

# Developing Awareness of Self-Talk

## Negative Self-Talk Triggers

### 1. Self-Limiting.

What do you hear your inner critic say that sounds like an excuse?

Why does it say you can't do what you want?

What does it say when it is shutting down possibilities?

### 2. Assumptions.

What does your inner critic tend to assume about?

When does it tend to think it can read people's minds?

What does it tend to assume other people will think about you?

What stories does it tell you that probably aren't even true?

### 3. Re-runs.

What repetitive, automatic thoughts have you been thinking for a long time?

What memories do you tend to replay in your mind over and over again?

What stories from your past or about yourself do you tend to talk about?

What phrases do you say to yourself or others repeatedly (especially the ones when you're judging yourself)? For example: "I'm always late" or "I'm an idiot" or "here we go again" or "this always happens to me".

### 4. Others' Thoughts.

Whose voice do you regularly hear in your head?

What do they say?

What do you tell yourself you "should" do?

Do you really believe that you "should" do this? (Hint, if you're feeling a sense of guilt, it's probably not your own, original, belief.)

1. If yes, make it a MUST and do it.

2. If not—if this is someone else hijacking your mind, tell them to GET OUT and then ask yourself, what do I really believe?

## **What's Your Inner Critic's Personality**

**The worrier:** Points out everything that can go wrong. Stirs up emotions of anxiety and fear by imagining disasters, expecting the worst, and overestimating the odds of something bad happening. It tends to say, “what if”?

**The critic:** Constantly judges and evaluates your behavior and points out your flaws. Jumps on any mistake you make and reminds you of past failures. Compare you to others and assume they will judge you. It even minimizes your accomplishments! It tends to say, “you're an idiot”.

**The victim:** It tells you that you're hopeless, not making progress, or that it's too hard. It tells you there is something wrong with you, you're incapable, unworthy. You're not smart enough. There are too many obstacles in your way. It's not your fault. It tends to say, “I can't”.

**The perfectionist:** It pushes you to do better but even when you do better you still feel like you're not good enough. There is always more you should be doing. Mistakes and setbacks must be avoided or quickly moved past. It pushes you to seek external validation, achievement, status. Acceptance by others is of the utmost importance. It probably even stops you from taking action because you're afraid to fail. Tends to say, “I need to do better” or “I'm not good enough”.

Take Your Power Back from Bob Now that you know what to look out for so you can notice your inner critic in action, go out into the world and practice observing it. When you catch your Bob in the act, use the following 3 strategies to take your power back from these negative thoughts.

- **IGNORE BOB:** Don't take BOB seriously. When BOB starts rambling on incessantly or hops on a negative train, imagine BOB has a funny voice or is wearing a clown suit. BOB is not you, and it doesn't know what it's talking about.

- **PROTECT BOB:** BOB's easily influenced, so always ask yourself if YOU really believe what it's saying. We already talked about getting people out of your head. One way to do this is pay special attention to any thoughts coming from BOB that sound eerily like things other people say (such as your parents, the media, authority figures). Choose what you expose BOB to wisely, because he's apt to believe it and repeat it.

- **OBSERVE BOB:** As often as you can, remind yourself to watch your BOB. Notice what it's thinking about. If you don't like what it's thinking about, CHOOSE A NEW THOUGHT. You're in charge. Many of the activities discussed throughout this course are designed to help you observe, record, and re-direct your bob.

Remember that it takes time to get good at keeping your BOB in check. You'll notice times when BOB runs off on a tangent of terrible thoughts without you noticing—sneaky BOB! But no worries because when you eventually notice what BOB is doing you can WHACK BOB on the head—it's like playing Whack-a-Mole. Whack him and say, "bad Bob!" and laugh. This stops the negative thought, giving you a moment to remember that you have a choice. You can then implement one of the thought-changing strategies you learn in the course and pick a better thought. The more you observe your BOB the better you'll get at catching it in the act— and as you practice, the voice will get quieter, and your inner cheerleader will take the lead. Play whack-a mole with your inner critic!