voice does it sound like?

Respond as a good colleague would

WHAT MY CRITIC SAID	WHAT I WOULD SAY TO A RESPECTED COLLEAGUE	WHAT I WILL SAY TO MYSELF INSTEAD

A kinder response usually does three things:

- Acknowledges the difficulty: "That did not go the way I wanted, and that is frustrating."
- Puts it in proportion: "Plenty of capable people get this wrong sometimes."
- Looks forward: "What would help next time?"

EXERCISE

Practice

1. One phrase I will use when the critic starts:
