



Overcoming Insecurity



with Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.



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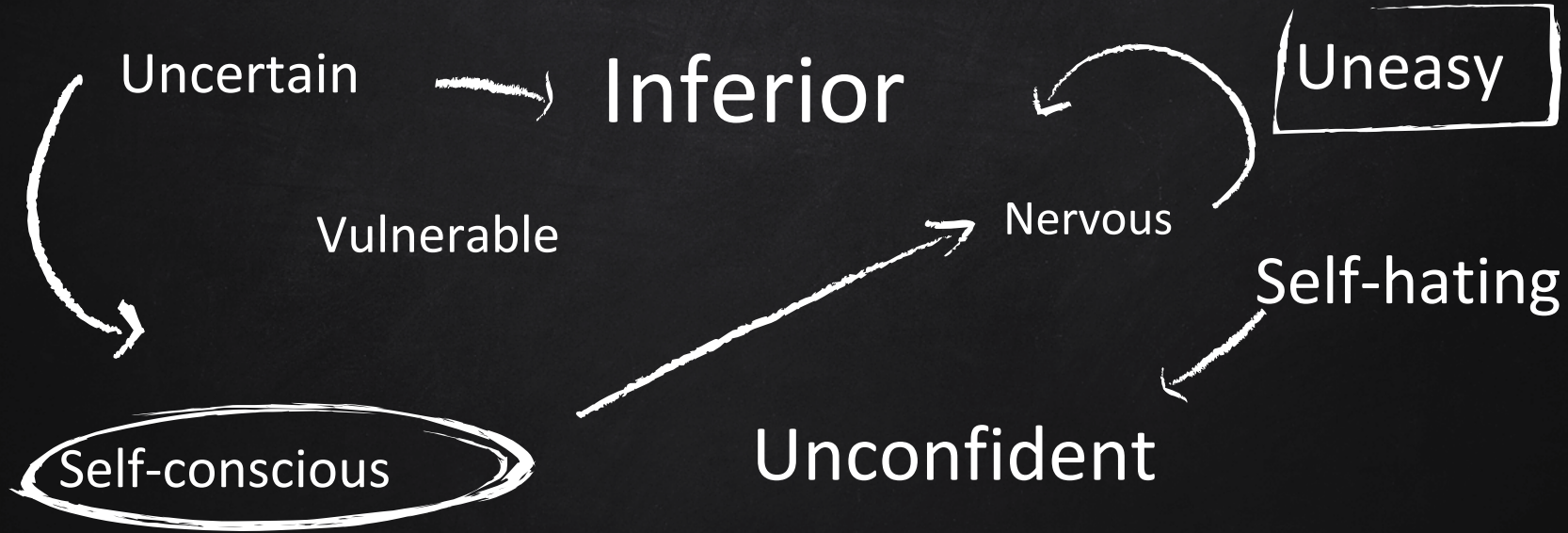


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What is Insecurity?





Importance of Inner Security

Many people lack a sense of inner security, so they try to find security in their relationships, jobs and accomplishments, but it's only when we feel secure within ourselves that we're able to enjoy more closeness, success and happiness in our lives.



Poll #1

How often do you or your clients experience insecure thoughts?

- ☐ **Daily**
- ☐ **Weekly**
- ☐ **Monthly**
- ☐ **A few times a year**
- ☐ **Never**

The Epidemic of Insecurity

✗ By high school only 29 percent of girls report that they're happy the way they are.



✗ Three out of four girls with low self-esteem “reported engaging in negative and potentially harmful activities, such as disordered eating, cutting, bullying, smoking or drinking, when feeling badly about themselves.

The Epidemic of Insecurity

✕ A 2011 APA study showed “there is no significant difference between men’s and women’s self-esteem during either of those life phases.”



The Epidemic of Insecurity

These negative core beliefs don't disappear as we get older. They go on to affect us in every area of our lives.





Three Parts to This Webinar



1.

The Roots of Insecurity





ATTACHMENT STYLE

What is insecure attachment?

