

Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice

An Adjunct to Clinical Practice

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Welcome!

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Three Parts to This Webinar:

Part 1:
What is the
critical inner
voice?

Part 2:
Where do
"voices"
come from?

Part 3:
Challenging
the critical
inner voice

Part 1:

What is the
critical inner
voice?

What is the Critical Inner Voice?

- The critical inner voice is a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others.
- The nagging “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behavior.

What is the Critical Inner Voice?

- The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head.
- This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages individuals from acting in their best interest.

Our outlook on life is often shaped
by our inner critic.

- Events that happen to us are often not the primary cause of our distress.
- Instead, trouble arises when we interpret these incidents through our critical inner voice.

The critical inner voice is not a conscience.

The critical inner voice affects every aspect of our lives: our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships, and our performance and accomplishments at school and work.

The "voices" that make up this internal dialogue are at the root of much of our maladaptive behavior.

They foster:

- Inwardness
- Self-criticism
- Self-denial
- Distrust
- Addiction
- Retreat from goal-directed activities

Two Sides to the Critical Inner Voice

Self-Soothing

"You don't need to go out tonight. Why put pressure on yourself. You're fine on your own. Have another drink. You need it."

Self-Punishing

"What a loser! You're always alone. No one wants to be around you. Drinking again? You'll never change."

Common Critical Inner Voices

About Yourself:

- You're ugly.
- You're stupid.
- You're not like other people.
- You'll never succeed, so why even try?

About Your Relationship:

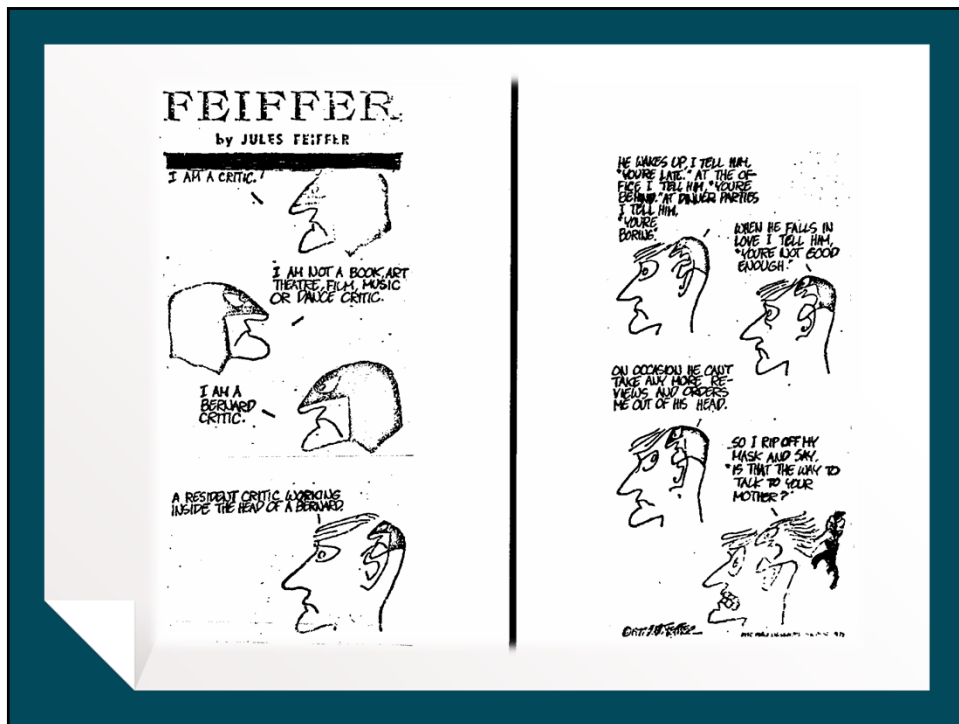
- She doesn't care about you.
- You can't trust him.
- You're better off alone.
- Don't be vulnerable. You'll only get hurt.

About Your Career:

- You'll never be successful.
- No one appreciates your work.
- You're under too much pressure; you can't handle it.

Part 2:

Where do
critical inner
voices come
from?

