



# Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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## Step 30: This Is Not How We Respond to Pain That Needs Attention

We are concluding this remarkable process with a central emotional theme that looks at one of the most significant and subtle aspects of excessive self-criticism: our relationship with our emotional pain.

This is perhaps the most important place in which to initiate change in terms of the influence of excessive self-criticism, a change that is likely the heart of all the other changes that will grow as a result of reducing this part of the human personality.

This step comes at the end of the process, and in many ways everything we have gone through so far can be seen as preparation for this subject, for this place where we meet our pain and learn how to support ourselves in dealing with it in a way that allows learning and healing to take place. When we succeed in improving this aspect within us, all the other “gifts” of reducing excessive self-criticism become more accessible and closer to us.

One of the most paradoxical and important things to understand in relation to excessive self-criticism is the incorrect use of its mechanisms in a desperate attempt to heal emotional disharmony. This is an attempt that not only fails, but actually intensifies the difficulty and the problem, distancing the person from the path of healing and release that they are seeking.

When there is not enough recognition of the problematic nature and lack of alignment of excessive self-criticism in various situations, there are moments when the human response to inner pain becomes self-hostility and self-intolerance.

For those reading these words, this may sound surprising. How is it possible that we act in a negative and even aggressive way toward ourselves when we are in pain? How is it possible that instead of embracing ourselves, comforting ourselves, calming ourselves, and giving ourselves a safe space for healing and recovery, we instead come to ourselves with complaints, feel disappointed in ourselves, and sometimes even descend into shame and self-condemnation?

This is who we are, and it results from a combination of inadequate education and negative influences. All of this leads to a situation in which a person does not know the right way to deal with their pain. This is a path that will never be simple or short, a path that does not demand immediate change, a path that understands that pain needs a listening, supportive, and non-pressuring space, a space that allows honest and unhurried observation of the discomfort that exists within around a certain issue.

Instead of acting this way toward ourselves, instead of doing what is truly helpful, we have learned and become accustomed to burdening ourselves and narrowing ourselves, precisely at the moment when we need inner generosity, self-compassion, self-recognition, and the feeling that we are seen in a non-judgmental way, and certainly not through disappointment or shame.

In response to excessive self-criticism, which reflects a disproportionate and unregulated use of masculine energy within the person, we must introduce a more active, present, and engaged feminine energy. This energy insists on compassion instead of criticism, does not give up on emotional containment where there is self-intolerance, provides space for quiet presence within pain and difficulty without pushing for immediate solutions, and reminds the person of the love that exists within them and the great need for it, especially in more complex moments.

Reducing excessive self-criticism is similar to a process of withdrawal, in which we learn to free ourselves from deeply rooted personal and cultural habits, to the point where it is difficult to recognize that they are harmful, unnecessary, and even redundant.

And this is something we must tell ourselves more often: this is not how we respond to pain that needs attention. Any version of creating shame or self-condemnation as a response to pain or any form of inner disharmony is a flawed, mistaken, and even harmful way of relating. Like any addiction, this is a habit that repeatedly creates harm and pain, and it is difficult to release.

It begins with recognition. Recognizing that this is a kind of mistake, a kind of misunderstanding, a kind of misguidance, that as long as we cooperate with it, it will indeed lead us into unpleasant experiences such as shame, self-condemnation, or a vague and unexplained inner pain. This is not how we respond to the emotional challenges we encounter regularly. We must recognize that this is a path worth moving away from, and at the same time acknowledge that we carry a deep habit of continuing to move within it.

We will want to replace this path with new ways that are more aligned with the needs of human growth and healing. These ways can be explored within the spaces of the Psycho-Creative world. But before we set out on those explorations, and also after we begin to experience them, we will need to remind ourselves again and again that excessive self-criticism tends to return even after deep processes of change. Therefore, we will repeatedly declare to ourselves: this is not the right way to treat ourselves. This is a mistake, an error, an expression of inner imbalance, and first and foremost we must refuse this way and the negative messages it produces.

When it happens, and it cannot always be prevented, we must at least pause. We must identify the process while it is happening. We must notice the gradual emergence of the unpleasant feeling, the quiet guilt that builds together with a vague sense of shame that is not entirely clear in its origin or its message.

When this occurs, we must observe ourselves, remain aware of what is happening, breathe, and try to remind ourselves that in those very moments excessive self-criticism is attempting to take control of our emotional state. And if we allow it to do so, this is exactly how we will feel about ourselves. This state may even express itself outwardly through unpleasant interactions with someone close to us, sometimes without understanding why we chose in that moment to speak or act in a way that is not beneficial.

In those moments, we need a higher than usual level of self-compassion. We need more self-patience. We need greater emotional care in our relationship with ourselves. These are moments in which our emotional state is generally weakened, and therefore it is precisely then that we should call upon the softer and more gentle aspects within us, those that can give us breathing space and prevent feelings of shame and self-condemnation from gaining too much power.

In these moments, it is also helpful to find within ourselves the ability to set a boundary to this emotional cloud, and to tell ourselves that this is a moment of excessive self-criticism and nothing more. It is an illusion that exaggerates difficulty, and we are not required to join the drama that is being created within us. We can breathe, smile at ourselves in the mirror, perhaps practice some form of emotional transformation, and choose to tell ourselves again and again, until we begin to believe it from within, that this is not how we respond to pain that needs attention.

In general, the journey of reducing excessive self-criticism includes a significant use of inner resistance. It is a journey of refusal, of rebellion, of setting new boundaries. It is a journey of learning what we must stop doing. It is a journey of redefining our internal values, and of choosing again how we relate to ourselves, how we speak to ourselves, how we respond to ourselves, how we care for ourselves, how we protect ourselves, and how we stand on our own behalf.

The message of this step is extremely important. The message is: this is not how we treat our pain. This message likely needs to be repeated countless times. This is not how we respond to pain and difficulty. It may sound logical and reasonable that we should not respond to pain with critical attack, yet in practice this is exactly what often happens automatically or almost automatically.

If we do not clearly and firmly deliver this message, that this is not how we respond to our pain under any circumstances and for any reason, it will continue. Excessive self-criticism will be activated in a way that not only does not help, but actually interferes with and harms the healthy processes needed to deal with pain.

This is a learning journey, to say no to criticism after it has already appeared, even when we are in the midst of a difficult emotional experience. We do not want this temporary state of vulnerability to receive a distorted and limiting response. For this, we must remain aware of the role of excessive self-criticism in these moments, and repeatedly update ourselves internally: this is not how we respond to pain within us.

Thank you for being here. And thank you for your presence as you continue along the path.

Thank you for choosing to reduce your excessive self-criticism, for yourself and for all those who may be inspired by you in learning how to relate to ourselves with respect, self-worth, courage, and the willingness to make mistakes, with self-tolerance.

All of this, along with an ongoing encouragement to seek the natural expressions of freedom and creativity that exist within, while consistently and firmly limiting excessive self-criticism, which it is our role to help become less excessive, and even kind and helpful.

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

1. Think about the central mistakes in your life, going far back into the past. What happens when you wrap them with deep compassion?
2. What expressions or words can you offer instead of the word “mistake”?
3. If we reach the understanding that there is no such thing as a “mistake,” what would that do to our lives?
4. What currently frightens you most about your future mistakes?
5. Can you wrap your future mistakes with love and even gratitude, knowing they may take you to places you cannot yet imagine reaching?
6. Write a letter to your excessive self-criticism. Explain to it what you now understand about it and about its presence in your life. Update it on how your relationship will be from this moment onward.
7. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about what you read in this step? Experiences, insights, questions, feelings?