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

Safe +
Seen +
Soothed =
SECURE



Dr. Daniel Siegel



People who grow up feeling insecure may have lacked emotional contact and availability that would make them feel secure.

Emotional Security

Higher maternal warmth linked to greater emotional security in children.



Source: Alegre, Albert & Benson, Mark J. & Perez-Escoda, Nuria (2014). Maternal Warmth and Early Adolescents' Internalizing Symptoms and Externalizing Behavior. *The Journal of Early Adolescence* vol. 34 no. 6 712-735. <http://jea.sagepub.com/content/34/6/712.abstract>



PARENTAL CONFLICT

Parental conflict can lead to emotional insecurity in children.



Source: Kouros, C. D., Merrilees, C. E., & Cummings, E. M. (2008). Marital Conflict and Children's Emotional Security in the Context of Parental Depression. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 70(3), 684–697.
<http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2008.00514.x>



PARENTAL DEPRESSION

Parental depression can lead to emotional insecurity in children.



Source: Cummings, E. M., Cheung, R. Y. M., & Davies, P. T. (2013). Prospective Relations between Parental Depression, Negative Expressiveness, Emotional Insecurity, and Children's Internalizing Symptoms. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*, 44(6), 10.1007/s10578-013-0362-1. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10578-013-0362-1>



CRITICAL ATTITUDES



Attitudes that can lead to insecurity

- Tear down/ Criticism
- Build up/ Overpraise
- Pressure/ Expectations



Attitudes we're exposed to

- The way we were seen by our parents or influential caretakers
- The way our parents saw themselves

This kid is out
of control



You're so
incompetent!



Separation Theory

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



Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

Real Self vs. Anti-Self



The Critical Inner Voice



*"To this day, I can hear my mother's voice—harsh, accusing. 'Lost your mittens?
You naughty kittens! Then you shall have no pie!' "*

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 CANT
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 FEIFFER

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE 1975

2.

How Does Insecurity Affect Us?



What is the Critical Inner Voice?

The critical inner voice is a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others.



What is the Critical Inner Voice?

The nagging “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behavior.



"Don't show him how much you care."

What is the Critical Inner Voice?

The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head.



"You're a mess. What's wrong with you?"

What is the Critical Inner Voice?

This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages individuals from acting in their best interest.



"Just give up already!"

How does the critical inner voice affect us?

- The critical inner voice is an internal enemy that can affect every aspect of our lives, including our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships and our performance and accomplishments at school and work.
- These negative thoughts undermine our positive feelings about ourselves and others and foster self-criticism, inwardness, distrust, self-denial, addiction and a retreat from goal-directed activities.



Common Critical Inner Voices



About Yourself:

You're ugly.

You're stupid.

You're not like other people.

You'll never succeed.



About Your Relationship:

She doesn't care about you.

He's going to leave you.

You'll always be alone.



About Your Career:

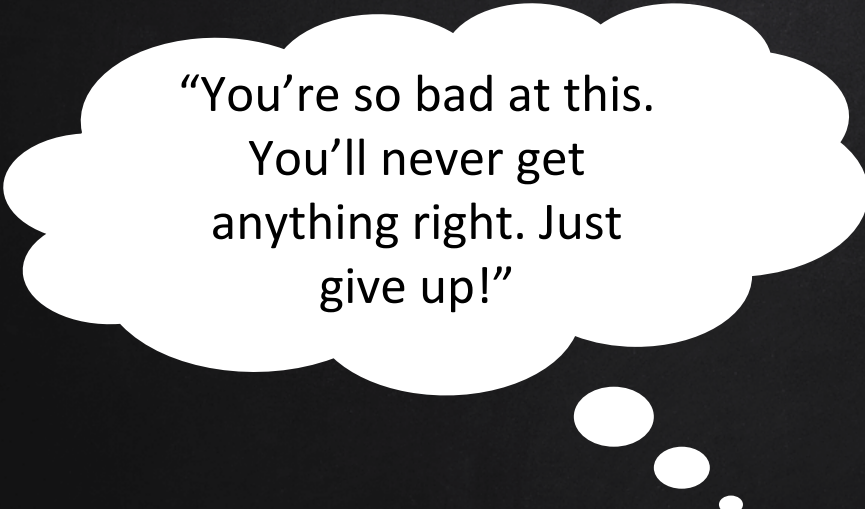
You'll never be successful.

