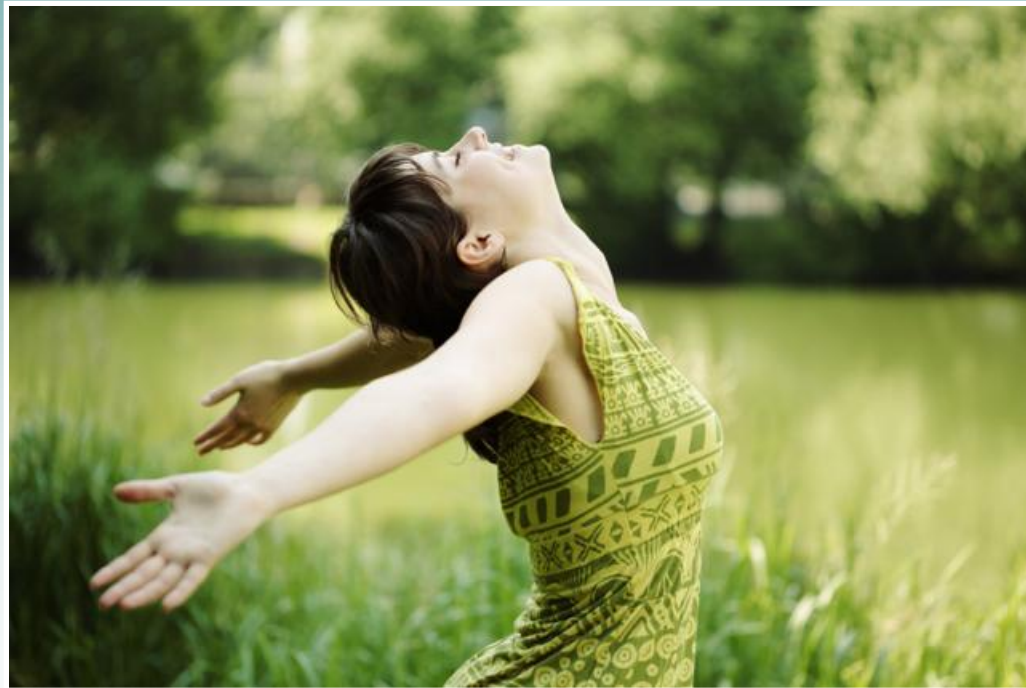


# Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice:

An Adjunct to Clinical Practice

with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



THE GLENDON  
ASSOCIATION



Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

Director of Research and Education  
The Glendon Association

Senior Editor  
PsychAlive.org



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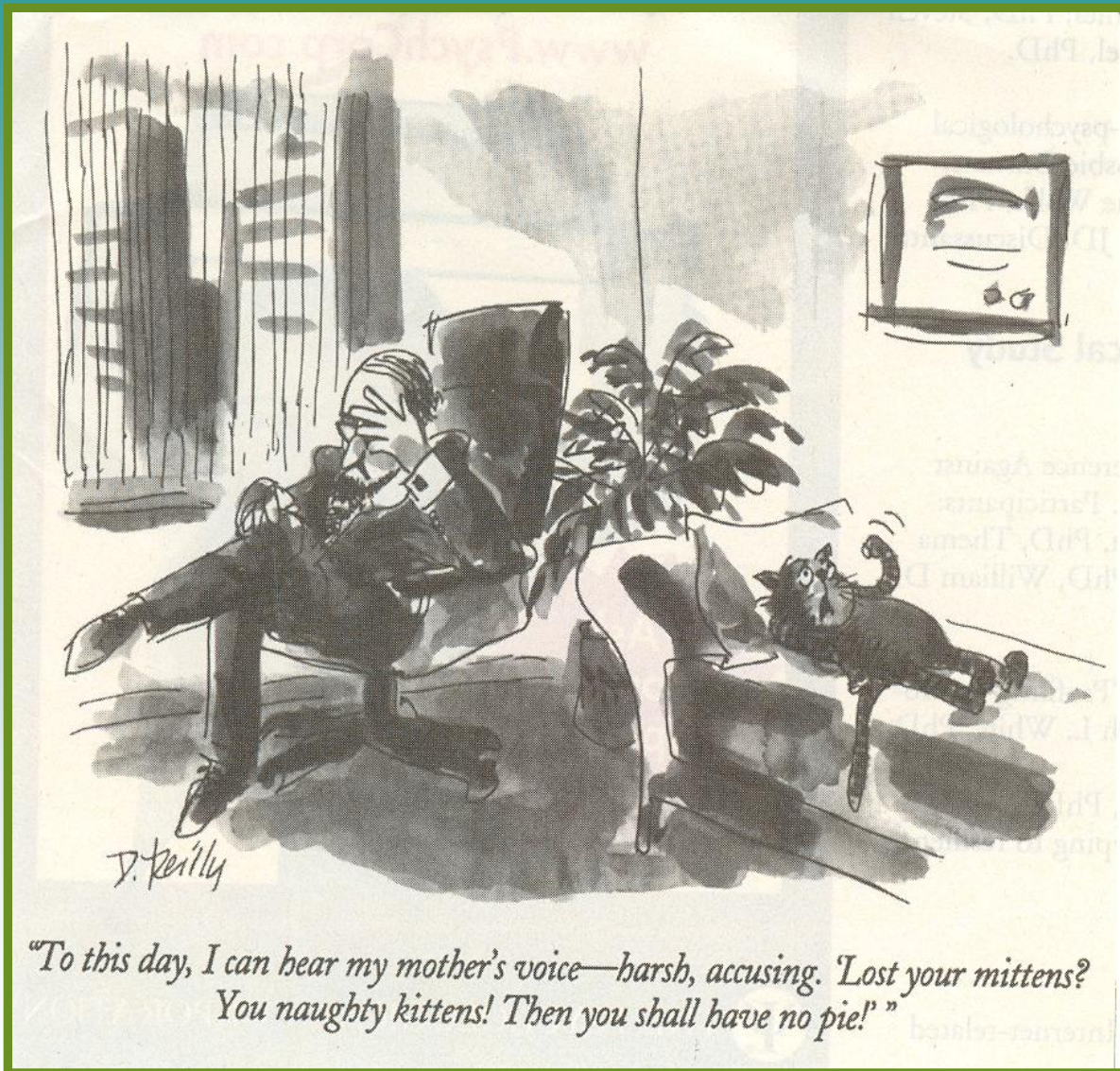
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# Definition of the Voice

