

The Divided Self

Rejecting Your Inner Enemy
and Reclaiming Your Real Self

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Two Parts to this Webinar

Part 1:

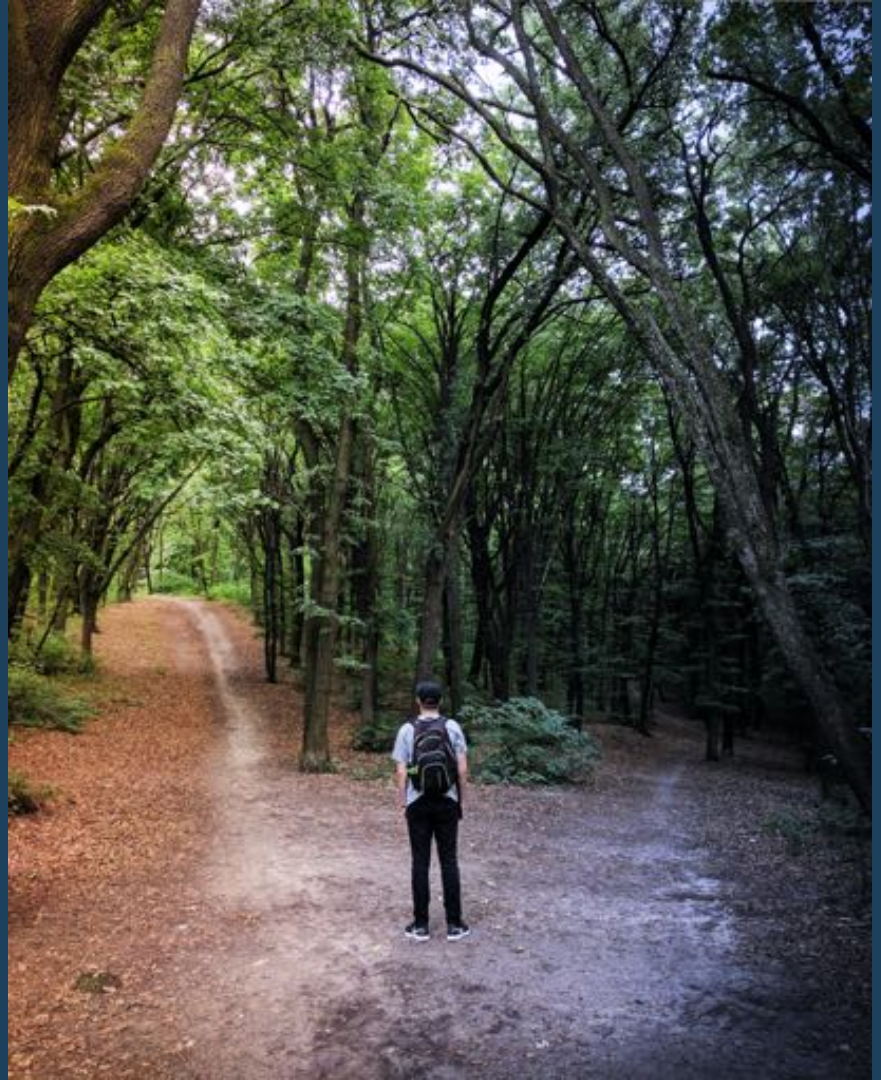
Why are we divided?

Part 2:

Reclaiming our real
self

Part 1

Why are we
divided?



“Our own worst enemy”

- Criticize ourselves
- Punish
- Create roadblocks
- Self-sabotage



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



The Creation of an “Accidental Identity”

Every child suffers to some extent. They create a self-concept out of hurtful experiences then live out that self-concept believing that’s just the way they are. This is still not their authentic self or an accurate picture of who they are but rather “an accident of experience.”

Three Important Influences:

1. Definition of ourselves picked up from emotional experiences – ways we were treated
2. Definitions by parents or early influential figures
3. Defenses formed to cope with painful experiences



Overlays on Personal Sense of Identity

Peers

Neighborhood

Social Groups

**Parents/
Family**

Nationality

**Society/
Culture**



How You Were Seen in Your Family?

