

Nowadays, It's become really popular to complain about how self-centered individuals are. A lot of us are self-serving, self-absorbed and self-seeking,— or so the story says. However, this is the truth that is usually omitted from that story: as self-oriented as we might get, the majority of us are also very hard on ourselves.

We become annoyed at ourselves for making errors. We hold ourselves up to impossibly high principles and then criticize ourselves any time we fall short of them. We put ourselves to extremely harsh self-criticism as we experience our day-day lives. Also, we regularly say to ourselves we're not good enough just the way we are. This entire thing leaves us with a continuous sense of inadequacy.

What is the reason why we take part in these behaviors? What's the issue with them? Also, how can we change them with a healthier, kinder, and more effective manner of treating ourselves? At the end of this summary, you'll get the answers to these whole questions and more.

Chapter 1 - Our inclination to be self-critical and to feel inadequate usually occurs from childhood.

Got a personal issue? Reflect it back to your childhood and put the blame on your parents. In the common imagination, that's one of the most clichéd concepts of psychology. Definitely, it's an oversimplification as well, both of our issues and of what psychology has to mention about them. However, when we're talking about self-criticism and feelings of inadequacy, there's really an iota of truth to it.

It is shown by psychological research that we're very more likely to be critical of ourselves as grown-ups if our parents were critical of us as kids. It is sensible if you pause and think about it. Nevertheless, as we're growing up, we rely on our parents to direct us through life's difficulties, assist us to know the world that surrounds us, and make us feel safe as well as loved. Due to that, we're naturally disposed to trust their decisions and seek their consent.

Now, add that inclination with an extremely critical parent, and you've got a recipe for catastrophe. To understand why assuming you're a child, and your parents criticize you for all

trivial little action – from how you eat your food at dinner to the manner you dress yourself for school. Also, assuming they also lace their criticism with disapproving comments about you. They refer to you as “stupid” for doing a thing wrong, such as crossing the street without looking out for the traffic light.

After a moment, the regular small criticisms and insults will add up to a more wide-ranging indictment of you as an individual: “I’m not okay just the way I am. I have to be better. Also, except I’m perfect, I won’t be deserving of love.”

That kind of thinking can make your parents’ criticism hold a really heavy blow to you as a child. Logically, you’ll want to evade it as best as possible. Also, that might make you begin expecting your parents’ criticism. In order to evade it, you preemptively criticize yourself even before they get an opportunity to do it for you. By doing that, you can change your behavior and evade their condemnation before time.

At this stage, you’ve internalized your parents’ criticism. Their disapproving words as well voices have become a part of your mind’s internal commentary. If you, for instance, drop a glass of water, you might tag yourself an “idiot” and condemn yourself for your clumsiness.

The outcome? An extremely deep-rooted habit of self-criticism and a sense of inadequacy that can proceed well into adulthood.

Chapter 2 - Societal pressures support us to be self-critical as well as to feel inadequate.

Therefore, blame everything on mom or dad?

Not so quick. First and foremost, it’s not only our parents who can guide us to form a habit of self-criticism and a sense of inadequacy. Our teacher, coach, uncle, teacher, sibling or any other person whose critical words left their imprints on us when we were still kids can make us

develop that habit. Secondly, it's not only the actual people who formed our lives. It's the broader societies where we live as well.

In the West, the majority of us live in extremely competitive, individualistic societies, where everybody is pitted against one another and pressured to surpass each other. Being raised in that kind of society, we grow to like feeling good about ourselves with feeling special. Based on the dominant ideas of our culture, that entails being more than average – preferably, number one. However, it's not possible for everybody to be more than average, and we can only be above the heap if every other person is below us.

Due to that, we come to consider other individuals as our contenders, and we get obsessed with outdoing them in the game of life. In order to monitor whether or not we are winning, we compare our accomplishments to theirs all the time. Simultaneously, we also carefully monitor how we're measuring up to the values that our society praises, like material success and physical attractiveness. Our sense of self-worth gets connected to our sense of how we're doing well, both in comparison to other individuals and to the principles by which we judge ourselves.

Definitely, we'll never be better than everybody at everything, and perfection will usually be beyond our power. Maybe we're watching the wealthy businessman in an expensive car or the impossibly gorgeous model on the magazine cover, we'll constantly be able to see a person who is more skilled, attractive, brilliant, fashionable, successful, attractive, intelligent, talented, or interesting than we are. Also, regardless of how great we are at a thing, we can constantly be better at it – and we'll usually make errors. Nevertheless, we're just human, and we'll have room for development all the time.

