



# Meeting Your Inner Critic: Understanding & Transforming Self-Talk

*A reflective worksheet for women navigating all stages of life and professional life*

## Understanding the Inner Critic

### **What is the inner critic?**

An internal dialogue that can sound like an unhelpful friend, harsh coach, anxious parent, or perfectionist boss. It's shaped by past feedback, culture, and internalised roles and expectations (e.g., "super woman" or "ideal professional").

### **Why does it feel so powerful?**

The mind's negativity bias, confirmation bias and overactive threat system make these voices loud and sticky.

### **Reflection:**

- *What does your inner critic sound like?*
- **You, we or I:** does it say "**YOU** need to..." "**WE** need to..." "**I** need to..."

**Try This Visualization:** Imagine your inner critic as a character. Let's name them! What do they look like? How might you thank them and set a boundary?

## Track and Challenge (CBT Strategy)

Use this table to explore patterns:

Trigger / Situation	Inner Critic Statement	Emotions Felt	Alternative, Compassionate Thought

**Guided Reframe Prompt:** - What would you say to a friend/child in your shoes? - How would your wisest self respond?

## Defuse with ACT + Soothe the Brain

***A Wandering Mind is an Anxious Mind***

**Defusion Practice (ACT):**

- Label the thought: *"I'm having the thought that..."*
- Thank your mind: *"Thanks for trying to protect me."* –

Refocus on action: *\*"What can I do that aligns with my values right now?"*

**RegulationTip:** - Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, out for 4. – in regulating breathing we can start to regulate our nervous system and re-engages the prefrontal cortex (your wise mind).

## Values + Identity Rebuild

**Reconnecting with identity burnout and role overload can eclipse your true self.**

**Values Clarification:** Circle or highlight your top 5–7 values from the list below:

**Core Values List:** - Acceptance - Adventure - Authenticity - Balance - Beauty - Challenge - Compassion - Connection - Contribution - Creativity - Curiosity - Encouragement - Equality - Faith - Freedom - Fun - Generosity - Growth - Harmony - Honesty - Hope - Humour - Independence - Integrity - Joy - Kindness - Learning - Love - Mindfulness - Openness - Order - Passion - Peace - Presence - Respect - Rest - Security - Service - Simplicity - Spirituality - Stability - Strength - Trust - Vitality - Vulnerability

**Journal Prompt:** - When do I feel most “me”? - What small acts could I take this week to honour those values?

**Affirmation to End:**

*“I am learning to meet myself with curiosity, not criticism.”*

*“My worth is not up for debate.”*

*“I care for myself and am deserving of rest”*

## Reflect with the 5 Ls — A Look Back Over Time

**Inspired by Andrea Clarke’s 5 Ls Framework.** Take a moment to reflect on the past 1–6 months (or a time period that feels meaningful). Use this reflection to guide your values, actions, and self-compassion.

**What have you...**

- **Loved?** What experiences, people, or moments lit you up?
- **Longed for?** What did you crave emotionally, mentally, or physically?
- **Loathed?** What drained you, made you feel small, or left you stuck?
- **Learned?** What have your successes and mistakes taught you?
- **Laughed at?** What brought you lightness, even in tough times?