

Turn Self-Criticism into Self-Compassion

Explore the warning

Highly self-critical thoughts are often **not** accurate, helpful, or true. But let's listen to them for just a moment. What is most important to your critic? What is it trying to tell you is at risk? Here are a couple of examples:

How the critic's message comes out
(self-critical thoughts):

"I probably bombed this test"
"I'll never succeed in college"
"I'm such a failure"



What the critic is actually worried about:

What's important:
performance in college
What's at risk:
grades, graduation,
success

"The argument we had was all my fault"
"I just shouldn't have spoken up, it was selfish"
"I should have known better"



What's important: my thoughts and opinions don't seem acceptable
What's at risk: my emotional safety in this relationship

"There must be something wrong with me for feeling this way"
"I'm just broken inside"



What's important: I'm feeling different and alone because of what's "wrong" with me
What's at risk: being accepted by others

What is your critic trying to tell you is important? Or, what is it telling you is at risk? Try your best to listen for the meaning behind the cruel words.

*This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.



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Respond to your critic with compassion

Try to treat your critic with patience and compassion. Acknowledge its fears but push back against its cruel words. Talk to your critic the way you would a loved one, or the way you hope a loved one would talk to you:

“Hey! I can hear that you’re really worried and you’re trying to protect me. But the words you’re using are not kind to me, let’s try that again.”

“Okay. I’m really worried about our performance. College is so important to us. I don’t want us to fail a class, then the semester, then the year...”

“I hear you. That test felt really bad. It’s okay to be worried about it, but no more name-calling. Let’s take a walk to calm down, then set up a meeting with the TA and see how we can improve.”



It might seem a little silly to talk to yourself like this. But we encourage you to give it a try. Self-compassion is a great way to validate your own feelings, but also to think in ways that are more helpful and true - and as a result, get to more effective action (like coping, getting support, or solving problems).

What could you say back to your own self-critic with compassion?

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Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



325+
Companies Reviewed



3,625+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,545+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.





Tools for Self-Assessment and Psychoeducation

Figuring out the next step in your mental health journey can be overwhelming. Developed by psychologists, the tools at [ChoosingTherapy.com](https://www.ChoosingTherapy.com) can help. Our mental health self-assessment quizzes can help you explore common symptoms of mental health concerns, as well as find the best therapy style for you. Our mental health worksheets can guide you through therapy concepts and how to use them in your life.

[Learn More with Mental Health Quizzes](#)

Our collection of psychologist-developed mental health quizzes can help you learn if you are experiencing mild, moderate, or concerning levels of anxiety, depression, stress, burnout, and more. Each quiz also provides targeted resources based on your answers. These self-assessments are designed to offer insight, not diagnoses, and can be a helpful first step in recognizing symptoms and deciding whether to seek further support. If you have concerns about your mental health or your quiz results, we recommend you reach out to a licensed mental health professional.



[Free Mental Health Worksheets](#)

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