Pretty/
Stupid

Funny/
Lazy

Smart/
Mean

Gifted/
Needy





Separation Theory

Robert W. Firestone, Ph.D.

Integrates psychoanalytic and existential systems of thought
Two kinds of emotional pain: **UNDEFENDED** **DEFENDED**

Core Conflict:



INTERPERSONAL

EXISTENTIAL

FANTASY BOND

CRITICAL INNER VOICE

The Core Conflict

Undefended

Contending with emotional pain,
both interpersonal and existential

Live with the pain of awareness,
feeling integrated

Experiences all emotions, retaining
the capacity to find happiness and
joy in life

Better able to tolerate intimacy

More humane toward others



Defended

Avoiding painful realities

Disengaging from self

Denial and escape to an unfeeling
existence

Loss of personal identity, freedom and
autonomy

More punitive toward others

The Fantasy Bond

- Illusion of connection we originally form with our parent to help relieve early anxiety and emotional pain
- Process of self-parenting – see and treat ourselves the way we were seen and treated by our primary caretakers, both punishing and soothing ourselves
- Fantasy bond extends to our adult relationships
- Defenses we form limit our capacity for real love and closeness



The Critical Inner Voice

The Voice Process:

The “critical inner voice” can be thought of as the language of the defensive process. It has been defined as an integrated system of thoughts and attitudes, antithetical toward self and hostile toward others. The concept of the voice is not restricted to cognitive processes but is generally associated with varying degrees of anger and sadness.



"I can't get anything right."



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

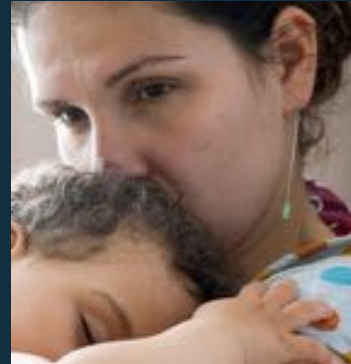


"Don't show him how much you care."

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



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.

Source: Mayo Clinic



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



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
 - 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



Goals

Needs, wants, search for meaning in life



Behavior

Ethical behavior toward self and others



Moral Principles

Realistic, Positive Attitudes Towards Self

Realistic evaluation of talents, abilities, etc. with generally positive/compassionate attitude 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, illnesses, 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

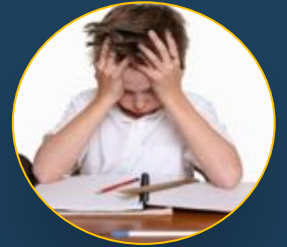
1. Critical thoughts toward self
2. Micro-suicidal injunctions
3. Suicidal injunctions – suicidal ideation

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 thoughts toward self
3. Suspicious paranoid thoughts towards others
4. Micro-suicidal injunctions
5. Overtly violent thoughts

Behaviors

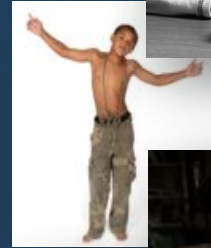
Self-limiting or self-protective lifestyles, Inwardness

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 2

Reclaiming your real self



Identities

“not the fixed markers people assume them to be but instead are dynamically constructed in the moment”



Defining Self

From Dr. Dan Siegel's book *Pocket Guide to Interpersonal Neurobiology*

- **Self:** A term signifying an internal sense of identity, sometimes including one's body, personality, or membership in relationships or groups. There are many "selves" of a healthy individual. The self is often seen as a singular noun, whereas it may be better considered a "plural verb."
- "We are always unfolding (verb, not noun) and we are finding our sense of self in connections to others."



Self and Identity

“...thinking about self and identity. The self system is composed of the unique wants, desires, goals and values that hold special meaning for the individual as well as the specific manner and means that he/she utilizes to fulfill these goals.”