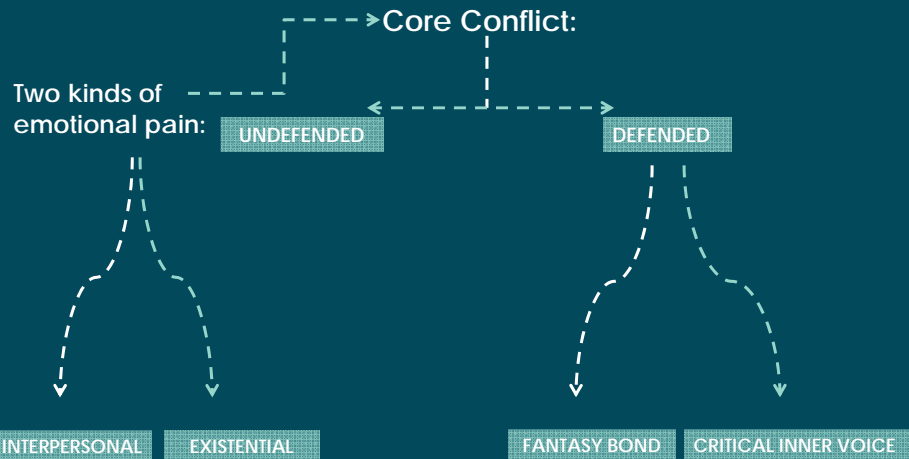


How Voices Pass From Generation to Generation

Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

Integrates psychoanalytic and existential systems of thought



Our Theory

Each person is divided:

- One part wants to live and is goal-directed and life-affirming.
- One part is self-critical, self-hating and even self-destructive.
- The nature and degree of this division varies for each person.

**Real Self
Positive**

**Anti-Self
Critical**

Our Theory

There is a relationship between these two continuums. How a person is thinking is predictive of how he or she is likely to behave.



What Creates Our Inner Critic?

Our critical inner voice is formed from our early life experiences. It stems from:

- Internalized attitudes that were directed toward us by parents or influential caretakers throughout our development
- Internalized negative thoughts that our parents or early caretakers had toward themselves



