



Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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Step 3: Restricting Authentic Creative Expression

Chapter Three is the third chapter of the first part, which focuses on getting as close as possible to an intimate familiarity with excessive self-criticism. This does not mean that later on we will deal with it any less. On the contrary. But it was important to begin the process with a clear declaration, with a strong presence of a very central aspect of excessive self-criticism, one that requires us to open our eyes wide.

The lies of excessive self-criticism.

Through excessive self-criticism, we tell ourselves lies and believe them with all our heart. Emotional, internal lies. And therefore, before we point a finger at others who lie to us, whether on a personal, familial, or public level, it is important to understand that we lie to ourselves on a daily basis.

This is a kind of lie that we must recognize as a lie. And it is important to use this word. A sharp, unequivocal word: lie. Excessive self-criticism lies to us. In fact, we lie to ourselves through it. We tell ourselves a story that is not true about who we are, about our abilities, about our possibilities.

It is not always important to understand why this happens. And even when we do understand, it does not necessarily change the situation. At this stage, what is more important is to allow ourselves to see the possibility that a large portion of the messages of excessive self-criticism are biased, distorted, and misleading information.

This information affects everything. How we see ourselves, the decisions we make, what we do or avoid doing, our emotional state, our worldview, our interactions with others, our relationships. It is there, everywhere.

And therefore, we want to begin to be somewhat more skeptical toward its absolute messages. To open openings for release from it. And this begins with awareness.

And this brings us to the heart of this chapter.

Excessive self-criticism has a role. And its role is to reduce us, to limit us, and to prevent authentic creative expression. That is its role.

This is a cultural role, a familial role, and ultimately also a personal role. And it stems from fear. Fear of freedom. Fear of our natural power. Fear of our inner truth. Fear of our creativity. Fear of self-realization. Fear of success. Fear of release.

We are far more afraid of these things than we are willing to admit. And there is even a kind of self-deception here. We tell ourselves that we want to succeed, want to grow, want to develop, want to be free. It is easy to hold on to these headlines. It is also easy to be drawn to promises that lead in that direction.

But at the same time, we are also afraid of it.

And when these fears are active, they generate obstacles. And these obstacles often take the form of excessive self-criticism. Stories. Explanations. Why it is not possible. Why it is dangerous. Why this is not the right time. Why it will not work.

And so a situation is created in which things that could be relatively simple and accessible appear complicated, distant, and difficult to achieve. Not because they truly are, but because we are afraid of them.

Excessive self-criticism is one of the central tools that generate this fear and sustain it. It blurs our vision. It limits our ability to see our paths of expression. And it does so in a wide variety of ways. It is very skillful.

It also appears in interpersonal dynamics. We fuel each other's criticism. We fuel the lack of trust in our ability to create, to initiate, to change, to free ourselves.

It has a purpose. It has an agenda.

We can also refer here to a familiar psychological distinction. Alongside instinctual, free, and spontaneous parts within us, there has developed a mechanism that restrains. A kind of inner guard, an internal police force, that does not allow certain impulses to be freely expressed.

Originally, there is some logic in this. But within that same inner space lies the blueprint for our creative expression. There lies access to our deeper self. And so it happens that not only problematic impulses are restrained, but also creativity, freedom, expression, and desire. We restrain ourselves.

And therefore, very often the reason that things we want to happen do not happen is not because they are too big, too complex, or too far away, but because there are layers of fear around them. And layers of stories created by excessive self-criticism.

- Stories of why it is not possible.
- Stories of why not now.
- Stories of why it is dangerous.

These are barriers. That is their role.

And at this stage, we want to begin to question their absoluteness. To see that they are not truth. That they are lies. That they are fiction. That they are manipulation.

The human being is a complex, sophisticated, and creative being. And we can also be very sophisticated in the ways in which we limit ourselves.

And therefore, our task here is to recognize this structure. A sophisticated structure whose purpose is to hide from us what we are capable of being. To hide from us the paths of joy, the paths of fulfillment, the paths of our truth.

And at this point, it does not really matter why this happens. This is what it does. And it does it very effectively.

One of its central tools is criticism. Criticism is a form of internal punishment. Statements such as “oh no,” “you must not,” “not okay,” “how did you fail,” “why did you do that.” And when we hear these voices, we also feel them.

This is manipulation. This is a way of bringing us into an emotional state of shame, contraction, and self-beating. And an internal drama is created: accuser and accused, critic and criticized, judge and judged.

This is a drama. A staged drama. And a drama whose purpose is to reduce us. We will want to learn how to step out of it. Not to take on either role. Because this entire drama is designed to limit us. And deep down, we are afraid of expansion and of freedom.

At this stage, we are not yet approaching these fears directly. That is another stage. Right now, we are learning to recognize the mechanism. To recognize that this is not only personal. It happens to many people. It is part of culture. It comes together with the beautiful aspects of humanity, but also with its costs.

- And it harms.
- And it limits.
- And it takes us to places we later regret.

But it is possible to be free from it. There are tools. And this is part of our inner leadership.

And so we begin with awareness. Awareness that it exists. Awareness that it can be changed. Awareness that it has many faces.

And awareness that it has one clear purpose: to reduce us, to limit us, and to prevent authentic creative expression.

And it succeeds in doing so.

It succeeds within us, and it succeeds around us, in educational systems, between people, to the point that sometimes we are surprised to see someone who has taken a step forward, who has realized something. Because there is always some moment, some crack, some opening through which they managed to pass beyond the wall of their excessive self-criticism.

And we can as well.

It is possible.

But first, we must recognize what we are dealing with.

And that is what we have done in these first three chapters.

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

1. Which of your creative abilities do you feel are not sufficiently expressed?
2. Which wishes and passions do you feel you suppress more than necessary?
3. Are you aware that the previous two questions are related to the excessive influence of your self-criticism, and what do you think about this at this moment?
4. Do you see the possibility that part of your personality is continuously engaged in preventing you from growing, expanding, and changing?
5. How do you feel about the idea that part of your mental energy is being used in a negative way to limit your possibilities for expansion and spontaneity?
6. Are there additional things you would like to share or express in writing regarding what you have read in this chapter? Experiences, insights, questions, or feelings?