



# Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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## Step 14: Claim your Freedom

Chapter 14 is the second chapter in Part Five, which states that there is no freedom when there is excessive self-criticism. This is a far-reaching statement, one that is worth internalizing, so that we do not become confused, so that we hold accurate and precise knowledge, so that we know where to focus, where it is worthwhile to invest our resources in order to gain more freedom, and where it is less worthwhile. Which struggles can truly yield results, can liberate us and others, and which struggles leave us in place, within a prison that we are not even aware of.

A prison of excessive self-criticism. A prison that also turns people into strangers to one another, because each person is locked within their own fears. It is not really possible to communicate this way, it is not possible to come close, it is not possible to create partnership, it is not possible to understand, it is not possible to truly know one another. Each person is inside their own inner drama, with that same inner “police officer” that does not allow them to be who they are.

And so I say: a person who wants freedom, a community that wants freedom, must place the reduction of excessive self-criticism very high on the list of priorities. Because the moment a person is released from excessive self-criticism, the number of things they can do, the amount of initiative, the amount of creativity, the number of surprises, the number of changes, becomes almost infinite. This is freedom. This is freedom.

And as long as this is not present, a person may be active, may be trying, but is still very limited. They are very subject to their fears and their internal restraints. And in the worst case, they are not even aware of it. They are caught in inner loops, because they are unable to see a broader picture. Excessive self-criticism builds wall around them.

And we want to dismantle these walls. We can. This is what we are doing here. And this is what Chapter 14 says: freedom from excessive self-criticism is perhaps the greatest freedom a person can ask for.

A person walks down the street and does not know that they are wrapped in their fears. They do not know that they have healthy creative impulses in every moment. They do not know that they are constantly moving from one crossroads in their life to another, where

there is an opportunity for change, an opportunity for growth, an opportunity for healing, an opportunity for love, an opportunity for celebration.

They do not know this. Because excessive self-criticism works overtime to hide it from them, keeping them in place, in a closed state, like inside a box, so that they do not change, so that they do not dare, so that they do not step outside the frame, so that they do not surprise, so that they are not surprised, so that they are not real, so that they are not authentic.

And the authentic, for those who have not yet seen this clearly enough, is a changing space. The authentic does not remain as it is. The healthy, inner, creative, almost divine part within a person is alive and dynamic, and it carries a constant desire for change, a constant desire for development.

It is always asking: what is next? What is the next thing? What is the next change? What is the next challenge? What is my next stage of development? What is my next creation?

And excessive self-criticism cannot tolerate this. It cannot tolerate a space that contains movement, change, discovery, and the questioning of existing patterns.

And therefore, the more we succeed in freeing ourselves from it, and the great wonder is that we can, a large part of this begins with simple awareness. Simply knowing. Becoming aware of the limitations we create for ourselves. Becoming aware of the prison we create within ourselves through excessive self-criticism. This recognition alone already accomplishes a significant part of the work.

And then, as we are doing here, we begin to respond. We initiate initiatives. We practice change. We “challenge” reality. We play with what exists. We destabilize excessive self-criticism. We do not allow it to lead us.

We strive for a better connection with our intuition. We take steps to realize our inner voice. We are in practice. We are learning not to believe the dramatic, final, and absolute statements of excessive self-criticism.

We say to it: “Excuse me, no. I am not buying this. This is exaggerated. This does not suit me. All these theories of ‘it is impossible,’ of ‘too early,’ of ‘too late,’ of ‘why not,’ of ‘this cannot be done’, No. It is possible. I will continue to try. I will find my way.” This is how we deal with our excessive self-criticism.

And ultimately, without even noticing, through quiet inner work, we are doing perhaps the most important work we can do for our freedom. We are addressing the pain that built the criticism. Because what stands behind the criticism? Fear. And those fears stem from pain.

And what is dangerous about true freedom? True freedom is being who I am. Meeting my authentic self. And that also means meeting my pain, my wounds, the parts I have locked away so I would not have to see them, because it hurts too much.

And so we invest a great deal of effort to avoid full freedom. To prevent our emotional space from opening too much. So that we do not see what still hurts, what grief has not been processed, what insult remains, what humiliation never received an answer. It is too painful.

So what does excessive self-criticism do? It closes the channels of expression. And in this way, I preserve those pains, untreated but also hidden. And seemingly, it is more comfortable.

I am less distressed. But they are there. And they limit me. They prevent me from accessing many important areas of life. They prevent me from experiencing joy and happiness.

Because as long as I do not meet those painful areas, those inner dark zones, I remain within my limitation. I am constantly escaping from myself without noticing. I do many things in order not to encounter myself, because there are things there that I am uncomfortable seeing.

And therefore, when we learn how to reduce excessive self-criticism, we develop courage. Without even noticing, by opening the flow of our authentic expression, we develop the courage to face what emerges.

And things will emerge that are not pleasant. Perhaps embarrassing things, perhaps things we would prefer not to see. And we will want to avoid them. But we can.

This is the new statement: I can.

And all that is required with painful things is to look at them with compassion, with patience, perhaps even to create something with them, without judgment, without rushing to fix. Simply to look. Simply to stop running away.

And then it clears. It releases. A new space is created.

And suddenly, things that once seemed very complex, very difficult, become something else. Suddenly, a door opens. All the excuses dissolve. It is possible. It is possible to achieve this. It is possible to get there. It is possible to choose this.

There were simply pains wrapped in excessive self-criticism, which protected us from reaching certain places within ourselves and outside ourselves.

And when we say to it: “Excuse me, you are in an exaggerated role. I can cope. I want to open things up. I have creative tools to deal with this. I am an adult. I am strong enough to see the truth,” then we begin to truly taste what freedom is in its deeper essence.

As long as we do not do this, we carry our prison with us everywhere. Even if we tell ourselves that we are free, we are not.

The moment a person recognizes the option of excessive self-criticism and chooses the other option, the courageous, independent one that is willing to taste, to experiment, and to discover along the way, that is perhaps the greatest freedom a person can ask for.

When you feel it, you know it. It is a very meaningful experience. And when you feel it, you also receive unique gifts: joy, enthusiasm, optimism, a sense of capability, hope, and other good things that the psyche knows how to find within itself when it is freed from excessive self-criticism.

And all of this is within our reach. When we learn to reorganize our inner boundaries and significantly reduce the presence and influence of our excessive self-criticism.

It is possible. And that is exactly why we are here.

**Questions for Self-Reflection (it is recommended to answer in writing):**

1. Imagine a situation in which your excessive self-criticism is reduced by 40 percent. What would happen in your life?
2. And if it were reduced by 60 percent? What then?
3. Are you able to identify today situations and areas in which excessive self-criticism creates a kind of “prison” within you?
4. What is the “crazy initiative” or the “exaggerated change” that would really irritate your excessive self-criticism?
5. When do you intend to begin this action?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about regarding what you have read in this chapter? Experiences? Questions? Feelings?