



Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

Dr. Pinkie Feinstein

Step 4: Aggressive Force

Lesson Four opens Part Two. It brings forward the very thing for which this course exists, and it is something that needs to be said again and again. On the interpersonal level, in everyday conversation, and above all within the relationship a person has with themselves.

Excessive self-criticism can be significantly reduced. It truly can be significantly reduced.

This is already embedded within the words. I did not choose the term excessive self-criticism by chance. When I say excessive, I am already saying that there is something here that can be reduced. But the problem is that this is not present in awareness. People are not aware of the potential and actual damage of excessive self-criticism, which operates continuously in almost every person within the culture we know.

The lack of awareness that it exists and has an impact, together with our habituation to its messages and its modes of operation, creates cooperation with it. We believe it. We believe its false messages. And this, of course, does not allow us to reduce it.

And so we begin from a clear recognition. To recognize that it is excessive. That it is problematic. That it is harmful. That it limits us. Not to let this slip away. Not to give it legitimacy through statements such as “that’s just the way it is,” “everyone is like that,” “we need to be hard on ourselves.”

This is not true.

It is not a balanced and healthy part that helps us improve. It is not a constructive corrective mechanism. It is a part that beats us down. A part that frightens us. A part that causes us to hide from ourselves. A part that uses anger, reproach, and guilt.

And it is a part that distances us from ourselves. From our source. From our creativity. From our abundance. From our joy. From our love.

And therefore, we want to see it as it is. As something excessive. As something that accompanies us. And as something that can be significantly reduced.

To such an extent that Chapter Four carries a clear title: there is an aggressive force within us, and we are engaging in a struggle with it.

There is a struggle here. An inner struggle. A subtle struggle, not always conscious, but very present.

On one side, there is the critical part, dissatisfied, fearful, and intimidating. A part that limits. And on the other side, there is another part, open, creative, naïve in the healthy sense of the word, childlike, intuitive, emotional, spiritual.

This part does not seek wars. It wants to express itself. To create. To develop. To grow. To heal. To try. To experiment. To connect. To open the heart. It has no interest in fighting.

But the critical part does. And it is busy diminishing it, restricting it, silencing it. This is a problematic inner relationship.

And beyond these two parts, there is also the “self.” The inner captain. The one who observes. The one who sees everything that is happening. The one whose role is to properly manage the inner space.

This is the place where we can choose. This is the place where we can reorganize our inner boundaries.

This is the place where, after a process of awareness like the one we have gone through in the first three chapters, we can see that there is excessive self-criticism. That it has costs. And that it is not only legitimate to deal with it.

Sometimes it is necessary. To struggle. Later on, we will see that there are also indirect, creative ways, alternative paths. But there are moments when we confront excessive self-criticism directly.

Why? Because it is a kind of bully. An inner bully. A bully that misleads, that pressures, that generates anxiety, that creates an unpleasant inner atmosphere. And when there is a bully, sometimes you need to tell it: stop. To say: enough. This is not acceptable to me.

I will expand on this later, on the strategies and the methods. But first, it is important to recognize that there is a force within us that carries energy. Life energy. And this energy is being misused.

Instead of using it creatively to deal with life’s challenges, it is directed inward. It uses our own resources against us. We use our own resources to harm ourselves.

This is difficult to grasp. But it is happening. And ultimately, many of the things we want to happen do not happen. Not because they are too big. Not because we lack ability. Not because we lack luck or the right environment. But because of excessive self-criticism. Which is like weights on our legs.

And we must recognize this. Excessive self-criticism does not come to dialogue. It does not sit with us for a balanced conversation. It does not listen. It is not truly interested in what is good for us.

It attacks.

And it attacks quickly.

And it attacks strongly.

It is an inner bully.

And we developed it. We learned to develop it. In order to please certain figures. In order to meet expectations. Out of fear that if we did not meet them, something terrible would happen. And so we learned to beat ourselves down.

And when there is an attack, the first step is defense.

Later, we will also speak about more creative approaches. About strengthening the healthy parts, about creativity, spontaneity, freedom. That is the deeper solution. But when these parts are not yet strong enough, and the bully attacks, we first defend.

We create clear lines of defense. We bring forward an inner force that understands that this is excessive. That understands that this is false. That understands that this is inner speech that comes from fear and limitation. That understands the damage.

And then, if there is a force within me that is an inner bully attacking, my role is to reduce it. To reduce the damage it causes.

I take a stand. I, the inner captain, take a stand. I stand alongside the creative, emotional, childlike, spontaneous part. And I say: enough.

Now there is a struggle.

I will not allow excessive self-criticism to move freely and generate so much noise and so many unnecessary remarks. And later, just as I would not allow people from the outside to speak to me in a diminishing way, I will not allow it to happen from within.

But first, it is important to put this on the table. There is an inner struggle. And we must choose to enter it.

For the sake of our healthy parts, those that need protection. Because they do not protect themselves. They are busy creating, growing, developing. And we need to provide them with that protection.

To allow them to deepen their roots. To extend branches. To grow. To strengthen. To come into expression. Until the point where excessive self-criticism will barely be able to harm them.

And even then, we will need to remain aware. Because this part is naturally exposed. And it needs to remain open in order to be alive. And so we protect it, but we do not close it.

This is possible. It happens. And it improves over time. But first, we must be aware. And we must make an inner decision.

That we stand with this part. And that we protect it.

And from here, the rules of the game begin to change.

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

1. Are you aware of the natural aggressive aspects within you?
2. What is your relationship with these aspects? Do you resist their existence? Do you feel anger toward them? Do you find yourself unsure of what to do with them?
3. Are you open to the possibility that part of your being is engaged, almost routinely and on a daily basis, in attacking yourself through excessive self-criticism?
4. Do you find it difficult to accept the idea that there is self-directed aggression within you expressed through excessive self-criticism? Does this way of describing it feel exaggerated to you?
5. What might happen if you were able to channel your natural aggression into expressions of release, initiative, and new action?
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?