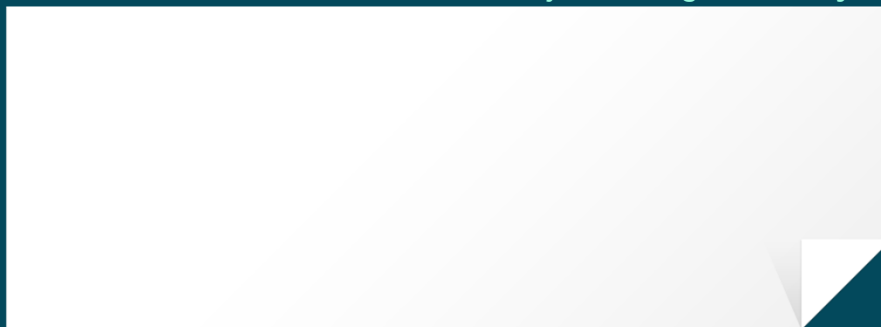
Division of the Mind

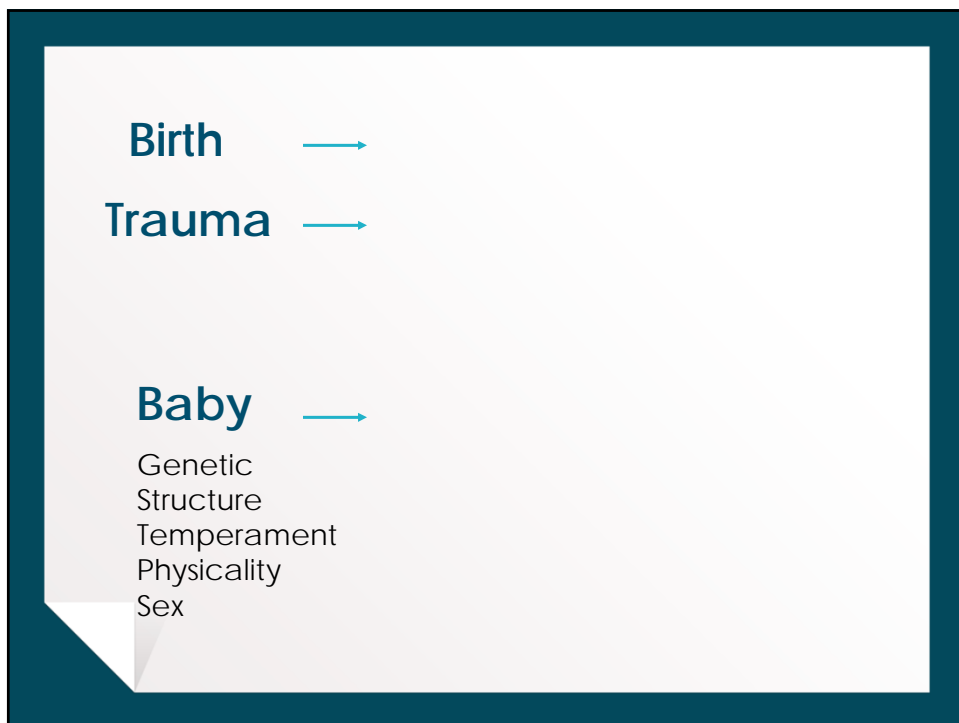
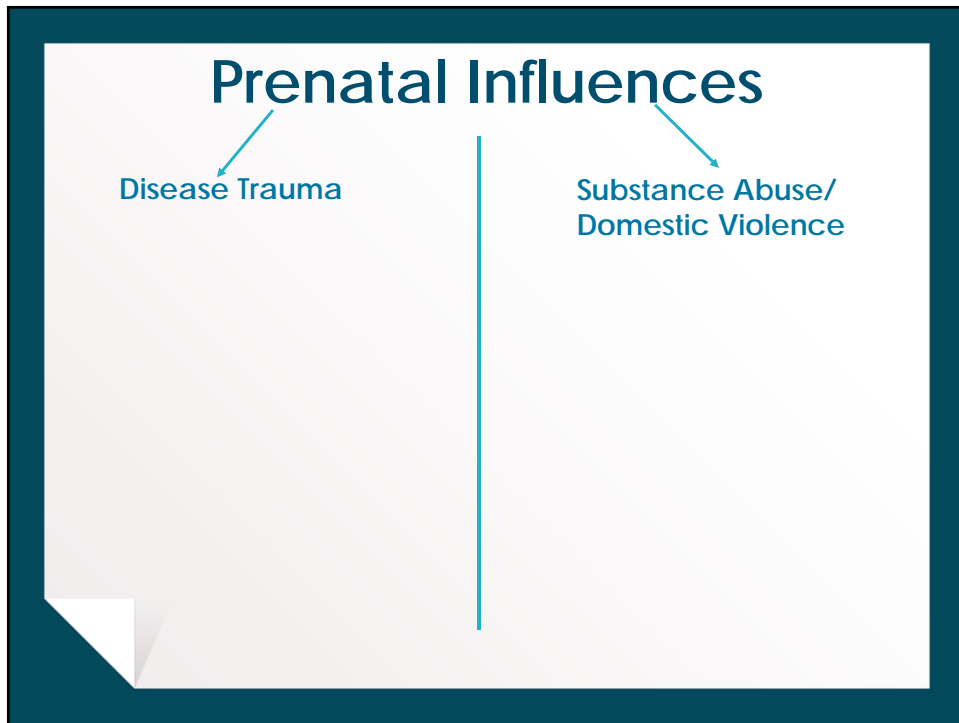
Parental Ambivalence

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

Parental Nurture

Parental Rejection, Neglect, Hostility





Self-System Parental Nurturance

Unique make-up of the individual (genetic predisposition and temperament); harmonious identification and incorporation of parent's positive attitudes and traits and parents positive behaviors: attunement, affection, control, nurturance; and the effect of other nurturing experience and education on the maturing self-system resulting in a sense of self and a greater degree of differentiation from parents and early caretakers.

Personal Attitudes/Goals/Conscience

Realistic, Positive Attitudes Toward Self

Realistic evaluation of talents, abilities, etc...with generally positive/compassionate attitude towards self and others

Goals

Needs, wants, search for meaning in life

Moral Principles

Behavior

Ethical behavior
towards self and others

Goal-Directed Behavior

Acting with Integrity

Anti-Self System

- **Unique vulnerability:** Genetic predisposition and temperament
- **Destructive parental behavior:** Misattunement, lack of affection, rejection, neglect, hostility, over permissiveness
- **Other Factors:** Accidents, illness, traumatic separation, death anxiety

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.

