



Natural Creativity Journey

Dr. Pinkie Feinstein

Step 28: Creativity is stronger than self-criticism, we simply tend to forget this most of the time

This chapter opens the final part of the process, and it is a good place to remind ourselves that the best way to deepen the integration of the tools presented here is repetition, returning again and again: repeated reading, repeated practice, repeated encounters. The tools we are working with belong first of all to the experiential domain and only afterwards to the intellectual domain. The experiential domain improves, strengthens and gains skill and confidence through repeated practice, repeated exposure and repeated experimentation.

It is therefore highly recommended to see the entire process as a kind of circulation. To return to earlier chapters, to let them flow through us once more, and also to explore and practice using additional books in the Psycho Creative Library. The things I bring here touch places in the psyche where there is sometimes also resistance. The more we allow them to flow, read again, practice again and try to apply them in actual life, the more the inner balance shifts between the part that carries healing, awakening information and the part that resists. Over time, the balance leans more and more in favor of the part that is awakening.

When we let these materials return in cycles, something in the psyche behind these tools begins to work. We feel it in the body, we feel it in our energy, and from that stage on the creativity simply does its work. It moves by itself, as it always knew to do.

The concluding part of the process deals with the theme: embracing criticism, empowering intuition and coming back home. This is an essential axis of inner leadership. To embrace criticism means to gradually reach a place where we can meet even our self-criticism from within love and compassion. To empower intuition means to give its impulses concrete expression through play and creativity. And to come back home means to use creativity as a pathway to return to the inner kingdom, to the natural home of the psyche.

One of the most important truths in this part is that creativity is stronger than self-criticism, and we simply tend to forget this most of the time. When self-criticism becomes exaggerated, we must set boundaries for it. Just as we would set a boundary for a bully in the street or for someone who attacks us, we need to say to the criticism, no more. To create around us a wall, a fence, a clear line, in order to protect the

kingdom. To protect that soft, childlike, pure and original part within us that does not need any interference, does not need any advice and does not need any outside ideas. It carries its own abundance, and it needs protection. Sometimes this protection is also a direct confrontation with a kind of inner “enemy” that we ourselves have created inside.

This is one level of the work, the work of setting boundaries with the criticism. But the higher level of reducing exaggerated self-criticism does not lie in focusing on the criticism, it lies in directing attention toward creativity. We want to strengthen the plus, instead of investing most of our energy in blocking the minus. The more I play, dare, change, question what exists, make mistakes, experiment and allow myself attempts that seem pathetic or silly to me, the more space I give to all of this, the more it happens, flows and takes place, the less room is left for exaggerated self-criticism.

We can actually say that exaggerated self-criticism is a result of not living our natural creative nature. It is the darkness that appears when we do not turn on the light. As long as we do not turn on the light, we have no choice but to put limits on the darkness, because it bites into us, narrows us and wants everything to remain dark. But in the end, our central task is not to fight the darkness but to turn on the light. In the end we must decide who we are, and not only what we are against. It is much more challenging to ask “who am I” than to know only “what I am not”.

The real question is “who am I, yes”. What does my unique voice want to tell? I do not want only to avoid disturbing this voice, I want to actively invite it. Speak. Sing. Paint. Write. Dance. Direct a play. Bring it out. Give it space. It does not matter if people will like it or not like it. Give it space. Only in this way can we truly reduce our self-criticism.

When criticism is reduced, creativity grows stronger, expands, purifies itself, shapes its own language and develops its unique aesthetics. This is a self-strengthening cycle. The more I allow myself creative training, which includes also less successful works, less “beautiful,” less clean, less aesthetic, the more the volume of creative expression grows, and the more the volume of self-criticism shrinks.

At a certain stage we can even begin to play with the criticism itself. We can paint it. Dance with it. Sculpt it. Write a story about it. Stage a play around its character. In this way a process of transformation takes place. We turn this “demon” into raw material for a creative production that contains compassion, understanding and a broader view of ourselves as people who also have exaggerated self-criticism. We create around the phenomenon, we bring the creative force to it, and that force becomes dominant. The more it is expressed, the more self-criticism raises its hands and gives up. This is how it works.

Many techniques for increasing creativity are based on a simple idea, reaching a state where we create, create, create, create, create. No matter what comes out, we keep creating. A flood of creative activity. The criticism sees that a person keeps creating, again and again, and it becomes tired. It fails to stop the flow. And the flow itself reduces the ability of self-criticism to say anything, because its main role is to prevent the flow.

How will we make sure there is flow? By doing exactly what exaggerated self-criticism most warns us against. We will do things that are not very beautiful, not very successful, not very impressive, not very sophisticated, not very deep. We will give our playful side space. We will say to it, go. Move. You are allowed. This is our kingdom. This is our freedom to play.

When we discover that the play itself, the repeated doing itself, is the healing force, a deep understanding begins to form. If I write ten stories, the eleventh story will bring something special that would never have arrived if I had not written the first ten. Many drafts are needed in order to reach something mature. The drafts are not less important. They are extremely important. They are the engine that legitimizes creativity. Another draft, and it is wonderful. Another scribble, and it is wonderful. All of them support the journey back home, the strengthening of the kingdom where your creative language can be expressed.

Part of the reason why certain things have not yet reached their full language and flow is that criticism is still disturbing them. When criticism interferes, we are a bit afraid. When we are afraid, we do not dare and we do not flow, and then our unique language cannot come out. This is why I repeat, creativity is stronger than self-criticism, but we tend to forget this, because we give far too much attention to exaggerated self-criticism, we believe it, we argue with it, we ask it for permission to do some small action, “just this once, without comments.”

We forget that the best thing against criticism is not more struggle with it, but turning on the light. Play. Creativity. Another draft. Another attempt. Another dance. Another silliness. Another game. Another change. Again and again and again. As Julia Cameron, one of my first teachers, says, “I take care of the quantity, the Creator of the world takes care of the quality.” I do. I act. I run the factory. Eventually the factory will clean and improve itself and focus itself, but only after it has been given working time.

I will end with a small story. Many years ago a friend of mine, who had almost no experience or confidence in free flowing writing, needed to write opening remarks for an exhibition of a painter he loved deeply. He was stuck. He had no ideas. Nothing moved. He asked for my help, something he rarely did. I said to him, “Write it five times. Write five versions of the opening remarks. It will be fine.” He said, “Fine.” He went and wrote it once, and that was enough. But the knowledge that he had permission to write it five times released him. Inside he was no longer trapped in the question of whether it came out “good” or “not good,” because at worst, so he knew, he would write a second, third, fourth and fifth version. That inner permission released the criticism. His creativity did its work, and the criticism bothered him less.

This is also your work. If you want to be more creative, go play. Because play will reduce the criticism. Reducing criticism will further increase creativity. The increased creativity will further shrink the criticism. And so, again and again, in a circle that keeps strengthening itself, on the way back home.

Questions for self-reflection

(preferably answer in writing):

1. Which things, in your opinion, does your exaggerated self-criticism prevent you from doing or realizing?
2. How do you feel when you reach a state of play and movement without criticism, what happens inside you then?
3. What is the last thing you initiated or did in a relatively spontaneous and unplanned way?
4. How does it feel to move and act with less planning and with more trust that it is worth setting out, even if it is not completely clear where to?
5. What is the next strange adventure it might be good for you to give yourself, despite it being so “strange”?
6. Anything else you would like to share? Feelings, thoughts or questions about this step?