



# Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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## Step 27: The Hostile Courtroom

One of the gifts a person can give themselves, a gift with deep and far-reaching impact on their life within the learning and awakening process around recognizing excessive self-criticism, is the understanding that this criticism creates within them an inner space similar to a “hostile courtroom.” This is a place to which a person is often “taken,” without having chosen it and without any real justification.

The term “judgmental” accurately describes this inner atmosphere, which contains many symbolic elements resembling an event taking place in a courtroom. Yet in this internal courtroom there is no real attempt to clarify what is just, nor is there any process of resolving a conflict.

It is a hostile space in which the person, cast into the role of the accused, stands before an internal figure acting as a prosecutor, while they themselves have no right to defense. There is no inner voice of defense that stands beside them, no internal figure that protects them, and no one who challenges the one-sided process that unfolds within them in those moments.

Within this inner courtroom, the person quickly moves from suspect to guilty, without any investigation, without presenting arguments, and without any form of proof. There is no proof because there never was any. This is an experience of self-judgment in which the person is both the judge and the prosecutor, and at the same time does not allow themselves to stand up to the judgmental atmosphere or to resist it. They are pulled into a scene that they themselves generate internally, again and again, usually without awareness.

This is a hostile courtroom that the person has built within themselves and continues to operate. It is no wonder that the fear of excessive self-criticism is so great, since violating one of its strict “rules” can instantly bring the person into this judicial space where they are declared guilty and even deserving of punishment.

Even if this description sounds metaphorical, it reflects very accurately the inner atmosphere familiar to many people, especially when something does not go according to expectations, or when patterns of difficulty, disappointment, and self-frustration reappear.

In such moments, the emergence of excessive self-criticism pulls the person into this courtroom very quickly, and the internal drama unfolds almost without them noticing.

At this point, an important question arises: is it possible to resist this inner courtroom? Can a person decide not to participate any longer in a play in which they simultaneously serve as judge, prosecutor, and accused, without any real chance of being heard or understood? Why does a person continue to appear, again and again, before this courtroom that offers them no real space to breathe?

A person can stand against this courtroom only if, before anything else, they recognize its existence. This recognition becomes possible when they learn to identify their self-criticism as excessive and disproportionate. They will be able to choose to leave this courtroom only when they clearly see that they are being drawn into it repeatedly, and that they themselves are fulfilling all its roles.

It is not simple to admit that we create within ourselves such a harsh inner atmosphere, and that we are the ones judging ourselves with excessive severity. It is not simple to recognize the quiet masochistic tendency we maintain within ourselves, sometimes on a daily basis, without naming it accurately.

We tend to judge ourselves not only harshly but also very frequently. We tend to be drawn into that inner courtroom where our entire perception narrows into a limited point of view that cancels all complexity, all understanding, and all compassion toward ourselves. This space reduces reality into a one-dimensional story that repeats itself again and again, without any real change taking place.

At this stage, it is worthwhile to pause and ask:

Why do I have a need for such an inner hostile courtroom?

Am I aware of the existence of such a space within me?

Am I willing to reexamine my conduct within the courtroom I have created for myself?

What will happen if I choose to be absent from it for a while, or even for longer periods?

What frightens me about a life with less self-judgment and less inner accusation regarding my thoughts, feelings, and choices?

These questions are not meant to produce one single answer. They are intended to open the inner space, to expand awareness of the pattern's existence, and to create a crack in the mechanism that continues to exist simply because we do not fully recognize it.

It is important to emphasize that this courtroom often convenes even after we have already decided to stop its activity. This is a sophisticated mechanism that begins in unconscious layers and operates long before we notice it. The path to improving early recognition and changing this pattern is not short, but it is possible. The clearer and quicker the recognition becomes, the more real change can take place.

We must cultivate compassion toward ourselves in our encounter with this inner courtroom. We must understand that it exists because there is an inner need that has not yet found its answer. It represents pains and fears that are still seeking a path toward healing, and therefore they appear again and again in the familiar drama of excessive self-criticism, dissatisfaction, a sense of failure, missed opportunities, and damage to self-worth.

At this stage, we aim primarily to improve recognition. We want to learn to identify the exact moment in which the courtroom convenes. In that moment, we can say to ourselves: here it is happening now, I am judging myself too harshly. The very act of recognition is already the beginning of change.

The more we learn to recognize that this drama does not reflect truth but rather creates a narrow and negative reality, the more we can gradually move toward choosing to end the courtroom session more quickly. Over time, we may even reach a place where the frequency of its convening decreases significantly, becoming rare and sometimes almost unnoticeable.

We are on our way there. And that is encouraging and uplifting.

And one last thing. The next time the courtroom convenes within you, at the moment you recognize it, you may pause and try to smile. The smile does not cancel the experience, but it exposes the mechanism. The smile reminds you that this is a manipulative process and nothing more. The more we are able to smile within this courtroom, the more it loses its power to judge us.

### **Questions for Self-Reflection (preferably in writing):**

1. How do you feel about the expression “inner courtroom”?
2. How do you feel about the possibility that you are the one who convenes this courtroom and also fills all the roles within it?
3. If you were to surprise the “courtroom” and present yourself also as your own defender against the usual accusations that arise there, what would you want to say in your favor to reduce the atmosphere of blame?
4. How would you feel if you stood in this way to support yourself in the face of the tendency to accuse yourself or remain too long within feelings of guilt?
5. What do you think will happen when you smile at this courtroom? What might change for the better? Where could this lead if you add a smile that observes and understands this strange situation with a slightly more playful perspective?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about what you read in this step? Experiences, insights, questions, feelings?