



# Reducing Excessive Self-Criticism Journey

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## Step 9: Initiative Undermines Excessive Self-Criticism

Chapter Nine is the third of the three chapters of Part Three. Part Three deals with stepping out of routine, with change, and with initiative, as a way to undermine excessive self-criticism. This is our goal. This is our goal: to undermine excessive self-criticism, to undermine its leadership, to destabilize it, to disrupt the balance it holds, to weaken the control it has within us.

It is useful to use such expressions when we engage with our excessive self-criticism, and even more exaggerated expressions, because usually we do not sufficiently grasp, on an experiential level, the meaning, the place, and the cost of excessive self-criticism.

And so Chapter Nine brings with it a central idea: initiative, even when it does not succeed, strengthens the ability to reduce excessive self-criticism. I will say this again: initiative, even when it does not succeed, and perhaps especially when it does not succeed, when it is repeated, strengthens our ability to reduce excessive self-criticism.

I would like to begin with an energetic image. Excessive self-criticism is like a heavy sack, like a kind of covering that wraps itself around our body. It weighs us down, it constricts us, it almost does not allow us to move. And even when we do move, every movement becomes complicated, complex, filled with thoughts.

We begin to think too much. If we plan more, maybe it will be more successful. If we think more, maybe it will turn out better. And we enter into more and more mental involvement around the question of whether to act, how to act, when to act, how exactly to act, whether it will turn out well. All of this stems from the limitation that this covering creates around us.

And here a very important point comes in. When we practice “initiating for the sake of initiating,” initiating in order to get used to the act itself, initiating in order to train ourselves to be people who initiate, something begins to change.

This has nothing to do with whether we are employees, self-employed, or entrepreneurs. It is not about a role. It is an attitude. A spirit. A position that every person can and should adopt.

I initiate. I take the first step. I decide. I set out on the path even before I understand all the details. I am the initiator. I am in charge. This is mine. And within this approach, I am also prepared in advance for the fact that some of my initiatives will not succeed.

Later, we will speak about the importance of mistakes. But even before I allow myself to make mistakes, very often I do not initiate, because I am afraid of making a mistake.

And what happens then? Out of fear of making mistakes, I do not make mistakes. And because I do not make mistakes, I do not act. And I remain frustrated, with dreams, with desires, with things I would like to do. So what, in fact, is the “mistake” here?

And then I begin to tell myself stories. I do not have time. I do not have money. I do not have the right conditions. I do not have ideas. I do not have support. But the truth is different.

The truth is that I have become accustomed to being afraid to move. I have become accustomed to thinking that I should act only if I know that it will succeed. And in this way, I have dramatically reduced my creativity. And within this space, I have enough intellectual ability to invent excuses for myself, to give myself explanations that sound logical, instead of telling myself the real thing: that I have become accustomed not to initiate. And who is the quiet force behind this habit? My excessive self-criticism.

And here we arrive at the central point of the chapter. Since our main goal here is to reduce excessive self-criticism, I invite you to practice initiative. To practice initiative for the sole purpose of reducing excessive self-criticism. To practice initiative in order to free yourself from the limitations that have been built over years by excessive self-criticism that is too active and too influential.

Of course, along the way, many additional benefits will come from practicing initiative. But this is the goal: to disrupt the ability of excessive self-criticism to block movement, change, initiative, and renewed action.

There are so many things that are prevented from a person simply because they are “stingy with initiative.” And it is possible to initiate very small things, very simple things. It is almost always much simpler than it appears when we are under the confusing messages of excessive self-criticism.

What does excessive self-criticism actually do? It turns us into victims by causing us to wait for others to act. Maybe someone else will take the risk. Maybe someone else will make the mistake. Maybe someone else will lead. How many times do we wait for some kind of “hero,” some kind of “leader,” to do what we are afraid to initiate?

And this is how it works: the less we initiate, the more our energetic state contracts. And the more it contracts, the less we initiate. And when we initiate less, we become more exposed to the influence of excessive self-criticism.

And so it is important to stop and examine: even if I perceive myself as a person who does not initiate much, is that really the case? Where and how can I, right now, initiate? Where have I exaggerated my sense of inability to influence a certain situation through some initiative?

We want, therefore, to begin counting initiatives. Throughout the day. Throughout the week. Also small initiatives. Also those that supposedly did not succeed. Initiatives, as I mentioned earlier, are actually a healing tool when it comes to reducing excessive self-criticism.

And in our language at this stage, the initiative itself is the success. We collect initiatives. We collect precedents. Because the psyche learns itself through precedents. The more I experience, act, and do again and again, the psyche reaches a conclusion: this is who I am.

If I train in initiating, very quickly something within me begins to feel: I am a person who initiates. And then I initiate more. And when I initiate, when I connect the inner world to the outer world, simply get up and act, excessive self-criticism cannot stop me. I do not give it space.

This is a mental muscle. A muscle that, when active, reduces excessive self-criticism. This is a rule of thumb: if we want to live with less excessive self-criticism, we need to initiate more. To get up faster and do something. To reduce waiting time. To reduce procrastination.

And all of this only for the sake of practicing initiative. Only for the sake of reducing excessive self-criticism. Not in order to “become an entrepreneur.” Not in order to “win.” Not in order to “get ahead of others.” But only for one thing: to gain more freedom from our excessive self-criticism. Only for that.

And this can become a kind of game. An exciting, liberating, expanding game. A person begins to discover how much energy they receive from each initiative. How accustomed they were to waiting for others to take the step.

So now we change roles. We stop waiting. We develop inner leadership. I determine my life. And in order to determine my life, I must also demonstrate it in action, not only internally.

And when I prove to myself through action that I initiate, the power of excessive self-criticism begins to shrink. It cannot stand in front of a person who says: I initiate. I do not have time to hesitate. I do not have time to deliberate. I do not have to know that it will succeed.

And again I emphasize: very often, the initiative itself is the success.

And so I invite you: each one of us can improve our ability to initiate. Especially in the more stuck areas. To initiate more. To make more mistakes. To initiate again and again.

And at a certain point, it begins to flow. Even if sometimes it turns out to be a “mistake.” That is fine. It is part of the process of change. The “mistakes” themselves also become, over time, tools that we learn to use in order to reduce excessive self-criticism.

We will return to the subject of mistakes later. For now, we will focus on changing one central and chronic mistake: the mistake of lack of initiative in areas where we tend to get stuck, in places where we have become accustomed to giving too much power to others or to circumstances.

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

1. How do you currently assess the level of activity of your “initiative muscle” in your life?
2. Give an example of something you initiated in the past, even though others were not particularly enthusiastic or encouraging about it.
3. What emotional changes do you experience when you are at a higher level of initiative than usual?
4. Are you willing to take a risk and initiate something connected to your passion, even if it may not succeed this time? How will you help yourself cope with the lack of success?
5. What initiative do you fantasize about doing sometime in the future? And perhaps you can bring that future a little closer to you, in some way?
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?