



Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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Step 7: Transform the Obsession

Chapter 7 opens part Three. Part Three enriches our tools for dealing with excessive self-criticism. The first part focused mainly on awareness. This is a large area, and we have a long way to go in learning to identify the nuances, the aspects, the forms, and the expressions of excessive self-criticism. This is an art in itself.

The second part also deals with awareness, but it already serves as preparation for action. It brings the message, or the declaration, that strengthens awareness: not only does excessive self-criticism exist, is exaggerated, limiting, and constricting, but it can also be reduced. These two things must come together. The recognition of the problem and the recognition of the ability to deal with it and reduce it.

Part Three begins to provide us with tools. To enrich us with tools, because there is much to do. A great deal to do. And there is also a great deal of enjoyment and satisfaction in this, along with a strengthening of self-confidence in the knowledge that I can do something about it, and that there are results, and that there are changes.

Chapter Seven asks a question: are we obsessive about what is familiar and routine in our lives?

It opens Part Three, which brings tools related to stepping out of routine, to change, and to initiative, as a way to challenge excessive self-criticism. Excessive self-criticism keeps us in the same place. Sometimes this is good. Routine has value. It strengthens, it stabilizes, it provides a framework.

But when routine becomes too closed, when it becomes too rigid, it begins to harm us.

Because part of human nature, healthy nature, and also the nature around us, is to change. It is part of what exists. It is part of what is. It is part of the natural flow of life.

And when we hold too tightly to what exists, preserving it out of fear of change, fear of uncertainty, fear of mistakes, fear of things we do not know, we begin to harm ourselves. And this only intensifies over time.

And so the central question here is: to what extent are we obsessive about what is familiar and routine in our lives?

Every person occasionally experiences obsessive periods. Thoughts that run again and again, with pressure and anxiety around a certain issue. And within this, there is always a great deal of excessive self-criticism, which intensifies the pressure, increases it, and does not allow us to see things in proportion.

And so we want to ask ourselves:

- To what extent are we obsessive, and to what extent are we critical, within what is familiar and routine in our lives?
- To what extent do we insist on maintaining routine, maintaining habits, maintaining certain patterns of behavior within the family, within work, within ourselves?
- To what extent do we invest excessive energy in preserving what exists, in protecting what is familiar and routine?

And if we expand this even further, it is also related to what we perceive as “normal.” On a social level, we want to belong to the “normal herd.” And so we are constantly, often unconsciously, asking ourselves: what do I need to do in order to remain within that herd?

It is important to clarify: maintaining routine is not necessarily something wrong. Routine can be a good thing. Being familiar, being normal, these are things that have significant value in the right context. But when we become obsessive about them, when they become too important, it is already a sign of fear.

We are afraid of ourselves. We are afraid of our natural creative impulse, which wants to break through existing boundaries, which wants to remind us that we are constantly creating for ourselves a kind of cell, a kind of prison, without noticing.

We tell ourselves stories that we like our lives, that we have freedom, that everything is fine. But within us there is an impulse that says: no. This is not enough for me. I want to break through. I want to change. I want to see other things. I want to taste. I want to challenge the places where I am stuck. I want something different.

- It is an impulse.
- It is a healthy impulse.
- It is a creative impulse.
- It is an impulse of life.

And sometimes we do not have the strength for it. It can be annoying, because it creates restlessness, it creates discomfort. And if we interpret it incorrectly, it can even generate excessive self-criticism about the fact that we are not changing, about the fact that we are stuck. In other words, even there, we can activate criticism.

And at the same time, we continue to preserve what exists, and even complain about the fact that we are not changing.

There is a way out of this situation. We will go deeper into this in the following chapters, but already here it is important to say: stepping out of routine, change, and initiative undermine excessive self-criticism.

It will not help to give excuses for why this is not the time to change. It will not help to complain about the fact that we are not changing. All of these excuses, all of these complaints, all of this overthinking, ultimately strengthen excessive self-criticism. They fuel the obsession with what is familiar and routine.

And not only within us. We also want others to remain familiar and predictable. We are even anxious about the possibility that they might change. And all of this only strengthens excessive self-criticism and gives it more power.

Because that is its purpose. To reduce the expression of our creative impulses. To reduce the expression of our authentic part. And the authentic part is creative. It changes. It updates. It surprises. It is spontaneous. This is how authenticity functions. Each person in their own unique way.

And so we want to ask ourselves, and to find answers: to what extent am I obsessive, to what extent am I investing excessive energy in what is familiar and routine?

And again, this is not a bad thing. We need stability. We need familiar and routine elements. They are foundations. We rely on them. They give us structure, meaning, a sense of ground.

We do not want to be in constant change. It is not healthy. It is not sustainable. We want to be in the right measure of openness and willingness for change, when our inner impulse guides us toward it.

And this impulse is wise. And when we listen to it, and dare to follow it, something interesting happens: excessive self-criticism begins to diminish, almost like magic.

But when we do not listen to it, when we do not allow ourselves to move, it grows stronger. And then we find ourselves investing more and more thoughts and doubts: why did I not do it, why will I do it, maybe I am like this and maybe I am like that, I must maintain this, why am I maintaining this. All of this mental activity only fuels excessive self-criticism.

So at a certain point, we need to step out of routine. We need to initiate changes, even small ones. We need to take our natural ability to initiate and move, and use it to deal with excessive self-criticism. This is how it happens.

And so, the first step is to identify: to identify to what extent we are obsessive about what is familiar and routine. Obsession is energy. It is energy dedicated to preservation, to protection, to non-movement.

But here there is something very beautiful: that same energy can be used to step out of routine, for change, for initiative, for self-healing. The same energy. And this is something remarkable.

And so it is possible to help obsessive people. There is no need to eliminate their energy. One only needs to shift its direction. From the obsessive, preserving, closed place, to a creative, open, initiating, changing place. And when that happens, suddenly there is no room for obsession. There is no room for excessive criticism.

And so the invitation here is to examine ourselves. To examine our obsession with what is familiar and routine. And to ask small questions.

Am I willing to move something there? To move it a little? To surprise myself? To step out of the familiar, repetitive direction? To play with what exists in a new way?

It is part of our role, from time to time, to challenge what exists. To show ourselves that routine and familiarity are important to us, but not to that extent. Because there are other things that are important in our lives. And I am willing to begin to give them energy.

And when the energy of obsession begins to find new “obsessive” channels of activity, channels whose purpose is change, renewal, challenging the existing, play, and exploring different paths than the usual ones, then excessive self-criticism retreats, and in its place arises a new excitement that can provide energy for continuing the journey of reducing excessive self-criticism.

Questions for Self-Reflection (it is recommended to answer in writing):

1. What are the things that are most important to you in your routine?
2. Which things could you be more flexible about in terms of the need to maintain them within your routine?
3. What happens to you when your routine is disrupted by something unexpected?
4. In what way can you slightly challenge your routine and introduce more adventure and surprise into it?
5. Can you recall a situation in which your routine was significantly disrupted and it ultimately turned out for the better?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share or write about regarding what you have read in this chapter? Experiences? Insights? Questions? Feelings?