

## 2/13/25: From the Desk of Suzanne: Inner Critic or Inner Coach?

Have you ever taken some time to listen to the tone of voice inside your head? **Is that voice a supportive one that champions you?** Or is it a negative, somewhat harsh voice that tends to berate you and even call you names? The tone of your inner voice is worth paying attention to, so that you make an effort to consciously train it, and allow it to be a true support system.

Sometimes if we are harsh with ourselves, we can masquerade this harsh tone as 'just being honest with ourselves'. We can pretend that we're taking responsibility. But underneath, this severe tone doesn't benefit us. **Tone matters, and over time the severity of this voice becomes akin to a low-grade form of violence within our system.** So rather than being corrective, it actually creates tension and constriction. What results is mistrust of ourselves, not growth.



This is because when we feel threatened, it's very hard to evolve. Instead we protect. We wouldn't want anyone else to talk to us this way, so why do we choose to talk to ourselves this way? The answer is that it's merely a bad habit. Often we have internalized the criticisms of our parents, who usually loved us, but didn't know how to help us...so their love was experienced by us as an attack, which didn't feel very loving. We might comply with our berating inner voice for a short period of time, but eventually, we begin to ignore it – while still experiencing uneasiness inside.

When our inner voice, through our training, becomes more gentle and compassionate, we are not avoiding accountability. We're creating a safe environment, where honesty becomes easier...in both directions. We can be truthful where we need to improve, but we can also compliment ourselves when we have done well.



Good coaches don't attack; they orient, guide, recalibrate. They offer clear feedback without humiliation. So when you notice your inner voice being mean to you, the moment you realize it's happening, try this: **Gently say "stop," take a moment, and then think about what a coach who is your biggest fan would say to you.** Next, think it, or say it, out loud to yourself. This step is important because it helps you write new scripts for your inner voice, so don't skip it! Coming up with positive coaching takes a bit of time in the beginning, but it gets easier the more you do it.

For example, if you forget your keys for the third time and have to spend an extra 15 minutes going back to get them, instead of saying, "What an idiot, I can't believe you forgot your keys again!", you can say "It's okay, let's go back and get them; everyone makes mistakes, maybe we can find a place to put them so it's easier to remember them on your way out the door." That's it.

Over time, when your inner voice becomes kinder and more compassionate, your internal environment becomes safer. Result? Learning accelerates and your resilience increases.

**Change is no longer forced from a negative place. It evolves out of truth and honesty, and this type of change is sustainable.**

So remember, moving from inner critic to inner coach isn't about lowering your standards or going easy on yourself: it's about creating the conditions where growth can actually happen. Make your inner voice your biggest fan!

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