You're going to get fired!

No one likes you here.

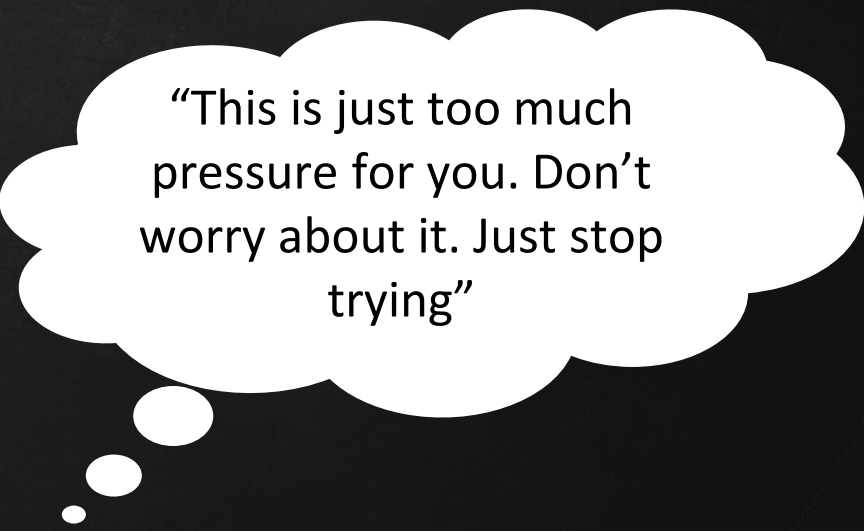
How the Critical Inner Voice Leads to Insecurity

✗ Self-punishing thoughts



“You’re so bad at this.
You’ll never get
anything right. Just
give up!”

✗ Self-soothing thoughts



“This is just too much
pressure for you. Don’t
worry about it. Just stop
trying”

Poll #2:

Do you or your clients commonly express having these critical inner voices?

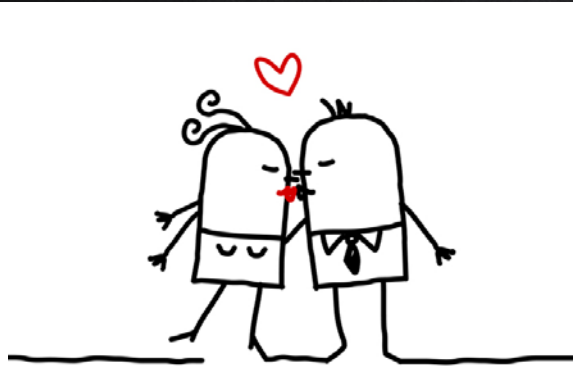
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

insecurity in relationships

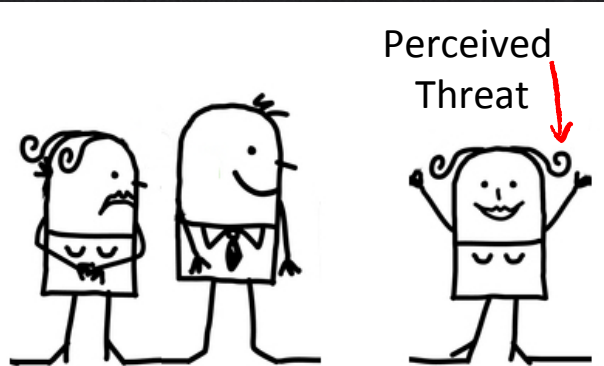
- Secure Attachment
- Avoidant Attachment
- Preoccupied Attachment
- Fearful Avoidant



Triggers for Insecurity



Secure = okay



Attachment system
activates



reaction

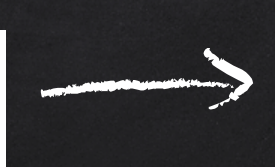
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How to Challenge Insecurity



Identifying the Critical Inner Voice

1. Recognize the events that trigger it
2. Recognize the specific outside criticisms that support it
3. Become aware of times you may be projecting your self-attacks onto other people
4. Notice changes in your mood



Identify Negative Thinking

Are you...?

