



# Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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## Step 28: There Is No Way to Escape

One of the amusing, or frustrating, aspects of excessive self-criticism and its wide-ranging effects is the fact that a person has no real option to escape the consequences and reactions that arise when they once again encounter the unpleasant experience of harsh self-judgment. It is a meeting with a space in which there is no protection, no inner defense, and no real ability to resist or influence the “verdict” that always arrives in the same familiar way.

Only when we truly understand that there is no way to bypass the experience of “guilt” and the “verdict,” important metaphors here for illustration, and only when we honestly observe the hostile courtroom that a person has created within themselves over the years, can we begin to change the nature of this ritual.

Only then does the possibility of real change begin to open, a change in this heavy, limiting, and restrictive mechanism, one that seems to take us again and again, against our will, into an inner place where no one would choose to step.

In order to begin dissolving the “institutions” of this inner courtroom that emerges from excessive self-criticism, we must first acknowledge its existence. We must clearly recognize the moment we have entered it. We must agree to remain there for a moment with full presence, to look directly at this strange phenomenon, which many people are not aware of and may even find difficult to admit exists.

As long as we have not directly observed how we judge ourselves, how we arrive at overly extreme conclusions about ourselves, how we declare ourselves guilty and even punish ourselves, as long as we try to avoid this reflection and refuse to look at it, we will be taken again and again into that same inner space without any ability to change it.

But the moment we stop looking away, stop resisting this uncomfortable inner reality, and begin to recognize it, perhaps even with a slight smile and compassion, the real and deeper journey of reducing excessive self-criticism begins.

And perhaps we can indeed smile at this impressive performance, a performance we have been producing within ourselves for many years. Perhaps it is worth adopting a slightly

more humorous, creative, and warm attitude toward the play we enter without noticing that we ourselves wrote its script, direct it, and perform all the roles within it.

This is a judicial space that we manage within ourselves, and this may be the most difficult part to grasp. But if we pause for a moment and look from the side, we may see that the figure who judges, the figure who accuses, and the figure who is accused are all us. This recognition already changes the nature of things.

Here an important principle comes into play. If I have chosen a certain path, even if I did so unconsciously, then I also have the ability to choose a different path. The ability to choose is always present, even if we are not using it. Just as I can choose to enter the inner courtroom again and again, I am also capable of choosing not to enter it. A choice is a choice. And if I have the ability to choose something destructive, then I certainly have the ability to choose something new that I have not yet experienced.

And this is how it works. As long as a person does not learn to choose differently, they will continue choosing the same familiar path. They will do so automatically, out of habit. As long as they do not pause and smile, recognizing the inner manipulation taking place, as long as they do not expand their awareness of the nature of this performance, they will continue pulling themselves into that space where there is no possibility to escape the “guilt” and the “verdict,” because this is still their choice.

Again, it is important to emphasize something that is not easy to emphasize. In the experience of excessive self-criticism and the inner courtroom, all roles are played by us. This is our story, our unconscious choice, a creation built within us during childhood. Most of the time, we are not aware that this is only one story among many that we could create within ourselves. It is a story we still believe in and cooperate with, even though it is limiting, painful, and restrictive.

From here arise the most important questions that a person who seeks to reduce excessive self-criticism should ask themselves again and again:

How long and to what extent am I willing to continue being my own judge?  
How long will I continue to produce a courtroom in which I am always guilty?  
How long will I continue cooperating with a performance that I myself created?  
Am I willing to take responsibility for the fact that this guilt is an internal invention that is not truly connected to the reality of my life?

Alongside these questions, it is essential to recognize the facts. This mechanism exists. It is active. It is present. It can arise at any moment. There is no real option to escape it as long as we are not willing to see it and recognize it. It is an old, ancient, and highly skilled mechanism that operates within us automatically because we have become accustomed to it. Recognizing its existence is a necessary step on the path to change.

From this place, where we stop denying the existence of this inner hostile courtroom, we can begin to change our relationship with excessive self-criticism. We can begin to see

how absurd this performance is, how irrational it is, and how we are not required to continue participating in it.

Further along the path, we will be able to learn tools that will soften, reduce, and gradually dissolve the experience of “guilt” and inner verdict. Such tools can only operate after we are willing to recognize this part of our inner reality and accept that it is an old creation of ours, and to begin asking new questions about the possibility of choosing differently.

Even at this very moment, as you read these lines, excessive self-criticism is present. Perhaps it is quiet right now, perhaps it is occupied with other things, but it is there. It is good to recognize this. It is good to know that the inner force that resists flow, change, spontaneity, and joy is still within us.

And yet, one day, at a moment when something does not go as we imagined, it will awaken. The courtroom will be called to convene. And you may once again feel the judgment and the discomfort. But what will change, over time, is awareness. Awareness will grow, recognition will deepen, and the ability to create a new, quieter, and more healing process will expand.

The more we become familiar with this pattern, especially in the moments when it occurs in real time, the more we will gradually be able to soften it, reduce it, and transform it.

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

1. Write a declaration in which you announce that you are resigning from the role of “judge of myself.” Allow yourself to release this unnecessary position.
2. What might life look like, in your view, without the presence of guilt? Can you imagine such a possibility in a positive way?
3. Complete the sentence: “I forgive myself now for...” regarding anything you wish to relate to, 12 times in a row.
4. How do you feel about the phrase “I forgive myself now”? Does it feel like something you could repeat many times?
5. Write one or two poems according to the following structure: 6 to 8 lines, each line 2 to 4 words, rhymes are not necessary. Title of the poem: No Longer Guilty. How does it feel to write this poem and to read it?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about what you read in this step? Experiences, insights, questions, feelings?