

## Turn the Discord **Down**

Tune into Self-Compassion  
to Silence Your Inner Critic



Most of us believe that showing compassion toward others is a virtue. But when it comes to offering that same love and understanding to ourselves? That's often a different story.

Our capacity for self-compassion has a lot to do with whether the voice in our heads acts like a friend (encouraging and supportive) or a foe (harsh and condescending). Tuning that inner critic toward kindness can ease stress, improve our quality of life, and make us better company for ourselves and the people around us.

### Why Self-Compassion Doesn't Always Come Easy

Sometimes people speak harshly to themselves because they believe self-compassion will stunt motivation and lead to laziness. Instead, they turn to self-criticism, convinced that drill-sergeant-like sternness will better push them to succeed. (Spoiler alert: it won't.)

Constantly coming down on ourselves for every mistake or perceived flaw is mentally exhausting and emotionally draining. It leaves us feeling defeated and hopeless, with little energy to face adversity.

Science hasn't pinned down how many negative thoughts we have each day. But a study from the University of Miami suggests it's not the number that matters most — it's how long they stick.

Using brain scans and daily check-ins, researchers found that lingering negative thoughts tend to drag down happiness and fulfillment. It's like a song stuck on repeat: the longer it plays, the more it shapes your mood.

Clearly, loud and persistent inner criticism takes a toll. But swinging to the other extreme isn't the answer either. Honest self-reflection *is* necessary, just not the kind that tears us down.

To move forward, we need to take an objective look at where we are now compared to where we'd like to be.

Balancing healthy self-criticism with self-compassion gives us room to make mistakes, learn, and grow. When negative self-talk keeps us from finding that balance, it's time to rethink our relationship with our inner critic.

## Replace Your Inner Critic with an Inner Coach

If your inner critic is like a sports reporter broadcasting potshots from the press box, your inner coach is the mentor on the sidelines, cheering you on.

Where the critic sees flaws, the coach sees opportunities. Where the critic reports obstacles, the coach points out challenges worth facing. Instead of magnifying weaknesses, the coach highlights strengths and reminds you of your potential.

When the critical play-by-play turns unhelpful, it's time to tune it out and invite your inner coach onto the playing field.

## Make Self-Compassion Your Default Channel

Of course, your mind isn't really a sporting event, and silencing your inner critic isn't always as easy as tuning into a different broadcast. Still, the following practices can help you to quiet destructive self-talk and remember to treat yourself with kindness.



### Replace defeatist droning with a little “Om”:

Taming your inner critic is tough if they're yapping at you a million miles a minute. [Use mindfulness to slow things down so you can observe and redirect your inner voice without judgment.](#) With regular practice, you can shift default thought broadcasts from critical to compassionate.



**Talk yourself up:** Try reciting compassionate phrases in your head: “This project is tough, but I’m up for the challenge.” For an extra boost, speak those love-bombs out loud in the mirror — your brain pays closer attention to face-to-face messages.



**Be your own best friend:** When self-talk turns hostile, run it through the “friend filter.” Ask yourself, “Would I let someone talk to my bestie this way?” If not, it's time to tell your inner voice to mind its manners.



### Smell your roses while they're blooming:

Don't sell yourself short when things go well: acknowledge accomplishments in the moment. Take time to journal about your proudest moments and revisit those notes on emotionally rainy days.



**Get out of your head and into your body:** If your critical inner monologue won't quit, no matter how much you try to think it away, get physical. [Use meaningful self-care practices to break negative cycles, regroup, and regroup.](#) Go for a walk, connect with a friend, or immerse yourself in something restorative like reading, gardening, or making art.

If these techniques don't click for you right away, don't be discouraged. That's just your inner critic trying to stage a comeback. Instead, ask your inner coach to step in with a mental pat on the back for giving it a try, and a reminder that growth comes from practice, not perfection.

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