- **Filtering:** You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones.
- **Personalizing:** When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself.
- **Catastrophizing:** You automatically assume and anticipate the worst.
- **Polarizing:** You see things only as either good or bad. There is no middle ground.

Critical Inner Voice Attacks

Change “I” statements to “you” statements.

Self-critical attacks
as “I” statements

Self-critical attacks
as “you” statements

Examples:

I'm so unattractive.



You're not attractive.

I'm a failure.



You're a failure.

No one loves me.

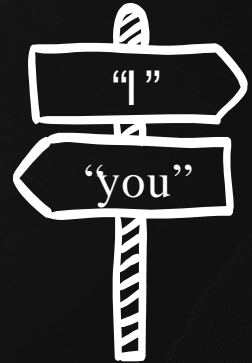


No one loves you.

Inner Voice as an External Enemy

Why you should put your “voices” in the second person:

- Become clearer and more easily recognizable
- See them more like an enemy than your real point of view
- Increases your awareness of these thoughts
- Bring up clues about your feelings and your past
- Feel more compassion for yourself and take your own side
- Unearth negative core beliefs about yourself



Two Sides of the Critical Inner Voice

Leads to two kinds of actions:

Actions that seem
self-destructive:

Actions that seem
self-protective:

Example:

*You're so fat. You should
just starve yourself.*

*You've been stressed all week.
Just have a drink or two. You
deserve it.*

Critical Inner Voice Vs. The Real You

Respond with a more compassionate and realistic view of your self.

My critical inner voice
as “you” statements

The real me
as “I” statements

Examples:

You're so incompetent.



Sometimes I struggle with

work, but I catch on

You must be stupid.

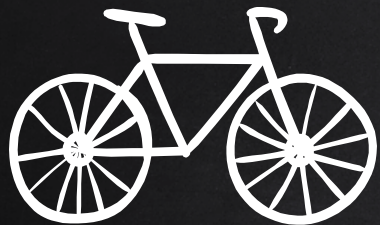
fast and do a good job.

*You're making a fool of
yourself. You should just hide.*



No one is laughing at me.

People enjoy my company.



A Plan for Action

What are some actions dictated by your critical inner voice?

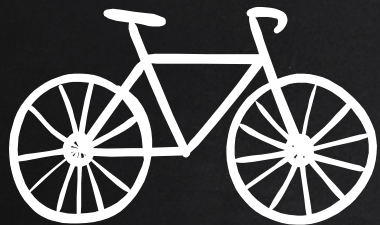
Examples:

“Have another piece of cake.”

“You should go away and leave everyone alone.”

“No one will ever really love you, so don’t get too close.”

“Don’t go after that promotion. It will never happen.”



A Plan for Action

What are some actions that reflect
the real me?

Examples:

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

“I don’t want to be isolated. I’ll seek out friends”

“I want to stay vulnerable in my relationships.”

“I’m gonna take actions toward my career goals.”

Assessment Instruments

- Firestone Assessment of Self-Destructive Thoughts (FAST)
- Firestone Assessment of Suicidal Intent (FASI)
- Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts (FAVT)
- Firestone Assessment of Violent Thoughts – Adolescents (FAVT-A)