Therefore, provided we're judging our self-worth by how we compare to other individuals and to the principles of our society, we'll usually feel discontented with ourselves. We'll usually see a gap between them and us. Also, provided we're concentrated on that gap, we'll usually see a thing to criticize about who we are and the things we do.

Chapter 3 - Self-criticism can encourage us to a limited amount; however, it comes with severe prices.

If you trust in self-improvement, you might be feeling uncertain at this moment. “Sure,” you could say. “Maybe childhood experiences, as well as social pressures, trap us in a circle of self-criticism and a sense of inadequacy. Perhaps, that’s a good thing! Doesn’t it hinder us from depending on our achievements? Doesn’t it push us to continue developing ourselves?”

Well, yes and no.

Self-criticism is encouraging to some degree; however, this is down to the reality that it’s painful to get. As we’ve noticed, it’s usually accompanied by nasty criticisms about ourselves, together with disparaging judgments about our general self-worth. If you’re extremely self-critical and you’re late for an appointment, you might utter a word like, “Ugh, I’m really an idiot. I can’t do anything correctly.”

That’s a really unkind message to hear; therefore, you’ll attempt to prevent it if you can. Maybe you’ll not forget to set an alarm on your phone the next time. In this manner, self-criticism can encourage us to develop ourselves –however, just due to the fact that we fear the pain it brings. That’s a significant point to bear in mind since fear comes with a couple of severe problems as a motivator.

To start with, it can allow us to get anxious, which can damage our opportunities for success. In order to understand why to assume you’re an actor ready to go on stage. The more you’re concentrated on your fear of being severely criticized for your performance, the less you’ll be concentrated on the real task of acting. It doesn’t mean if the criticism you fear is that of your audience or yourself; the subsequent stage fright will make you lose focus and anxious.

Also, if you’re very nervous about it, you might even do a sub-par performance intentionally! By doing that, you can ignore the subsequent self-criticism by asserting that your “bad” acting wasn’t a true reflection of your real skills as an actor. In psychology, this behavior is known as self-handicapping.

Closely associated with it is another behavior that you're most likely much more conversant with procrastination. In order to prevent self-criticism, you may as well just dodge doing the task for which you'd judge yourself! The more you put it off, the more you'll postpone your feared day of self-judgment.

In a nutshell, the advantages of self-criticism can simply be outweighed by the costs. Also, that's not even considering the deeper, longer-term destruction it can bring about, which we'll look at in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 - Harsh self-criticism amounts to self-abuse, which can have extreme long-term impacts.

Let's say you are walking down an icy street with your best friend when, suddenly, she slips and falls to the floor. How would you react?

You definitely wouldn't stand still with your arms folded, saying, "Wow, you're really a useless idiot. You can't even walk properly." That would be a really harsh, unnecessary, and unhelpful manner of reacting to another person's disaster. Still, for people like us who are extremely self-critical, that's how we usually react to our own difficulties and hardship.

Let's be realistic: our vicious self-criticism is extremely counterproductive. That gets glaring when we visualize speaking this manner to other individuals. Also, it gets even more obvious if we visualize doing continuously to a person who'd take our words to heart, just like a kid. Here, we can actually see our criticism for what it really is: a kind of self-abuse.

To understand the reason why, visualize how a child would respond if she continued being told that she was "useless," "good for nothing," or "couldn't do anything correctly." Eventually, these kinds of remarks would break her spirit. They'd reduce her sense of self-worth, and they'd make her always scared of messing up or falling short of perfection.

The same applies to us as well— and if that seems like a path to insecurity, anxiety, depression, anxiety, and general dissatisfaction with life, that's exactly what it is. Research reveals that self-criticism can cause these whole problems. It can as well ruin our self-efficacy beliefs – our

beliefs about our skill to achieve things in life. A lot of studies reveal that these beliefs are directly connected to our actual skills to achieve things. It might seem like a cliché; however, it's true: the more we trust in ourselves, the more we're able to attain our aims.

Now add to that the more instant impacts of self-criticism that we formerly discussed. Recall how the fear of it can keep us unfocused, anxious, and susceptible to procrastination and self-handicapping? If we join these entire pieces of the puzzle together, the image gets clear. Self-criticism doesn't just make us have to extreme mental health conditions; it can as well weaken our skill to do our best – the actual thing that it allegedly motivates us to do!

