



## Inner Critic Quiz: How Harsh is Your Self-Talk?

**Purpose:** Quickly assess how harsh your self-talk is and identify one clear practice to reduce self-judgment and increase self-kindness.

**How to use:** Answer each question honestly with **Yes** / **Sometimes** / **No**. Tally scores (Yes = 2, Sometimes = 1, No = 0). Total possible score = 20. This quiz is a self-reflection tool, not a diagnosis; use results to choose paced next steps.

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### Questions

1. I often notice a critical voice that points out my flaws or mistakes.
  2. When things go wrong I tell myself I'm incompetent or unworthy.
  3. I replay mistakes in my head and punish myself emotionally for them.
  4. I compare myself unfavorably to others and feel I come up short.
  5. I avoid trying new things because I fear I'll fail and be judged.
  6. I catch myself using absolutes like always or never when describing myself.
  7. I find it hard to accept compliments and usually minimize positive feedback.
  8. I believe that being self-critical motivates me to perform better.
  9. My inner critic shows up more when I'm tired, stressed, or overwhelmed.
  10. I feel stuck in shame or self-blame even after apologizing or repairing a situation.
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### Scoring Guide

- Add your points (Yes = 2, Sometimes = 1, No = 0).
  - 0–7 = Mild Self-Criticism
  - 8–13 = Moderate Self-Criticism
  - 14–20 = Severe Self-Criticism
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## Result Summaries and Next Steps

**Mild Self-Criticism 0–7.** You notice critical thoughts, but they don’t dominate your daily life. Practice a simple reframing habit: when a critical thought appears, pause, name it, and replace it with one factual statement about what you did or learned. Do this once per day for one week.

**Moderate Self-Criticism 8–13.** Self-judgment shows up regularly and affects choices, confidence, or risk-taking. Use the 3-step pause for two weeks: notice the thought, label its tone (harsh/absolute/shaming), and offer a 60-second compassionate response (hand on heart; one kind sentence). Pair this with one imperfect action per week to counter avoidance.

**Severe Self-Criticism 14–20.** Critical self-talk is frequent, pervasive, and likely reduces wellbeing and functioning. Prioritize daily compassion practice and a short cognitive check routine; schedule a consult with a therapist or coach experienced in shame work and self-compassion. Start with five minutes of self-compassion practice twice daily and one supported imperfect action with a trusted person.

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## Practices to Reduce Self-Criticism

- **Name the Voice (30 seconds):** Label the inner critic as “Judge” or another neutral name to create distance.
- **60-Second Compassion Pause:** Hand on heart, breathe two cycles, say one kind sentence aloud.
- **Fact Check (2 minutes):** Write the critical thought, list evidence for and against it, then write a balanced alternative.
- **Micro-Action Challenge (72 hours):** Do one small, low-risk action you’ve avoided and note one learning.

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**Safety and Pacing Notes.** If self-criticism triggers intense shame, dissociation, or urges to harm yourself, pause the exercises and seek immediate professional support. If practices increase distress, scale them down and include a regulation routine first (box breathing, grounding), then try a shorter compassion pause.

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*This quiz is for educational and self-reflective purposes only. It is not therapeutic advice.*