The critical inner voice refers to a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior. This internal enemy fosters inwardness, distrust, self-criticism, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities. The critical inner voice effects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships, and our performance and accomplishments at school and work.

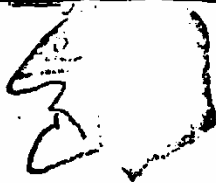




# FEIFFER

by JULES FEIFFER

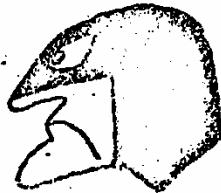
I AM A CRITIC.



I AM NOT A BOOK, ART,  
THEATRE, FILM, MUSIC  
OR DANCE CRITIC.



I AM A  
BERNARD  
CRITIC.



A RESIDENT CRITIC WORKING  
INSIDE THE HEAD OF A BERNARD.



HE WAKES UP I TELL HIM,  
"YOU'RE LATE." AT THE OF-  
FICE I TELL HIM, "YOU'RE  
BEHIND." AT DINNER PARTIES  
I TELL HIM,  
"YOU'RE  
BORING."



WHEN HE FALLS IN  
LOVE I TELL HIM,  
"YOU'RE NOT GOOD  
ENOUGH."



ON OCCASION HE CAN'T  
TAKE ANY MORE RE-  
VIEWS AND ORDERS  
ME OUT OF HIS HEAD.



SO I RIP OFF MY  
MASK AND SAY,  
"IS THAT THE WAY TO  
TALK TO YOUR  
MOTHER?"



CRITIC BY JULES FEIFFER

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE 1977

# Common “Voices” About One’s Self

- ❖ You’re stupid.
- ❖ You’re unattractive.
- ❖ You’re not like other people.
- ❖ You’re a failure.
- ❖ You never get anything right.
- ❖ No one will ever love you.
- ❖ You’re fat.
- ❖ You’re such a loser.
- ❖ You’ll never make friends.
- ❖ You’ll never be able to quit drinking (smoking etc).
- ❖ You’ll never accomplish anything.
- ❖ What’s the point in even trying?



# Common “Voices” About One’s Career

- ❖ You don’t know what you’re doing.
- ❖ Why do they expect you to do everything yourself?
- ❖ Who do you think you are? You’ll never be successful.
- ❖ You’re under too much pressure. You can’t take it.
- ❖ You’ll never get everything done. You’re so lazy.
- ❖ You should just put this off until tomorrow.
- ❖ No one appreciates you.
- ❖ You’d better be perfect, or you’ll get fired.
- ❖ Nobody likes you here.
- ❖ Put your career first. Don’t take time for yourself.
- ❖ When are you ever going to get a real job?
- ❖ No one would hire you.



# Common “Voices” About Relationships



## Voices About One's Self:

- ❖ You're never going to find another person who understands you.
- ❖ Don't get too hooked on her.
- ❖ He doesn't really care about you.
- ❖ She is too good for you.
- ❖ You've got to keep him interested.
- ❖ You're better off on your own.
- ❖ As soon as she gets to know you, she will reject you.
- ❖ You've got to be in control.
- ❖ It's your fault if he gets upset.
- ❖ Don't be too vulnerable or you'll just wind up getting hurt.



# Common “Voices” About Relationships

## Voices About One's Partner:

- ❖ Men are so insensitive, unreliable, selfish.
- ❖ Women are so fragile, needy, indirect.
- ❖ He only cares about being with his friends.
- ❖ Why get so excited? What's so great about her anyway?
- ❖ He is probably cheating on you.
- ❖ You can't trust her.
- ❖ He just can't get anything right.



