
Shutting Down Your Inner Critic

Thought-stopping is the process of using willpower to disidentify from and interrupt toxic thoughts and visualizations. Sometimes visualizing a stop sign at the same time can help strengthen thought-stopping.

Since traumatizing parents cripple the instinctive fight response of their child, **recovering the anger of the fight response is essential in healing C-PTSD**. We need the aid of our fight response to empower the process of thought-stopping the critic. *I cannot over-encourage you to use your anger to stop the critic in its tracks.* We can re-hijack the anger of the critic's attack, and forcefully redirect it at the critic instead of ourselves. We can then silently and internally say "No!" or "Stop!" or "Shut Up!" to short-circuit drasticizing and perfectionistic mental processes.

Angrily saying "No!" to the critic sets an internal boundary against unnatural, anti-self-processes. It is the hammer of self-renovating carpentry that rebuilds our instinct of self-protection. Furthermore, recovery is deepened by directing our anger at anyone who helped install the critic, as well as at anyone who is currently contributing to keeping it alive.

Successful critic-shrinking usually requires thousands of angry skirmishes with the critic. Passionate motivation for this work often arises when we construct an accurate picture of our upbringing. Natural anger eventually arises when we really get how little and defenseless, we were when our parents bullied us into hating ourselves.

Most trauma survivors were blank slates who were brainwashed into accepting the critic as their primary identity. The degree to which a family is C-PTSD-engendering resembles a mini-cult. Cults demand absolute loyalty to the leader's authority and belief system. In early thought-stopping work, most survivors need to empower their efforts with a healthy rage against their parents for destroying their self-loyalty and their self-individuation. However, with enough practice, the survivor's healthy observing ego can use willpower alone to disidentify from the critic.

I particularly like this way of challenging the critic. "I'm not afraid of you anymore, mom and dad. You were the critic, and you put the critic in me. I renounce your toxic messages. Take back your shame and disgust. I am disgusted at your shameful job of parenting."

One of my clients shared with me a phrase that spontaneously came to her while she was fighting her critic at home. "You totally ruined my childhood, and I'm not going to let you get away with ruining my life now." She reported that this perspective emblazoned in her consciousness, and now often helps to fire her up to fire the critic.