This means self-criticism fails to assist us even by its own standards. Even if we only wished to develop ourselves, it's a misguided tactic that we'd be better off without.

Chapter 5 - Self-compassion offers us with a healthier, kinder, and more useful option to self-criticism.

Right, self-criticism can be detrimental—however, what's the other method?

In order to answer this question, let's reflect back to the illustration of a friend you visualized falling on the icy street. How would you really react to her slipping to the ground in real life? Probability is, you'd quickly rush to her side and ask her, "Are you okay?" You'd comfort her, and after you will assist her to get back up.

Meaning, you'd have compassion for your friend. Also, if you began reacting in this manner to your own disaster, errors, and hardship, you'd be participating in self-compassion.

By pondering on how we would show compassion to a person we love in pain, we can form a beneficial model of how to show compassion to ourselves. Therefore, let's go back and break this down a bit more.

In a circumstance such as the one with your friend who slipped and fell down, the first thing you'd do is show that you know about her accident and you care about the pain that she's most likely going through from that fall. That's what you're basically doing by asking her if she's okay.

Similarly, self-compassion starts with a recognition of our own pain. For people like us who were raised in the West, that can be easier said than done. From a tender age, we're taught that we should confront our sufferings with a "stiff upper lip." If we're going through pain, we should only brush it off and move on, we're told. Also, a lot of us attempt to do exactly that.

To counteract this inclination, we need to pause and question ourselves how we're feeling in the current moment. Are we unhappy or nervous about a hard circumstance we're in? Are we angry or frustrated with ourselves for making an error or falling short of one of our standards?

Whatever the case might be, we have to tune into the feeling and take it into our conscious awareness. Meaning, we have to learn mindfulness with our suffering.

As soon as we've recognized our suffering, we can react to it with kindness and care, which we'll look at in the following chapter.

Chapter 6 - Practicing self-kindness entails defeating the idea that we need to be cruel toward ourselves and our pain.

To understand how we can show kindness as well as care to ourselves, let's begin by examining how we can show them to other individuals. When loved one of yours is suffering, what do you do to assist them?

Definitely, that depends on the circumstance; however, normally, you'd begin with some simple words of comfort. "I'm really sorry you're experiencing this," you might say. Frequently, you'd as well add some comforting actions with the words, such as a hug, a caress, or just a hand on the shoulder.

“Uh oh,” you might be wondering at this point. “Am I about to be told to hug myself or murmur words of comfort into my own ear?” Yes, you are – and if the impression looks silly, well, there’s a cause for that.

Once more, people like us who were raised in the West are at a disadvantage here. We’re told that we’re meant to only grit our teeth and endure our pain. That’s particularly true if we played a part in the circumstance that brought about our suffering. The reason is that, based on another dominant belief of the West, we are the masters of our own destinies.

If we make a mistake or fall short of our goals, we can’t put the blame on someone else but ourselves. Having this notion in mind, we don’t only lash out at ourselves when we make a mistake; also, we have no sympathies for the subsequent pain. As a matter of fact, we most likely think we deserve it, which makes it hurt even worse.

With these ideas and outlooks, it’s not a surprise that the notion of hugging yourself might seem ludicrous initially. However, hey, your body doesn’t understand it’s not “supposed” to be hugged by itself. Also, science reveals that a hug can make your body to produce oxytocin –this is a hormone that makes us feel more relaxed, safe, and calm. Therefore, why not attempt it when next you are feeling sad or anxious?

Another option could be to say some comforting words to yourself. “Poor baby,” you could say in a calm, kindly tone. “Things are really difficult at the moment.”

Also, if only the idea of doing that makes you cringe, pause, and think about what this says about your approach toward yourself.

Chapter 7 - Another vital component of self-compassion is knowing our shared humanity.

Assuming you believed you were the only person in the universe who had a challenge—for instance, fear of public speaking. By feeling all alone with your issue, it’s very easy to get down on yourself about it. You might say, “every other person is okay with public speaking.” “What’s is the problem with me?”

Now assuming, on one occasion, a different person came along and mentioned, “ As a matter of fact, just about every other person fears public speaking as well. As a matter of fact, it’s one of the most popular phobias.” Meaning, you’re not the only one. Your fear of speaking in public is an aspect of your being human – and it’s an aspect of other people’s humanity as well.

How would you feel? Most likely a big sense of relief!