# Common “Voices” About Parenting



- ❖ You don't know what you're doing.
- ❖ You're a horrible father.
- ❖ You're just like your mother.
- ❖ Everyone sees what a bad parent you are.
- ❖ Your kids are out of control.
- ❖ They're no good, because you're no good.
- ❖ You'd better make them listen to you.
- ❖ You never get a moment's peace.
- ❖ Don't you wish they'd just leave you alone?
- ❖ Having kids means giving up your life.
- ❖ Only a horrible person feels critical of their kids.



# Part One: Where Do Critical Inner Voices Come From?



# How Voices Pass From Generation to Generation

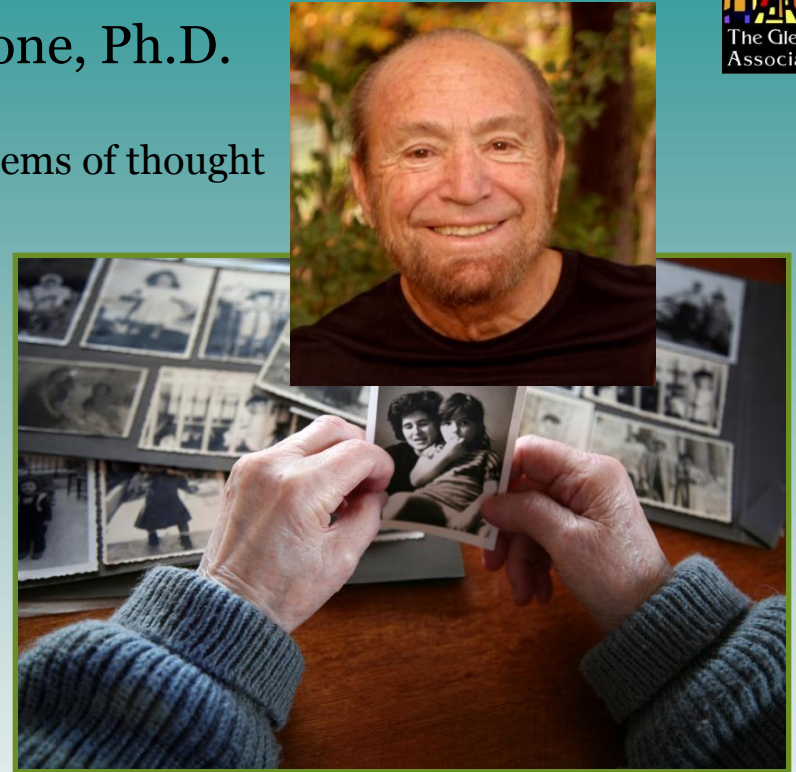


# Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.



- ❖ Integrates psychoanalytic and existential systems of thought
- ❖ Two kinds of emotional pain:
  - Interpersonal
  - Existential
- ❖ The core conflict
- ❖ Defended versus undefended lifestyles
- ❖ Formation of defenses in childhood
- ❖ The concept of the **Fantasy Bond**
- ❖ The concept of the **Critical Inner Voice**



# Attachment Theory



Sir John Bowlby, Ph.D.

Harry Harlow, Ph.D.

Rene Spitz, M.D.

Mary Ainsworth, Ph.D.

Mary Main, Ph.D.

Erik Hesse, Ph.D.

## **Adult Attachment Interview:**

predicts the baby's attachment to the parent with 80% accuracy before the baby is even born

# Where do voices come from?

## Patterns of Attachment in Children

### Category of Attachment

- ❖ Secure
- ❖ Insecure – avoidant
- ❖ Insecure- anxious/ambivalent
- ❖ Insecure - disorganized

### Parental Interactive Pattern

- ❖ Emotionally available, perceptive, responsive
- ❖ Emotionally unavailable, imperceptive, unresponsive and rejecting
- ❖ Inconsistently available, perceptive and responsive and intrusive
- ❖ Frightening, frightened, disorienting, alarming



