



Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

Dr. Pinkie Feinstein

Step 20: The Need Not to See

The role of a person who is growing and developing, who seeks for themselves a more meaningful and fulfilling life, is, among other things, to be engaged as much as possible in an ongoing process of personal expansion.

The healthy way to exist is connected, among other things, to a recurring question: how can I grow from my current point into new places of self-realization and a broader expression of what makes me unique?

A person who seeks growth and development is meant, as much as possible, to be on this path. There are always new horizons to move toward, always the next destinations, new wishes and new passions inviting the person to explore new spaces within themselves, outside themselves, and with other people.

This is similar to human curiosity, which reflects a healthy state of an ongoing desire to know more, discover more, uncover more, search more, and ask more questions. Many times, curious people encounter barriers that attempt to block their desire to expand their knowledge and understanding, and often they receive messages suggesting that their curiosity is unnecessary, disturbing, and perhaps even harmful.

This is exactly how excessive self-criticism operates when it is engaged in preventing a person from recognizing the fact that at any given moment there are many possibilities available to them for action, experimentation, and experience. Through its comments and reactions, it reduces the range of possibilities and creates around everything beyond them an atmosphere of fear and negative perception.

Excessive self-criticism serves, without our awareness, a need that arises from fear: the need not to see spaces that are too vast. The need not to see too far, not to see too broadly, not to feel things that move beyond what we believe we are capable of containing and managing within ourselves.

We are afraid of this ability within us, an ability that has no logic and no clear boundaries or order, an ability connected to the infinite freedom of imagination, to the vision some people have of creating a reality completely different from the existing one, and to our

capacity to grasp, even if only for moments, how much more we are than just human beings who think in ordinary ways, act in ordinary ways, and understand as they are expected to understand.

Excessive self-criticism ensures that we remain within the boundaries of consensus. That we do not deviate, that we do not stray from the path, that we do not cross the lines defined for us by what is considered normal or acceptable. It ensures that we remain smaller than we truly can be, more afraid than necessary, and therefore also aspiring to goals and objectives that are far more limited than what we are capable of aspiring to and even realizing.

And so, when a person seeks to encounter their greatness, their uniqueness, their one and only story, their authenticity, and the path that reflects who they truly are, they must take into account that excessive self-criticism opposes this desire and will do everything in its power to prevent them from continuing to explore these places within themselves.

To a large extent, this is how a person's self-image is formed, regarding their abilities, the potentials available to them, their possibilities for growth and change, the forces that accompany them, and the horizons they can move toward through curiosity and adventure in order to discover themselves and their world.

Excessive self-criticism creates within us a kind of tunnel vision, or in another sense a kind of dimming, which causes us to think and feel that our lives and the world around us are far more limited than they truly are.

This can be illustrated through the example of a journey. Let us assume that we are moving along a certain path and wondering where we can continue next. Excessive self-criticism will attempt to inform us that there are only a limited number of possible directions forward, and nothing beyond that.

While presenting these limited options as correct or appropriate, it hides from us a wide abundance of other possibilities that we could choose, explore, and experience. These possibilities would reveal to us new horizons, not only in the external landscape of the journey, but also, and perhaps mainly, in our internal landscape.

How great are you? Are you able to recognize the unique and beautiful aspects of your personality, the places within you where there are elements of greatness, special abilities, and a wide range of possibilities to contribute unique gifts to the world through what you brought with you into life? Is there a voice within you that cancels this possibility, that suggests you should be modest and not exaggerate your self-evaluation?

This is excessive self-criticism, faithfully performing its role from morning to night, reminding us again and again that we are supposedly much smaller than we truly are. Our role now is at least to allow space in our awareness for the possibility that this mechanism, which limits our ability to see vast spaces within and around us, is not as reliable as it appears, and to learn to gradually reduce the degree of trust we place in it.

In contrast to excessive self-criticism, there are many inner voices that seek to hint that the reality within us and around us is far broader, richer, more abundant, and more open to change than it is presented through the filter of excessive self-criticism.

These voices are worth getting to know more deeply, nurturing, and bringing to the forefront of our attention with increasing frequency, while improving our ability to question the definitive and limiting messages of excessive self-criticism, which, as we remember, is excessive.

The irony here is that excessive self-criticism urges us not to exaggerate. It tries to convince us not to exaggerate in the way we look at life and at ourselves, not to exaggerate in our passion, not to exaggerate in our attempts to create change, not to exaggerate in our movement toward self-realization and the search for our authentic essence, not to exaggerate in our sense of adventure, love, and positivity.

Excessive self-criticism, in an exaggerated and even distorted way, seeks to reduce us to dimensions narrower than what we truly need and deserve. In a highly exaggerated manner, it attempts to prevent us from seeking new things, from exploring the unknown, from allowing ourselves to remain for extended periods in spaces of uncertainty, from crossing lines, from rebelling against existing rules, from asking for more, from dreaming, from leaping, and even from laughing too much.

Excessive self-criticism serves our fears of the greatness and abundance that exist within us from birth.

In order to free ourselves from its ongoing grip, it may be beneficial for us, from time to time, to do exactly what it tries to prevent: to exaggerate. To be more than what feels comfortable. To go beyond ourselves, to step out of the limited and familiar paths, and to allow ourselves to see larger spaces.

Often it works like this: when we allow ourselves to exaggerate in directions of passion, spontaneity, initiative, change, new choices, and decisions that come from intuition, the ability of self-criticism to exaggerate over us decreases accordingly.

At times, when we do this, we can feel the sweet taste of an inner and outer reality in which excessive self-criticism diminishes. And it is precisely for these moments that we are here.

Questions for Self-Reflection (preferably in writing):

1. In what situations and forms does your self-criticism prevent you from initiating, acting, or daring?
2. What feelings does excessive self-criticism create in you when it “speaks to you” while you are trying to do something new or different?

3. How far might you go into feelings of guilt or self-anger if you tried or did something and later realized you made a mistake, missed something, or were not attentive?
4. Are you aware that procrastination and hesitation can stem from excessive self-criticism? Do you have examples from your own life?
5. Can you identify your excessive self-criticism when you are in anxiety, low mood, or simply in a place that does not feel good to you?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about what you read in this step? Experiences, questions, feelings?