When we’re going through pain over a thing, it can be easy to get really absorbed on our hardship that it turns into the only thing we notice in our mind’s eye. At this moment, it’s as though every other person in the universe has stopped living to us. Due to that, although we might understand that millions of other individuals have experienced the painful feeling of, say, for instance, losing a job, we feel as though we were the only person in the universe to ever feel pain from it. This sense of loneliness can intensify our pain. On the other hand, having it in mind that we’re not alone can assist us to comfort ourselves.

Asides only making us feel less alone in our pain, reminding ourselves of our shared humanity has a different advantage. It works as a strong remedy to the perfectionism that makes us really self-critical and feels so inadequate in the first instance. Having our shared humanity in mind, we can say to ourselves that definitely, we make errors. Definitely, we’re not perfect. Definitely, we go through setbacks. We’re only human.

That doesn’t signify that we don’t need to work on addressing our mistakes, fixing our weaknesses, or defeating our setbacks. It basically signifies that it’s unreasonable to beat ourselves up over them. They’re an aspect of us being human, both as individuals and as a species.

Eventually, then, self-compassion isn’t only some warm and fuzzy manner of treating ourselves with child gloves. It’s basically a reasonable, pragmatic manner of relating to ourselves as humans.

Chapter 8 - Rather than just being a hindrance, self-criticism can be a starting point for self-compassion.

Just like a lot of things in life, stepping away from self-criticism and accepting self-compassion is easier said than done. If you've formed an extremely deep-rooted habit of self-criticism, it's not like you can only flip a switch and turn off your mind's critical inner voice.

As a matter of fact, when you first begin practicing self-compassion in your day-day routine, you may see yourself participating in self-criticism and then changing it into yet a different thing to criticize yourself about! "Ugh" you might growl. "There I go again being self-critical! Stop that! Be more compassionate!" However, at the end of the day, this is self-defeating. You can't put a stop to beating yourself up over beating yourself up by beating yourself up.

Therefore, how do you leave this trap? The key is to begin practicing self-compassion with your self-criticism, instead of against it.

To notice how this functions, assume you're working on a project at home, and you pause for a coffee break. You go into the kitchen, and there you go: you find a huge pile of dirty dishes in the sink. You didn't remember to do them yet again.

Now, if you're a regular self-criticizer, you might not even realize your self-criticism any longer; hence, the first thing to do in this circumstance is to pause and notice how you're talking to yourself. Are the words you use self-critical? Perhaps, you're uttering something like, "Ugh, I'm such a slob."

Rather than reprimanding yourself for uttering these words, attempt to recognize and admit the negative feelings and unmet needs lying beneath them. Maybe you're feeling angry with yourself, and perhaps that's due to the fact that you need a sense of order in your living space to focus on your work.

Next, question yourself, "What can I ask of myself or another person to assist me with my unmet need?" Maybe you can take a break from your work to clean the kitchen. Or perhaps you can ask a partner or a roommate for assistance.

Now, you're in a position to talk to yourself in a more compassionate and kind manner. You could say to yourself "I understand you're feeling very angry and frustrated at the moment." Also, by being self-critical, you're attempting to make yourself to be tidier –however, it's not actually helping. Therefore, why not take a break to tidy up the kitchen instead? That will allow you to feel better and deal with the issue."

Observe how your self-compassion isn't making you self-indulgent or unconcerned about your issues. In contrast, it's making you be self-supportive and prepared to deal with your issues directly, rather than only getting annoyed at yourself about them!

Meaning, self-compassion is both a kinder and a more realistic manner of treating yourself.

Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself by Kristin Neff Book Review

Self-criticism and feelings of inadequacy are the unhealthy repercussions of getting criticism as children and feeling the burdens of living in an extremely competitive society. A healthier substitute for self-criticism is self-compassion, which is essentially a self-defeating behavior. We can learn self-compassion by being careful of our suffering, showing ourselves kindness in reply to it, and recalling our shared humanity.

Accept yourself for who you are.

In learning self-compassion, we can accept ourselves for who we truly are. That doesn't essentially signify being contented about our flaws. It basically entails that we see them in a more holistic, compassionate manner– one that includes our strengths as well. In order to assist yourself implement this perspective, attempting jotting down a list of five means in which you're more than average, five means in which you're only average, and five means in which you're below average. Then, step back from your list, see it as a panoramic image of yourself, and question yourself, "Can I embrace these parts of myself? Can I rejoice the reality that I'm human and hence embrace a wide range of qualities – positive, negative, and neutral alike?"

<https://goodbooksummary.com/self-compassion-by-kristin-neff-book-summary-review/>