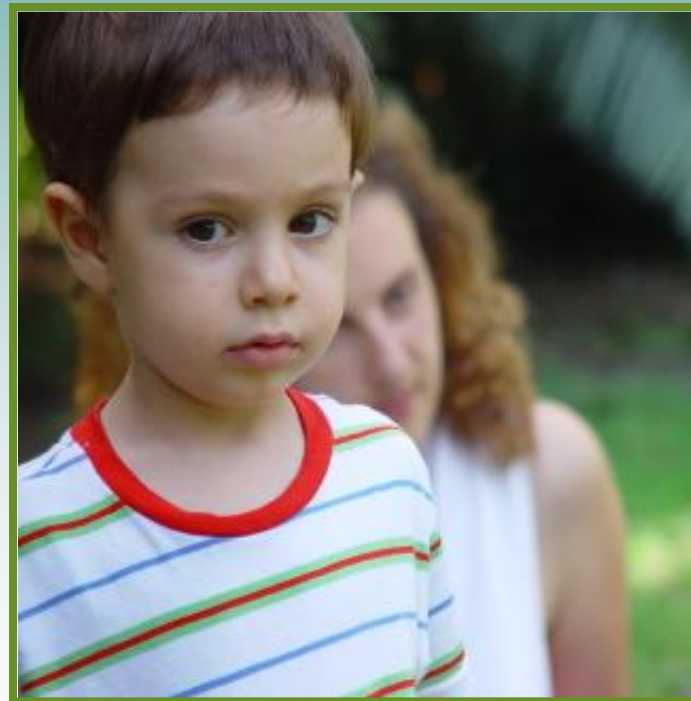
# Attachment Figures

- Low Risk Non-Clinical Populations
  - ❖ Secure 55-65%
  - ❖ Ambivalent 5-15%
  - ❖ Avoidant 20-30%
  - ❖ Disorganized 20-40%
  - (Given a Best Fit Alternative)
- High Risk, Parentally maltreated
  - ❖ Disorganized 80%

# What causes insecure attachment?

- ❖ Unresolved trauma/loss in the life of the parents statistically predict attachment style far more than:

- Maternal Sensitivity
- Child Temperament
- Social Status
- Culture



# Implicit Versus Explicit Memory

## ❖ Implicit Memory



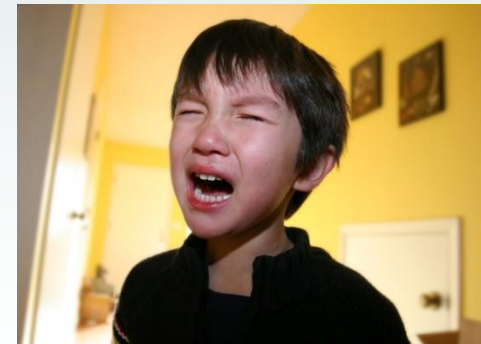
## ❖ Explicit Memory



# How does disorganized attachment pass from generation to generation?

❖ Implicit memory of terrifying experiences may create:

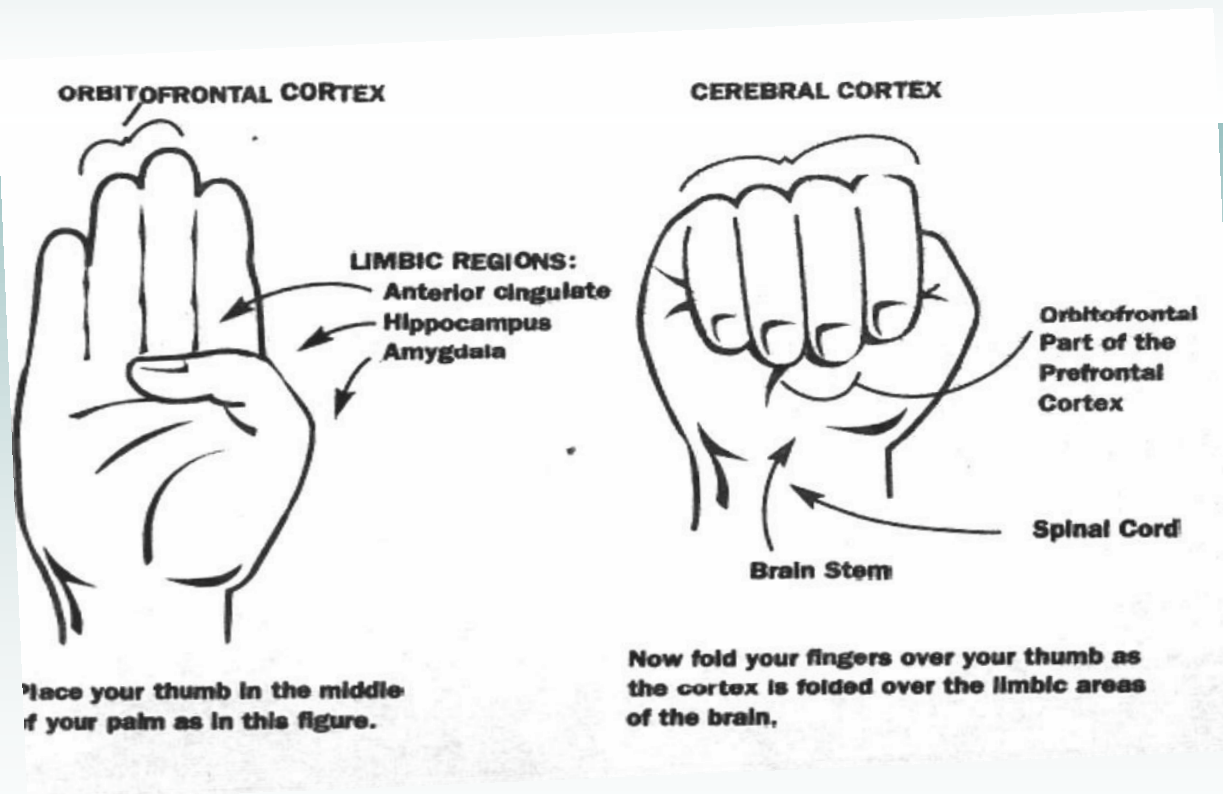
- Impulsive behaviors
- Distorted perceptions
- Rigid thoughts and impaired decision making patterns
- Difficulty tolerating a range of emotions