- **Dr. Robert Firestone**
The Self Under Siege



“How much of our identity or “self” is truly representative of our own wants and goals in life and how much does it reflect the wants and priorities of someone else? Are we following our own destiny or are we unconsciously repeating the lives of our parents and automatically living according to their values, ideals and beliefs?”

- **Robert Firestone, Ph.D.**



Becoming Your Real Self



Differentiation

Differentiation refers to the struggle that all people face in striving to develop a sense of themselves as independent individuals.



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



Step 1:

“We have to separate from the destructive attitudes that were directed toward us.”



Separate from Destructive Attitudes:

- Self-critical
- Self-soothing
- Hostile and suspicious
- Self-aggrandizing



Step 2:

“We have to separate or differentiate ourselves from the negative traits of our parents and their defensive posture toward life.”



For Example:

The way you are in your relationship...

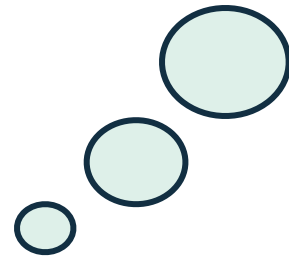


The way you are as a parent...



Saying Goodbye to Your Parent

- Picture each of your parents sitting in front of you.
- Describe your experience of each of them when you were a child.
- Say goodbye to them as a parent.
 - *"I don't need you anymore as a parent."*
 - *"I'm an adult."*
 - *"I'm a separate person from you."*



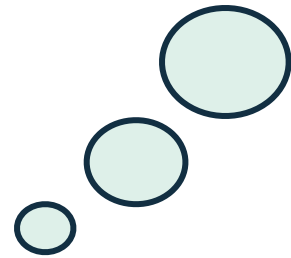
Step 3:

“We want to separate from the defenses we use to cope with elements of our childhood—we want to break with these defenses as well. And being ourselves, we have to move away from the defensive posture that we adopted realistically as children, but that are no longer necessary or functional.”



A Conversation with Your Child Self

- Picture your child self sitting in front of you.
- What does that child need?
- What would you say to that child?



Most people either:

Are compliant and rarely deviate from the beliefs and opinions held by their parents and tend to live conventional and predictable lives.

OR

Adopt a defiant stance in opposition to their parents' ideas and values and approach life, mistakenly believing that their defiance and rebelliousness is their real identity.

Step 4:

“We have to develop our own values, our adult value system, and approach to life, to really fulfill our destiny as a human being, our potential as a unique individual.”

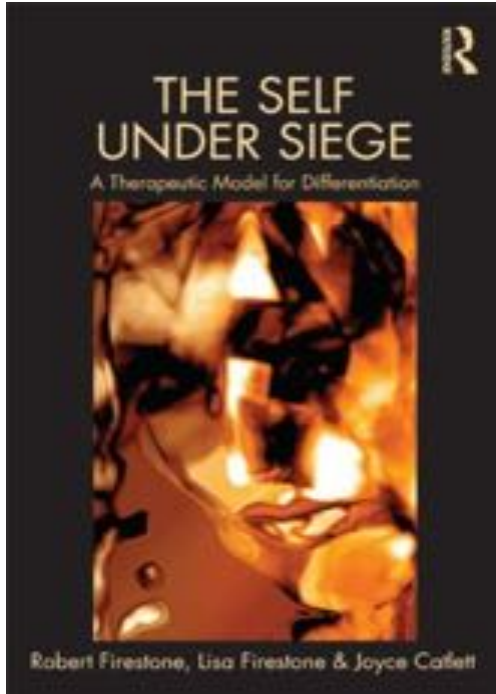


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We can make the most of our short experience of life, actually, and to live it fully, to exist as a separate, creative individual, we have to differentiate in those ways.

– Robert Firestone, Ph.D.





- “More differentiated individuals have a greater potential to experience all of their emotions, including an increased capacity to feel the joy and happiness of life, and a higher tolerance for intimacy.”
- “People who are relatively undefended feel more integrated, are better able to live more fully and authentically, and tend to be more humane toward others.”

