



Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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Step 19: The Fear of Losing Control

Life is, to a large extent, an unclear story. No matter how much we try to explain or define the journey of life through the tools of logic, there will always come a moment when we discover, perhaps to our disappointment, that we do not truly understand what is happening, why things unfold as they do, and where exactly we are moving now and in the future.

These moments, in which we recognize the high degree of uncertainty in our lives, accompanied by a considerable sense of lack of control, are moments that may evoke confusion, pain, anxiety, despair, anger, and other uncomfortable reactions.

In order to reduce our encounters with these aspects of life, which over time may not be as problematic as they seem, a continuous and universal human need has developed to increase the experience of control over what is happening, to reduce uncertainty and the element of surprise, to strengthen the sense of managing things, the ability to plan the path ahead, and the ability to be prepared for every possible scenario.

This is where excessive self-criticism enters, continuing, as it always has, to be excessive because of the impossible role that was assigned to it from the very beginning. In fact, excessive self-criticism is meant to fulfill a role that is destined to fail, to create an experience of control in a place where such control is not possible.

These are the laws of life, and there is no way or possibility to change them, certainly not through increasing self-criticism. Yet we struggle to understand this because this is what we have become accustomed to and even addicted to. We do not know how to approach the journey of life from a growing acceptance of uncertainty and lack of control, and from there to learn the way that is right for us to exist within such a space, a space in which what is hidden is always greater than what is revealed.

Precisely in those places where it is possible to increase our degree of control over what is happening, excessive self-criticism hides the possibilities from us.

These are places where, at first, reality feels more frightening due to the sense of lack of control, but once the fear subsides, we discover not only that our level of control is better

than before, but also that we learn how to benefit from that experience of lack of control and the unavoidable uncertainty that accompanies the life story of every human being, everywhere.

And so it happens that through excessive self-criticism we do not reduce the fear of lack of control, but rather preserve it and even intensify it. Not only that, we sometimes influence people around us to behave in a similar way and to fear in a similar way what we call lack of control.

The reality is that we do not have, and will never have, complete control over what happens and what will happen. This is, in fact, a significant part of the beauty and uniqueness of the human life journey. A large part of the true story of what is happening is not revealed to us, and no matter how much effort we make to uncover the deeper truth of this unpredictable path, it will remain significantly unpredictable. Uncertainty will always be part of the human experience, and without it, large parts of beauty and the possibilities for development and growth would not exist here or anywhere human life exists.

Relative control can exist only from a position that first recognizes the level of lack of control that cannot be changed, and the level of uncertainty and the wide range of surprises that are an inseparable part of the rules of the game. These cannot be changed, certainly not when approached only through logic or attempts to impose order and structure on this unpredictable journey of life.

Relative control is similar, for example, to the ability to navigate a rowing boat within a current whose strength and direction cannot be changed, yet through certain gestures and choices it is possible to move with the current toward new, changing, and even highly rewarding places.

When we recognize that uncertainty is not only a space defined by negation, a place where there is no certainty and therefore seemingly problematic, but also understand uncertainty as a space within human consciousness and within the story of life where anything can happen, including positive things, a shift occurs.

That same space of uncertainty, which strongly characterizes human existence in all its forms and expressions, also invites the human being to influence it in countless ways. It is a highly flexible space. Although outcomes cannot be predicted in advance and there is always room for surprises and changes, the human being has a significant ability to navigate the movement of existence in almost any direction they choose, through a creative, courageous, adventurous, playful, curious approach that is willing to change and to be changed.

There is no other way for a person to create for themselves even a partial experience of control other than this path. There is no other way to derive meaningful and even pleasurable benefit from the fact that uncertainty constitutes such a large part of their life story.

The experience of lack of control invites the person to learn, improve, grow, explore, and embark on journeys in which the logic guiding them is not only the familiar and conventional logic, but also an intuitive logic whose laws are different from what we usually perceive as the laws of reality.

This approach to the journey of life, which includes adventure, openness, creativity, courage, and a willingness for change and surprise, is the approach that places the human being in the highest level of synchronization with what truly exists.

Precisely in such a place, a person is less afraid of lack of control, because conventional concepts of control, which attempt to eliminate uncertainty and the natural lack of control inherent in existence, distance them from the better alternative to control, which is cooperation with the mysterious and possibility filled path of life.

Those moments of synchronization, in which a person reaches states of enjoyment from the game they are playing with the course of life, a course whose logic is always limited, those moments of connection through a creative approach that includes a willingness to make decisions without knowing exactly where they will lead, are the moments in which a person not only does not feel fear of lack of control, but experiences an increasing degree of freedom and the ability to exist within an unpredictable space and influence it in a way that grants increasing levels of satisfaction and fulfillment.

All of these meaningful and beautiful aspects are what excessive self-criticism seeks to prevent, keeping the person in an exaggerated position of fear toward the illogical characteristics of their life. Those moments of harsh and unpleasant inner reprimand from excessive self-criticism are moments in which we are, supposedly, trying to create a higher level of control in our lives so that we will not make mistakes and so that in the future we will make more correct and appropriate choices.

The very common fear of lack of control is in fact a fear of mystery, of surprises, of the understanding that part of the story will always remain hidden and unknown. It is a fear of existence itself, a fear of a close and fruitful encounter between the human being and the true framework within which they belong. It is, in fact, a denial of the course of life within which we exist. And therefore, it is also a denial of ourselves.

When we go deeply into this, it becomes clear that what occupies us is not a fear of control, but the opposite, a fear of true control in life. This is a form of control that recognizes uncertainty, that looks courageously at the reality of death, that connects to the mystery that is not fully understood, and that is willing to influence life in a creative way even when it is never clear where it will lead.

It is from this kind of control that we are truly afraid, and excessive self-criticism exists in order to distance us from it as much as possible.

Questions for Self-Reflection (preferably in writing):

1. Why do you think it is important to recognize excessive self-criticism in a person?
2. What is your relationship today with your self-criticism?
3. Is it now clear to you that it is excessive, or do you still have doubts about this idea?
4. Do you personally know people who are aware of their excessive self-criticism? Do you feel comfortable in their presence?
5. What might happen as your awareness of your excessive self-criticism expands beyond where it is today?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about what you read in this step? Experiences, questions, feelings?