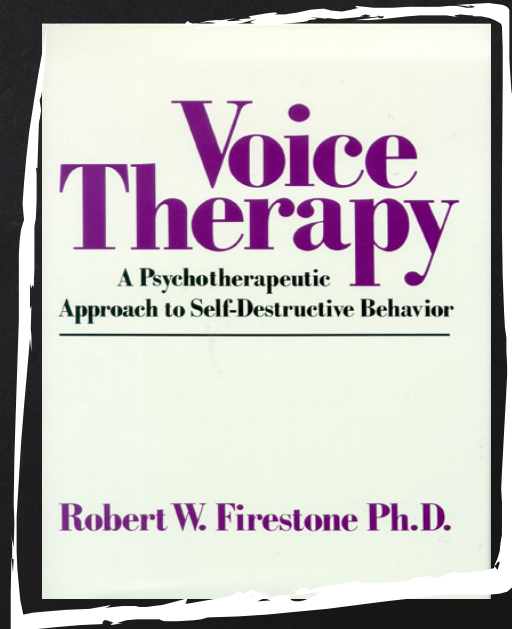
Uses for Our Measures

- Risk Assessment
- Treatment Planning
- Targeting Intervention
- Outcome Evaluation



Voice Therapy

Cognitive/ Affective/ Behavioral Approach



The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step I

- ✗ The person articulates his or her self-attacks in the second person and expresses any feelings that arise.



The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step II

- ✗ The person discusses reactions to saying their voices.
- ✗ The person tries to understand the relationship between these attacks and early life experiences.



The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step III

- ✗ The person answers back to the voice attacks.
- ✗ The person makes a rational statement about how he or she really is.



The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step IV

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



The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step V

- ✗ The person collaborates with the therapist to plan changes in these behaviors.
- ✗ The person is encouraged to not engage in self-destructive behaviors and to 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 or visit www.glendon.org.

Self



Anti-Self



Let thoughts go by like a train, 

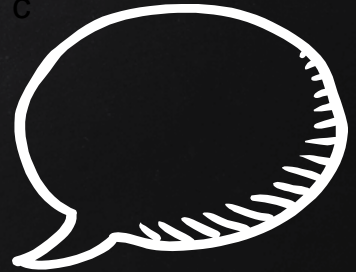
and choose not to get on.





“The task we must set for ourselves is not to feel secure, but to be able to tolerate insecurity.”

- Erich Fromm



Curious

Open

Accepting

Loving



Self-Compassion

“Being touched by and not avoiding your suffering”

From Kristin Neff:

Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluation. It is not a way of judging ourselves positively; it is a way of relating to ourselves kindly.

Three Elements:

1. Self-kindness Vs. Self-judgment
2. Mindfulness Vs. Over-identification with thoughts
3. Common humanity Vs. Isolation

Source: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>



Benefits of Self-Compassion

- Mechanism for change
- Lowers stress
- Buffers against negative social comparisons



Source: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>

Self-Compassion Vs. Self-Esteem

from Dr. Kristin Neff:

self-esteem

- Self-esteem refers to our sense of self-worth, perceived value or how much we like ourselves.
- Low self-esteem is problematic, however trying to have higher self-esteem can also be problematic.
- The need for high self-esteem may encourage us to ignore, distort or hide personal shortcomings so that we can't see ourselves accurately.
- Our self-esteem is often contingent on our latest success or failure, meaning that our self-esteem fluctuates.

Source: <http://www.self-compassion.org/>

Studies show that self-compassion has a significant positive association with:

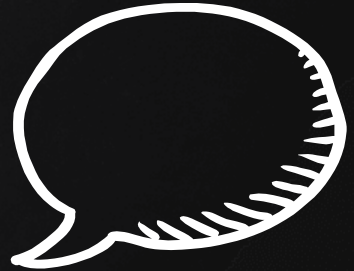
- ✓ Happiness
- ✓ Optimism
- ✓ Positive affect
- ✓ Wisdom
- ✓ Personal initiative
- ✓ Curiosity and exploration
- ✓ Agreeableness
- ✓ Conscientiousness
- ✓ Extroversion





“When we’re mainly filtering our experience through the ego, constantly trying to improve or maintain our high self-esteem, we’re denying ourselves the thing we actually want most. To be accepted as we are, an integral part of something much greater than our small selves. Unbounded. Immeasurable. Free.”