[The Self Under Siege, Routledge, 2012](#)

“

- “In order for people to live their own lives and fulfill their destiny, they must differentiate themselves from destructive environmental influences.”
- “Differentiation is a universal struggle that all human beings face if they wish to fully develop themselves as individuals.”
- “They implicitly trust that their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings are their own, and fail to recognize that they may be “channeling” someone else’s thoughts and feelings.”
- “Without differentiating from parents or caretakers we may never succeed in living our own lives.”

– Robert Firestone, Ph.D.



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Child Self



Real Self



Parent Self



“Real You”



Exercises

Who is the Real You?

- Times when you notice you feel the most yourself.
- Times when you notice yourself following in the footsteps of others (i.e. of parents or other influential figures).
- What are the things that light you up?
- What are the things you do to please or conform to the standards of others?
- Are there areas of your life in which you act either childish or parental?
- At what times do you lose your own point of view?

What Gives Your Life Meaning?

- What did your parents think gave life meaning?
- Name three areas that you feel give your life meaning.
- What about these things matter to you/ light you up?
- How could you do these things more justice in your life?



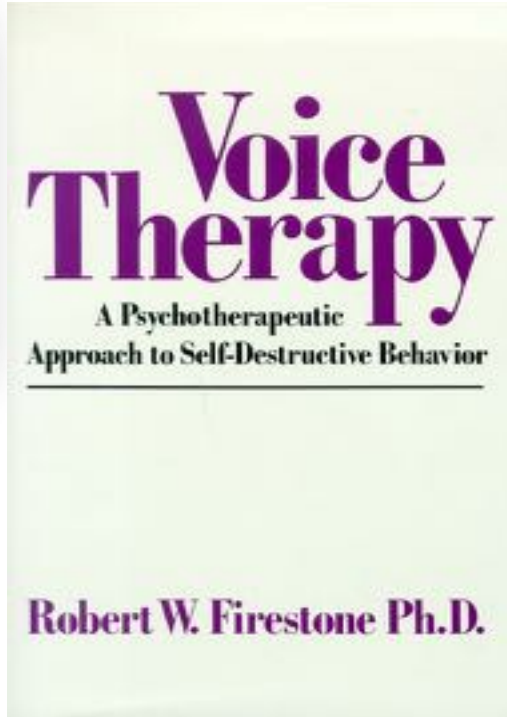
Why People are Resistant

- Core resistance to forming a better image of yourself
- Involves breaking a bond with the original family where identity was formed, which was once a source of safety
- It's a kind of companionship/ connection to keep this identity
- Scary to assume a new, more positive identity
- Takes a lot of courage, understanding, and insight, but ultimately, the person has to take power



Voice Therapy

Cognitive/ Affective/ Behavioral Approach



The Therapeutic Process in Voice Therapy

Step 1

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're interested in attending a voice therapy training please contact jina@glendon.org or visit www.glendon.org.

Exercise 1.2: Your Critical Inner Voice Attacks

Self-critical attacks
as "I" statements

Example:

I'm not attractive.

I'm such a loser.

I can't get anything right.

Self-critical attacks
as "you" statements

Example:

You're not attractive.

You're such a loser.

You can't get anything right.

Exercise 1.3: Keeping a Journal: Your Critical Inner Voice/The Real You

Self-critical attacks
as "you" statements

Example:

You're so stupid.

The real me as "I"
statements

Example:

*Sometimes I struggle
with work, but I catch on
quickly and then usually do
a good job.*

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.*

Actions to take that reflect the real me

Examples:

*I want to feel 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.*

Exercise 7.3

You and the Continuum of Self-Destructive Thoughts

My critical inner voices

Level 1: Thoughts that lead to low self-esteem and self-defeating behaviors

Level 2: Thoughts that support the cycle of addiction

Level 3: Thoughts that lead to seriously self-destructive behavior

Behaviors I engage in

Level 1:

Level 2:

Level 3:

Exercise 7.4

The Firestone Voice Scale for Self-Denying and Giving-Up Thoughts

Circle the frequency with which you experience the following critical inner voices:

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Once in a While 3 = Frequently 4 = Most of the Time

0 1 2 3 4

You'll save money if you don't take this trip.