# The Brain in the Palm of Your Hand



Daniel Siegel, M.D. – Interpersonal Neurobiology



# 9 Important Functions of the Pre-Frontal Cortex

1. Body Regulation
2. Attunement
3. Emotional Balance
4. Response Flexibility
5. Empathy
6. Self-Knowing Awareness (Insight)
7. Fear Modulation
8. Intuition
9. Morality



# Division of the Mind

## Parental Ambivalence

Parents both love and hate themselves and extend both reactions to their productions, i.e., their children.

### Parental Nurturance



### Parental Rejection, Neglect Hostility



# Prenatal Influences

Disease/Trauma



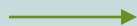
Substance Abuse/ Domestic Violence



# Birth Trauma



# Baby



Genetic  
Structure  
Temperament  
Physicality  
Sex



# Parental Nurturance



## Self-System

Unique make-up of the individual; harmonious identification and incorporation of parent's positive attitudes and traits; and the effect of experience and education on the maturing self-system.

# Personal Goals

## Needs



Food

Thirst

Sex

Safety

## Wants



Affiliation

Achievement

Activity

## Meaning



Love

Compassion  
for Others

Generosity

# Personal Conscience

## ❖ Moral Principles



## ❖ Ethical Behavior



## ❖ Integrity



# Parental Rejection, Neglect, Hostility

Other Factors: accidents, illnesses, death anxiety

## Anti-Self System

The Fantasy Bond (core defense) is a self-parenting process made up of two elements: the helpless, needy child, and the self-punishing, self-nurturing parent. Either aspect may be extended to relationships. The degree of defense is proportional to the amount of damage sustained while growing up.



# Anti-Self System

## Self-Punishing Voice Process



### Voice Process

### Behaviors

### Source

1. Critical thoughts toward self



Verbal self-attacks – a generally negative attitude toward self and others predisposing alienation.

Critical parental attitudes, projections, and unreasonable expectations.

2. Micro-suicidal injunctions



Addictive patterns. Self-punitive thoughts after indulging.

Identification with parents defenses

3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation



Actions that jeopardize, such as carelessness with one's body, physical attacks on the self, and actual suicide

Parents' covert and overt aggression (identification with the aggressor).

# Anti–Self System

## Self- Soothing Voice Process

### Voice Process

### Behaviors

### Source

1a) Aggrandizing  
thoughts toward self.

Verbal build up toward  
self.

Parental build up

1b) Suspicious paranoid  
thoughts towards others.

Alienation from others,  
destructive behavior  
towards others.

Parental attitudes, child  
abuse, experienced  
victimization.

2. Micro-suicidal  
Injunctions

Addictive patterns.  
Thoughts luring the  
person into indulging.

Imitation of parents'  
defenses.

3. Overtly Violent  
thoughts

Aggressive actions, actual  
violence.

Parental neglect, parents'  
overt aggression  
(identification with the  
aggressor).



# Part Two: Challenging the Critical Inner Voice



# Helping Your Clients Identify Their Critical Inner Voice



## Help Clients:

1. Recognize the events that trigger their Critical Inner Voice
2. Recognize the specific outside criticisms that support their Critical Inner Voice
3. Become aware of times they may be projecting their self-attacks onto other people
4. Notice changes in their mood

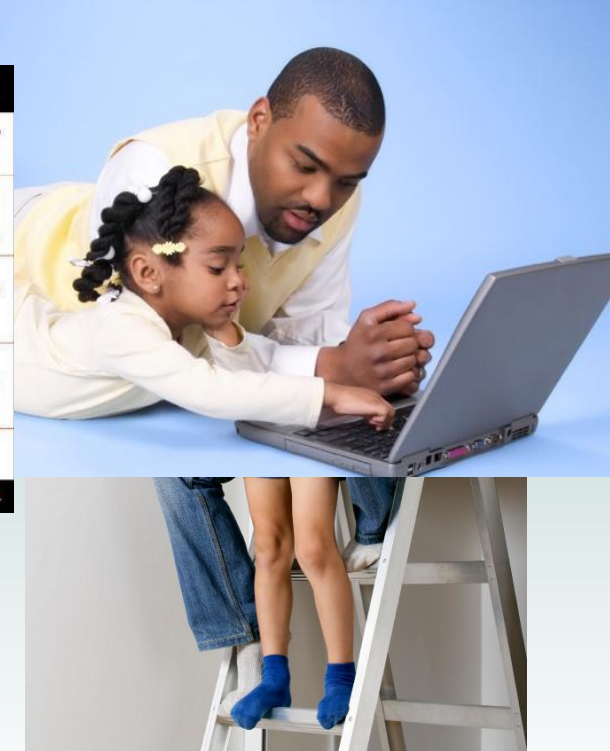
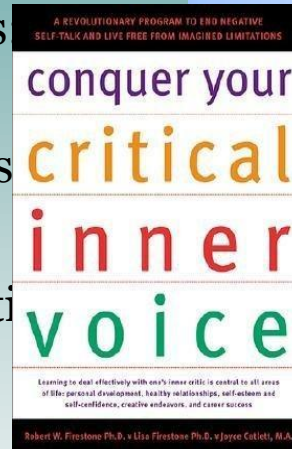