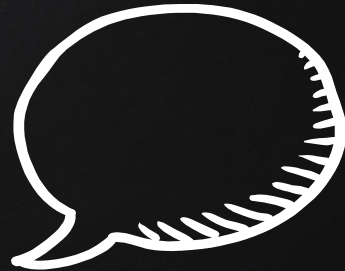
- Kristin Neff





“To achieve normal self-experience the infant requires his emotional signals to be accurately or contingently mirrored by an attachment figure...When a child cannot develop a representation of his own experience through the caregiver’s mirroring interactions, he internalizes the image of the caregiver as part of his self-representation. We have called this discontinuity with the self the ‘alien self.’”

- Peter Fonagy and Anthony Bateman



Differentiation

Some of our insecurity comes from a lack of differentiation from past influences:

Step 1: Break with internalized thought processes, i.e., critical, hostile attitudes toward self and others

Step 2: Separate from negative personality traits assimilated from one's parents

Step 3: Relinquish patterns of defense formed as an adaptation to painful events in one's childhood

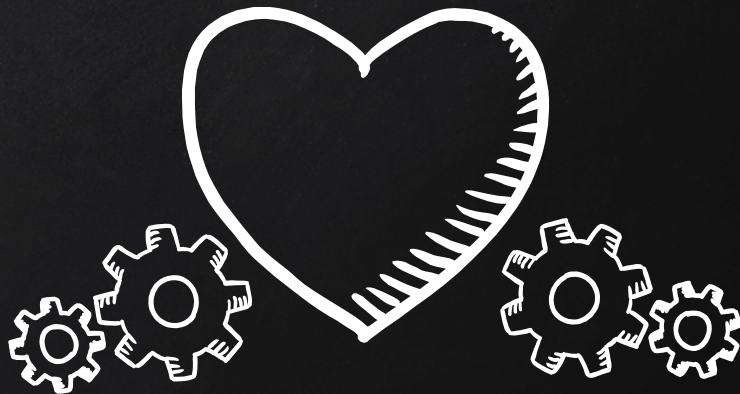
Step 4: Develop one's own values, ideals and beliefs rather than automatically accepting those one's grown up with



Earned Secure Attachment

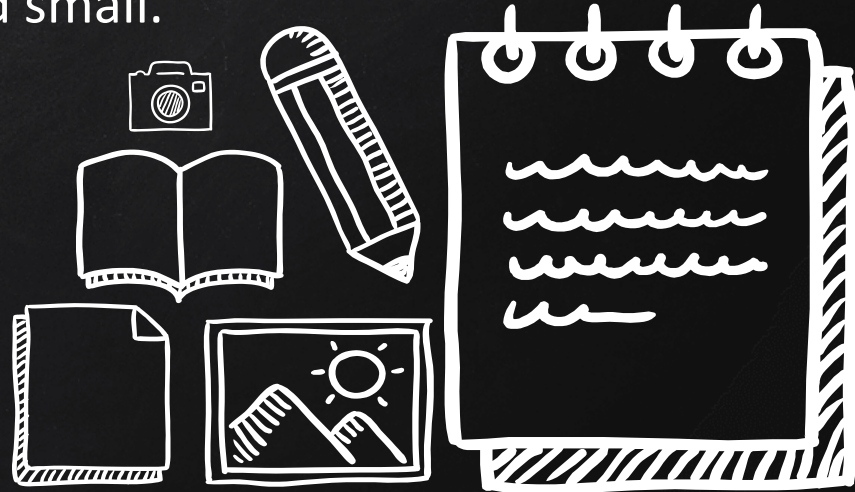
We can feel more secure through an earned secure attachment.
An earned secure attachment can come from:

- ✕ Feeling the full pain of your childhood and making sense of it.
- ✕ Engaging in psychotherapy.
- ✕ Forming an adult relationship with someone with a healthier attachment.