0 1 2 3 4

It's too much trouble to go out to dinner. Just stay home.

0 1 2 3 4

You don't deserve happiness. You're such a creep!

0 1 2 3 4

What's so exciting about playing baseball, football, dancing (any activity)? You should just relax and settle down.

0 1 2 3 4

Look at all the work you have to do. You can't afford to take time off.

0 1 2 3 4

You've always had problems with sex. You should just give it up.

0 1 2 3 4

Why bother trying to get a date? If you don't date, you'll have more time to study.

0 1 2 3 4

Just look at how your friends are acting. They're so immature. They think they're having fun, but they're really just making fools of themselves. Don't be like them!

0 1 2 3 4

You shouldn't be out having fun with all the misery in the world.

0 1 2 3 4

You're too old to have romance in your life.

0 1 2 3 4

What's all this passion in your relationship? You should just settle down.

0 1 2 3 4

Nothing matters anymore.

0 1 2 3 4

Why bother even trying?

0 1 2 3 4

Nothing is any fun anymore.

0 1 2 3 4

Why bother making friends?

0 1 2 3 4

What's the use? What's the point of anything really?

0 1 2 3 4

Your work doesn't matter anymore. Why bother even trying? Nothing matters anyway.

Critical Inner Voice vs. the Real You

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 others
4. Notice changes in your mood



Real Self

Anti-Self



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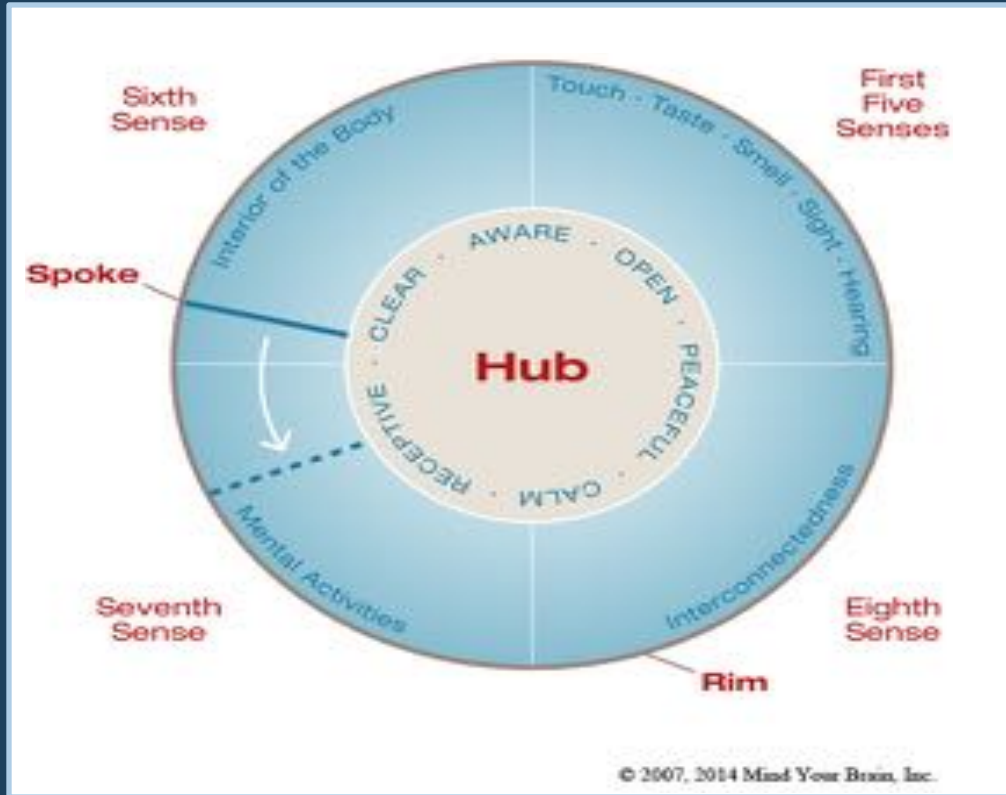
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- **A**ccept/Acknowledge/Allow
- **I**nvestigate
- **N**on-Identification