Self-Parenting Process

Punishing

Soothing

Anti-Self System

Self-Punishing Voice Process

Voice Process

1. Critical thoughts toward self
2. Micro-suicidal injunctions
3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation

Behaviors

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

Addictive patterns. Self-punitive thoughts after indulging

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

Anti-Self System

Self-Soothing Voice Process

Voice Process

1. Self Soothing Attitudes
2. Aggrandizing thought toward self
3. Suspicious paranoid thoughts towards others
4. Micro-suicidal injunctions
5. Overtly violent thoughts

Behaviors

Self-limiting or self-protective lifestyles, Inwardness

Verbal build up toward self

Alienation from others, destructive behavior towards others

Addictive patterns. Thoughts luring the person into indulging

Aggressive actions, actual violence

Part 3:

Challenging the Critical Inner Voice

Identifying the Critical Inner Voice

1. Recognize the events that trigger it
2. Recognize 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

The Power of Our Words

- Neurological studies show that just flashing the word "NO" for less than a second causes dozens of stress-producing hormones and neurotransmitters to release in our brains.
- These chemicals interrupt the normal functioning of our brain, impairing logic, reason, language processing and communication.
- Seeing a list of negative words will make a highly anxious or depressed person feel worse. Ruminating on these words can damage structures that regulate memory, feelings and emotions.
- This can disrupt sleep, appetite, and one's ability to experience long-term happiness and satisfaction.

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The Power of Our Words

**So what could the words of
your "critical inner voice" be
doing to you?**

Source: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/words-can-change-your-brain/201207/the-most-dangerous-word-in-the-world>

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Critical Inner Voice Attacks

Change "I" statements to "you" statements.

Self-critical attacks as "I" statements	Self-critical attacks as "you" statements
Examples:	
<i>I'm so unattractive.</i>	→ <i>You're not attractive.</i>
<i>I'm a failure.</i>	→ <i>You're a failure.</i>
<i>No one loves me.</i>	→ <i>No one loves you.</i>

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
- Brings 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:

Example:

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

Actions that seem self-protective:

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

The Critical Inner Voice Vs. the Real You

Respond with a more compassionate and realistic view of yourself.

**My critical inner voice
as "you" statements:**

**The real me as "I"
statements:**

Examples:

*You're so incompetent.
You must be stupid.*

*Sometimes I struggle at work, but I
catch on 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.*

Self-Sabotage

- In what areas of your life do you struggle (self-sabotage)?
- What does that sabotage look like?
- Were these areas that your parents struggled in?

A Plan for Action

What are some actions dictated by your 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."
- "Don't go after that promotion."

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.

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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

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

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Benefits of Self-Compassion

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

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Reactions to Change

- **Fear** of the unknown or unfamiliar
- **Anxiety** over living free from your inner critic
- **Guilt** over surpassing people from your past
- **Sadness** about the preciousness of life

The RAIN Approach

Recognize

Accept/Acknowledge/Allow

Investigate

Non-Identification

Differentiation

Some of our self-hatred comes from a lack of differentiation from past influences:

- Ways we were seen in our early environment
- Ways we repeat negative attitudes and behaviors
- Ways we adapted to negative influences
- Ways we fail to find our own sense of meaning
- Guilt over living our own life

Steps of Differentiation

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 has grown up with

Differentiation

- As a kid, turning against ourselves can make us feel safe, because it feels threatening to face the flaws in our parents.
- As adults, it can feel scary to give up these negative views toward ourselves, because we then feel separate from our parents.

Health Benefits of Positive Thinking

- Increased life span
- Lower rates of depression
- Lower levels of distress
- Greater resistance to the common cold
- Better psychological and physical well-being
- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease
- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

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Guidelines for Continued Personal Development

- Be Aware of the Fear That Comes With Giving Up Self-Hatred
- 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
- Generosity

**We create the
world we live in.**

Personal Power

We assume so much is circumstance:



But we actually have a lot of power.

Personal Power

Don't Play the Victim

Be An Active Participant in Your Life

- Assume responsibility for your feelings and behaviors
- Give up victimized language and thinking
- Avoid the use of passive aggression to get what you want

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

Thanks!

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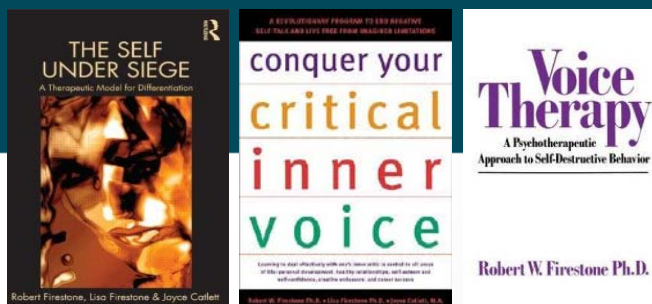
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