Creating a Coherent Narrative

- ✗ Look back at your attachment relationships.
- ✗ Who were the important adult figures in your childhood?
- ✗ How did your parents (or caretakers) treat you?
- ✗ Did you feel safe, seen, soothed and secure by anyone?
- ✗ Reflect on traumas both large and small.



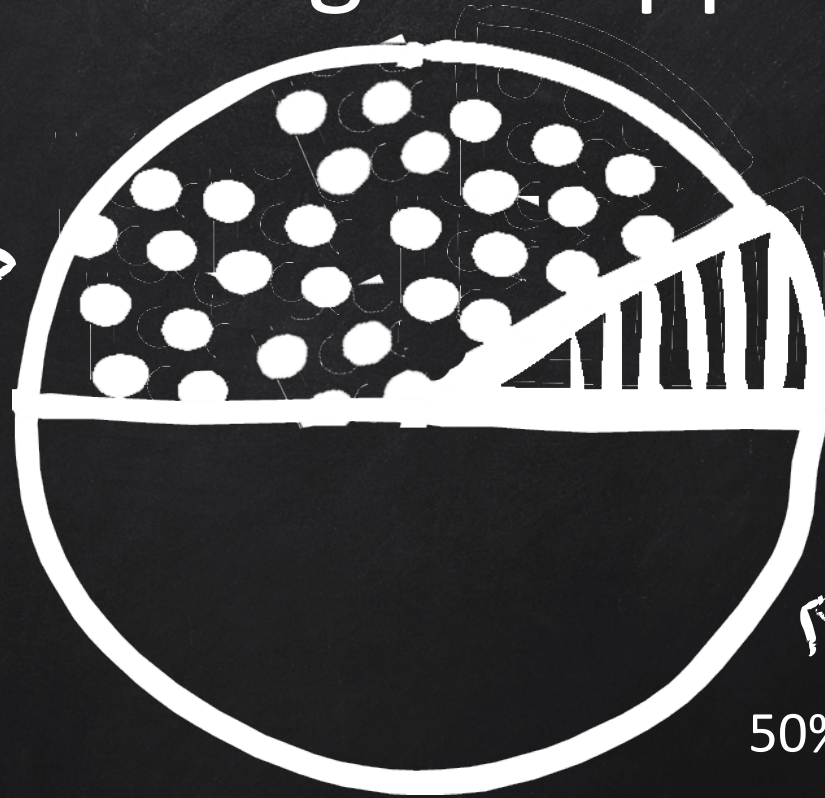
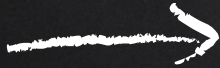
How do you tell what's really you?

- What gives your life meaning?
- What lights you up?
- Which people in your life make you feel most yourself?
- What activities make you feel most yourself?



Wellbeing & Happiness

40%
Actions



10%
Circumstances



50% Genetic





We create the world we live in.

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.
- Differentiate – 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

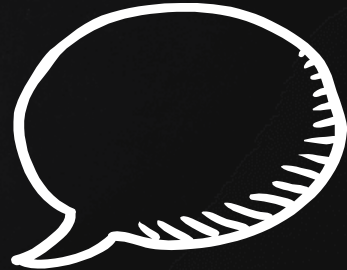
- Practice being generous in all your relationships.
- Become aware of existential realities.
- Develop a spiritual perspective and appreciate the mystery of existence.