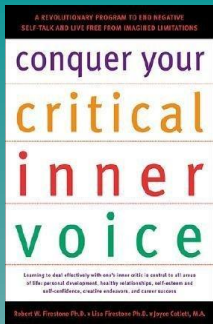
# Exercise 1.1:

## Visualizing the Real You

All exercises from Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

- ❖ My physical abilities
- ❖ My positive qualities
- ❖ My interests and activities
- ❖ My long-term goals:
- ❖ My short-term goals:
- ❖ Where do I stand in relation to my goals?





# Exercise 1.2:

## Your Critical Inner Voice Attacks

### ❖ Self-critical attacks as “I” statements

Example: “I don’t think I’m an attractive person.”

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### ❖ Self-critical attacks as “you” statements

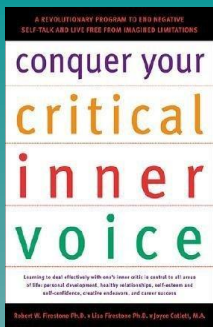
Example: “You’re not attractive.”

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# Exercise 1.3:

## Keeping a Journal:

### Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

❖ My critical inner voice  
as “you” statements

Example: “You’re so stupid.”

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❖ The real me  
as “I” statements

Example: “Sometimes I struggle  
with work, but I catch on quickly  
and then usually do a good job.”

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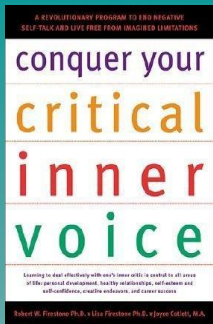
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# PsychAlive Workshop & Journal



Journal on PsychAlive at <http://www.psychalive.org/category/psychalive-workshop/>

Screenshot of the PsychAlive Workshop journal entry form. The header includes the PsychAlive Workshop logo and navigation links: Home, About PsychAlive, Blog, Subscribe, My Profile. A search bar is also present. The main banner features a woman and a man sitting on a lawn, with text: "PSYCHALIVE Workshop", "Alive to SELF Workshop", "Alive to PARENTING Workshop", and "Alive to INTIMACY Workshop". Below the banner, there is a section for "PSYCHALIVE Workshop" with links: My Profile, My Workshop, Journal Exercises, My Journal, and a "New Entry" button. The form itself has a "Title / Subject" field, a "Text" area, and two buttons at the bottom: "Write Journal" and "Cancel, back".



# Exercise 1.4: A Plan for Action

## ❖ Actions dictated by my critical inner voice

Examples:

“Have another piece of cake.”

“You should just be on your own.”

“You can’t trust anyone, so don’t get too close.”

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## ❖ Actions to take that reflect the real me

Examples:

“I want to eat healthy and take care of myself.”

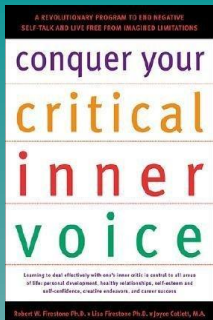
“I don’t want to be isolated and will seek out friends”

“I want to stay vulnerable in my close relationships.”

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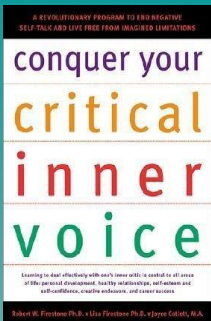


# Exercise 2.1:

## Seeing Your Parents Realistically

### A. Describing Your Parents' Traits and Behaviors

1. Did you experience any long-term separations from your parent or parents during your childhood? Through death? Divorce? Illness? If so, describe your reactions at the time.
2. What do you think your parents offered you that has been the most valuable to you in your adult life? Describe these traits, values, or ideals.
3. What faults or weaknesses did you dislike in your parent or parents? Describe these traits.
4. Were your parents strict or overly permissive in their discipline of you and your siblings? Describe an example of how they disciplined you.



# Exercise 2.1:

## Seeing Your Parents Realistically

### B. Your Parents' Behaviors That May Have Caused You Shame or Guilt

Mother

Father

Yes No

Yes No

As a child, were you beaten or scolded in the presence of others?

Yes No

Yes No

Did your parents show with words and gestures that they liked you?

Yes No

Yes No

Did you ever feel humiliated by things your parents did or said in front of others?

Yes No

Yes No

Did your parents begrudge you things you needed?