Wheel of Awareness





Self Compassion



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

Self-Compassion Vs. Self-Esteem

Research from Dr. Kristin Neff:

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 be as well.
- The need for high self-esteem may encourage us to ignore, distort, or hide personal shortcomings, so we can't see ourselves accurately.
- Self-esteem is often contingent on our latest success or failure, meaning that it fluctuates.

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



Self-compassion Counters Narcissism

- Self-compassion offers same benefits as self-esteem—less depression, greater happiness, etc.—without the downsides.
- Survey of 3,000 people, self-compassion was associated with more stable feelings of self-worth than self-esteem.
- Self-compassion was less contingent on things like physical attractiveness or successful performances than self-esteem.
- Self-esteem had a strong association with narcissism while self-compassion had *no* association with narcissism.

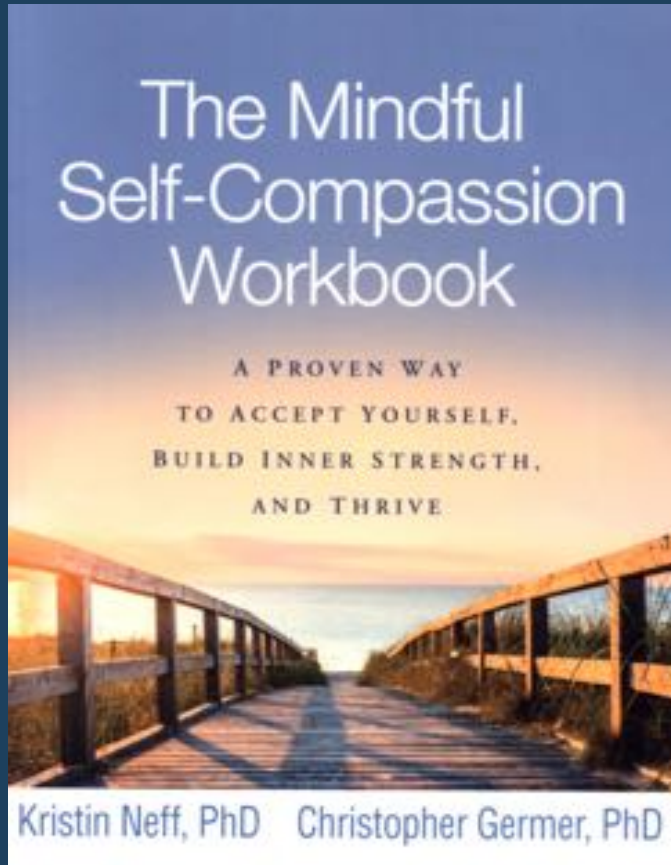


Has a significant positive association with:

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



Self-Compassion Exercises



Interpersonal Neurobiology



Curious

Open

Accepting

Loving



What You Can Do

- **Take action:** Act against your critical inner voice, resist resorting to defenses, take risks, make alterations, go after what you want.
- **Be adult:** Realize you have power over your life and can make changes that immediately change your identity.
- **Be kind to yourself:** Treat yourself like a friend, being kind, inquisitive, patient, honest, and open.



What is a healthy sense of self?

Kind attitude toward yourself in which you see yourself from a flexible, changeable, resilient, realistic, compassionate point of view.



“

To-be-nobody but yourself – in a world that is doing its best, night and day, to make you everybody else – means to fight the hardest battle which any human being can fight; and never stop fighting.