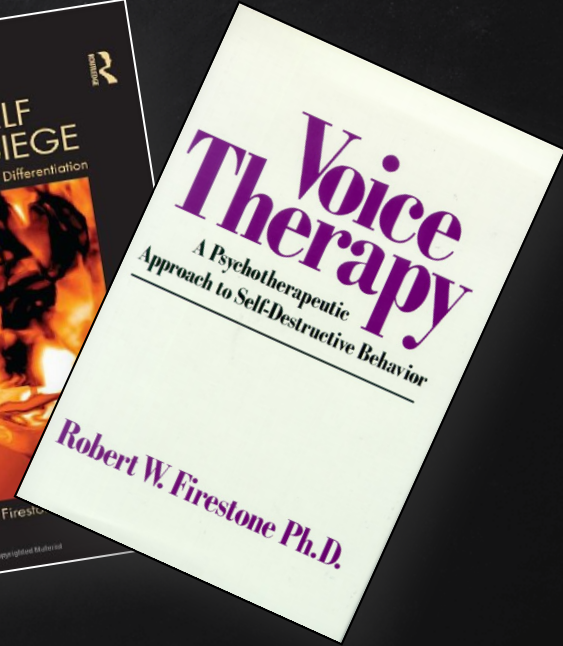
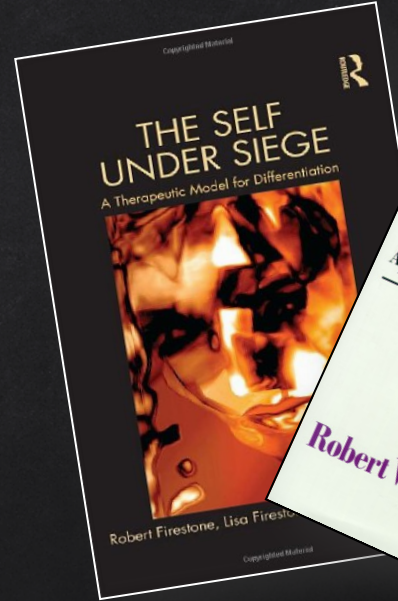
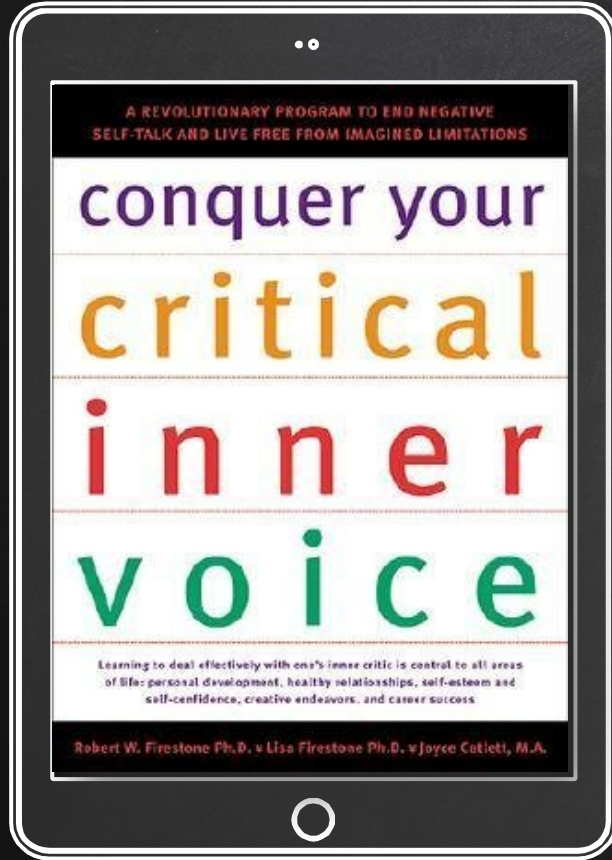


"A human being is a part of a whole, called by us 'universe', a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal 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



Books



Webinars

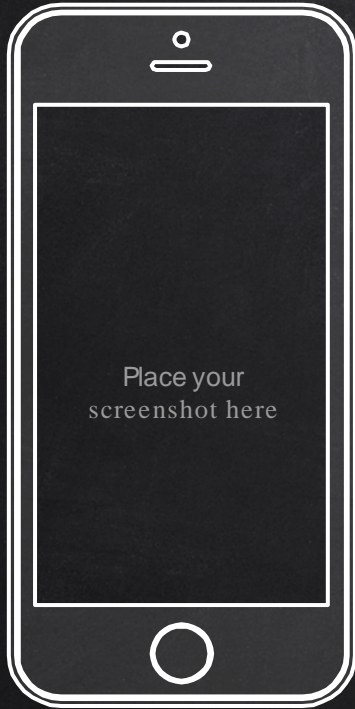


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thanks!

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