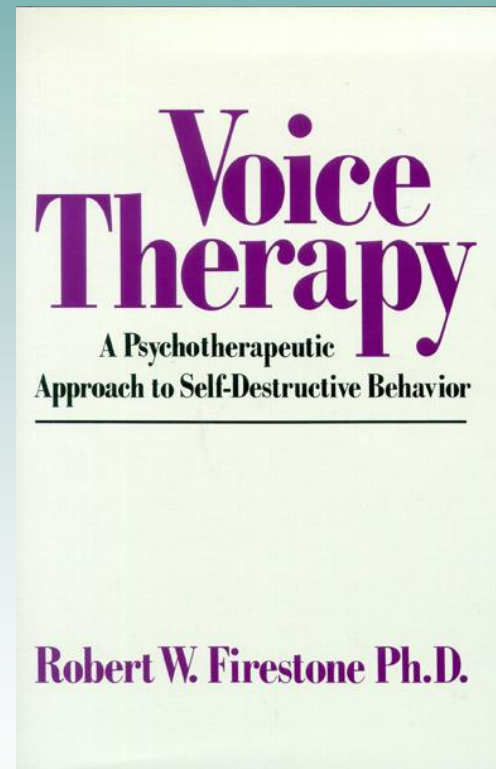
# Assessment Instruments

- ❖ Firestone Assessment of Self-Destructive Thoughts (FAST)
- ❖ Firestone Assessment of Suicidal Intent (FASI)
- ❖ Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts
- ❖ Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts - Adolescents



# Voice Therapy

## Cognitive Affective Behavioral Approach



# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

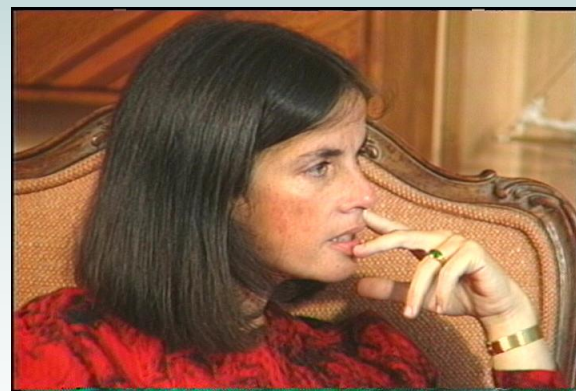
## Step I

Identify the content of the person's negative thought process. The person is taught to articulate his or her self-attacks in the second person. The person is encouraged to say the attack as he or she hears it or experiences it. If the person is holding back feelings, he or she is encouraged to express them.



## Step II

The person discusses insights and reactions to verbalizing the voice. The person attempts to understand the relationship between voice attacks and early life experience.



# The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

## Step III

The person answers back to the voice attacks, which is often a cathartic experience. Afterwards, it is important for the person to make a rational statement about how he or she really is, how other people really are, what is true about his or her social world.



## Step IV

The person develops insight about how the voice attacks are influencing his or her present-day behaviors.

## Step V

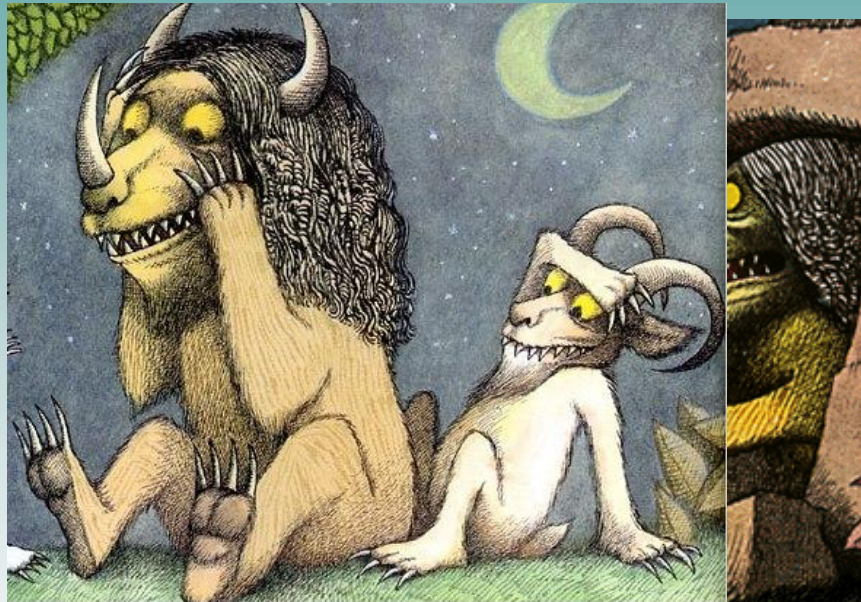
The person then collaborates with the therapist to plan changes in these behaviors. The person is encouraged to not engage in self-destructive behavior dictated by his or her negative thoughts and to also increase the positive behaviors these negative thoughts discourage.



If you are interested in attending a voice therapy training or in getting training materials please contact [jina@glendon.org](mailto:jina@glendon.org) or visit [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org).