– e.e. cummings



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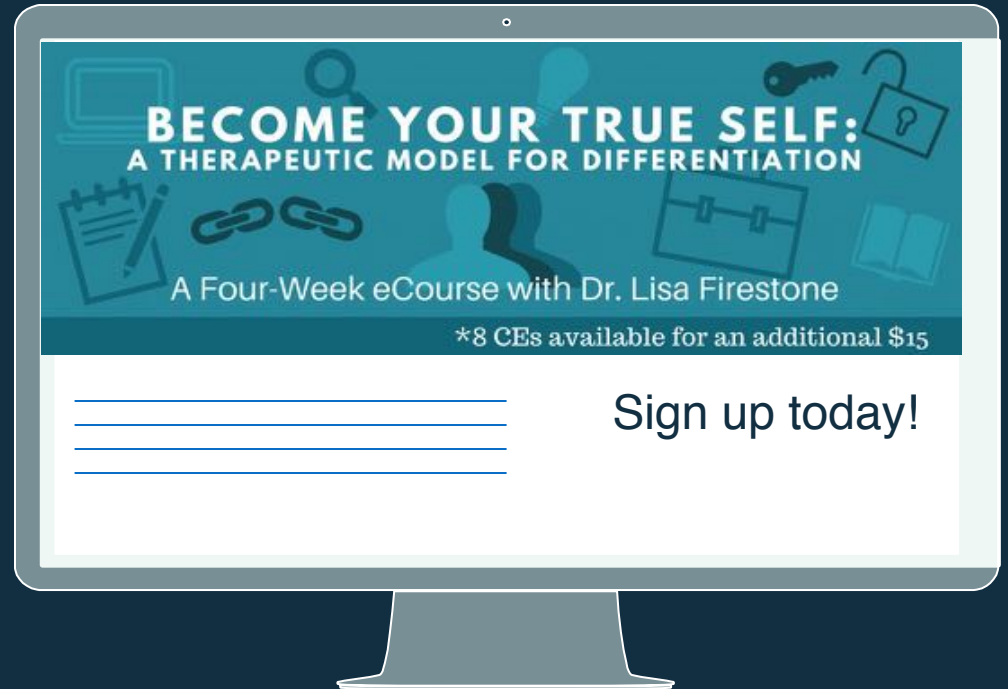
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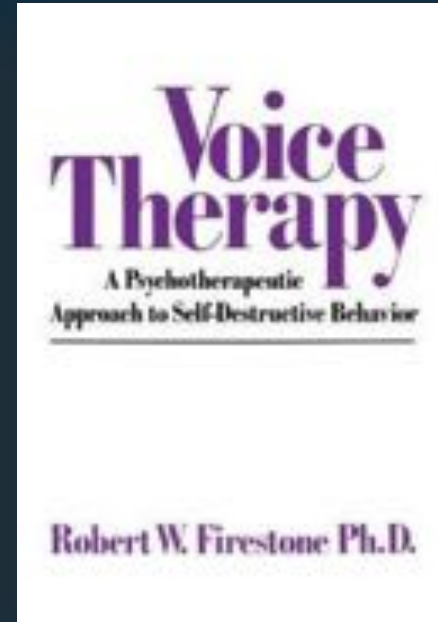
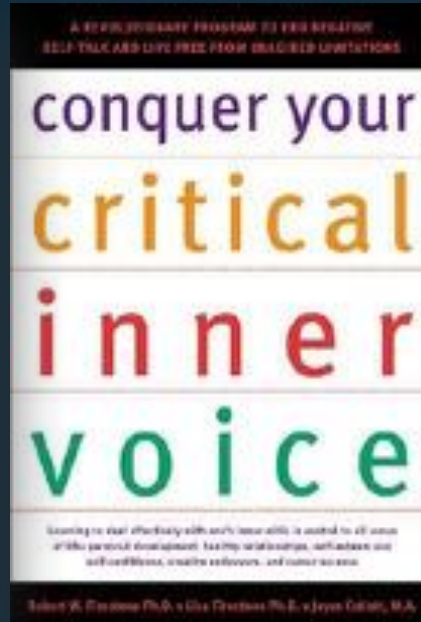
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Any questions?



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