# Self

# Anti-Self



# Guidelines for Continued Personal Development



- ❖ Be Aware of the Fear That Accompanies Change
- ❖ Realize That Psychological Pain is Valid
- ❖ Develop a More Realistic View of Your Parents
- ❖ Differentiation – Unlearn Old Behaviors, Learn New Behaviors
- ❖ Become More Aware of Specific Defenses Against Feeling
- ❖ Recognize the Value of Friendship
- ❖ Seek Your Own Personal Meaning in Life

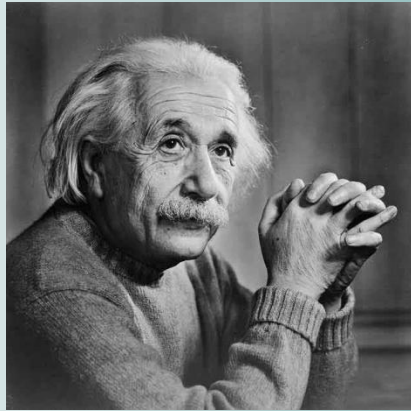


# Guidelines for Further Developing a Meaningful Life



- ❖ Practice Being Generous in All Your Relationships
- ❖ Become Aware of Existential Realities
- ❖ Develop a Spiritual Perspective and Appreciate the Mystery of Existence

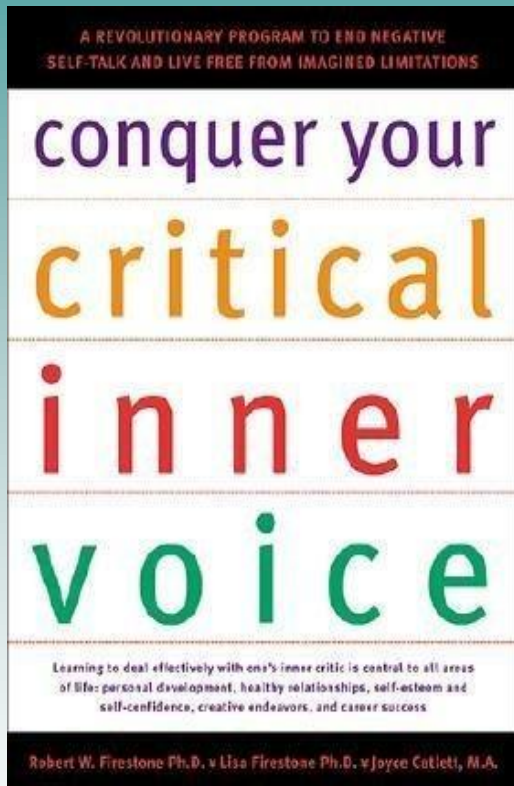




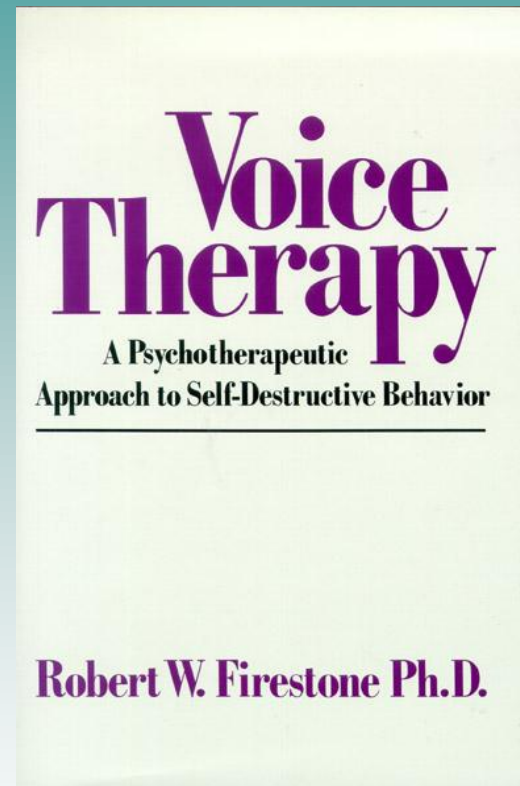
*A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security."*

- Albert Einstein

# Resources: Books



For Public and Professionals



For Professionals

Visit [www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org) for resource links

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A Free Webinar for the Public



**Tuesday, October 19  
11 am – 12 pm PST**

Register at -

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All upcoming webinars can be found at [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)



**THE GLENDON**  
ASSOCIATION

Next CE Webinar:  
Helping Parents to Raise  
Emotionally Healthy Children



Tuesday, November 2  
11 am – 12 pm PST

Register at -

<https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/987433273>

All upcoming webinars can be found at [www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)



THE GLENDON  
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# Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice Workshop at Esalen Institute, Big Sur California



Weekend of January 14-16, 2011, Earn 10 CE's  
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- ❖ Upon completion of this webinar, you will receive an email with an evaluation form for you to complete and return to the CE provider PER (PsychoEducational Resources). This form can be emailed, faxed or mailed. Instructions will be given in the email.
- ❖ A recording of this webinar will also be available online. Those unable to attend this live webinar may view the recording and complete the evaluation form to receive 2 CE Units for \$25. A link to this recording will be sent to you as soon as it's available.