

12 ways to reclaim back your power

Ever catch yourself saying things to yourself that you'd never dream of saying to a friend ?

What fascinates me after working with thousands of people is how sophisticated our inner critics have become. They don't just show up as obvious bullying thoughts. Instead, they disguise themselves as helpful advisors, protective friends, and pragmatic realists—making them incredibly difficult to identify and challenge.

The most powerful inner critics don't sound mean at all. They sound reasonable. They sound protective. They even sound loving. And that's what makes them so dangerous.

The most dangerous inner critic isn't the one that obviously bullies you. It's the one that sounds so reasonable you don't even recognize it as self-sabotage.

Your inner critic isn't just an annoying voice—it's a sophisticated survival mechanism that your nervous system developed to try to keep you safe, accepted, and secure. The problem is, it's operating on outdated information and causing more harm than good.

Let's explore 12 subtle yet powerful red flags that indicate your inner critic has taken over (and then I'll show you how to reclaim your power).

1. You're a master of disaster scenarios. “What if I bomb this presentation and everyone thinks I'm incompetent?” “What if this headache is something serious?” “What if I put myself out there and get rejected?”

This one is particularly sneaky because it disguises itself as “just being prepared.” You think you're protecting yourself by mentally rehearsing disasters.

What's actually happening? Your brain's threat detection system is working overtime, keeping your nervous system in a state of high alert and exhausting you mentally and physically—all while rarely providing any real, sustainable benefit .

Next time you catch yourself in a “what if” spiral, ask: “Is this helping me prepare, or just making me anxious?”

2. Your achievements have a 5-second expiration date. You finish a project, reach a goal, or receive recognition... and within moments, your mind has already moved on to what needs improvement or what challenge comes next. The sense of accomplishment barely registers before it's replaced by new pressure.

This masquerades as ambition and drive, but it's actually your inner critic ensuring you never feel “enough.” It creates a treadmill where you're constantly striving but never arriving.

Try this: The next time you accomplish something (even something small), consciously savor it for at least 30 seconds before moving on. Your brain needs time to register the win!

3. Compliments bounce off, criticism sticks like glue.

Someone points out something you did well, and you immediately deflect: “Oh, it was nothing” or “I could have done better.” But when you receive even minor criticism, it echoes in your mind for days or weeks.

This seems like modesty, but it’s actually your inner critic maintaining a negative self-image by systematically filtering out positive feedback while amplifying anything negative.

The pattern is especially clear when you notice how differently you weigh positive versus negative feedback—as if they’re on completely different scales

4. You’d be horrified if someone spoke to your friend the way you speak to yourself.

“You’re so stupid.” “How could you mess that up?” “No one wants to hear what you have to say.”

This one can be hard to spot because self-talk happens so automatically. The test? Would you ever say these things to someone you care about? The stark contrast between how you speak to yourself and how you’d speak to others reveals your inner critic’s double standard.

5. You need to “earn” the right to rest. You notice you can only relax if you’ve “earned” it through productivity. Even then, relaxation comes with nagging thoughts that you should be doing something “more important.”

Your inner critic has convinced you that your worth is tied to your output, and rest is a luxury you must justify. The irony? This mindset makes rest less restorative because you can’t fully enjoy it without the background hum of guilt.

6. Your brain goes offline at the worst possible moments. You’re well-prepared for a presentation, meeting, or important conversation—but when the moment comes, your mind empties like someone pulled the plug. Words and thoughts you normally access easily simply vanish.

This might seem like simple nervousness, but it’s often your inner critic creating so much pressure that your brain essentially short-circuits. The performance anxiety becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

7. Your success feels like an elaborate hoax (that you’re perpetrating) You’ve achieved success in your field, received recognition for your work, or developed clear expertise—yet you still feel like a fraud or imposter who’s about to be “found out.”

This often looks like humility or healthy self-doubt on the surface, but it's actually your inner critic systematically dismissing your legitimate accomplishments and capabilities. It's as if you're watching your life through a fun-house mirror that distorts everything positive about you.

8. You're trapped in perfectionism loops.

You can't seem to complete projects because they're never quite "good enough." You revise, rework, and refine far beyond what's necessary, or sometimes abandon projects entirely if they can't meet your impossible standards.

This masquerades as quality control or high standards, but it's actually your inner critic creating unattainable requirements. The hidden benefit? If you never finish, you never have to face potential judgment, rejection, or criticism.

9. Your brain keeps embarrassing memories on speed dial.

Your brain routinely pulls up memories of past mistakes, embarrassing moments, or perceived failures—often from years or even decades ago—and you find yourself reliving them with fresh shame or regret.

At first glance this appears as "learning from the past," but it's actually your inner critic keeping you trapped in old stories. It's like having an unhelpful friend who constantly reminds you of your worst moments just when you're feeling confident.

10. You procrastinate on what matters most while staying busy with what doesn't. You find yourself putting off the work that matters most to you—writing that book, starting that business, having that important conversation—while staying incredibly busy with less significant tasks.

This looks like productivity, but it's actually your inner critic protecting you from the vulnerability of pursuing what truly matters, where failure would feel more meaningful. After all, if you never try what really matters to you, you can never fail at it.

11. Your inner compass needs constant external calibration. You find yourself unable to make decisions or trust your own assessment without first checking with others. Even in areas where you have experience or expertise, you doubt your own judgment until it's validated externally.

This appears as valuing others' input, but it's actually your inner critic undermining your connection to your own wisdom and discernment. Over time, this pattern can lead to a profound disconnection from your own desires, preferences, and intuition.

12. You feel responsible for everyone else's emotional state. You find yourself constantly monitoring how others might respond to your words or actions. When someone reacts negatively, you automatically assume it's your fault and your responsibility to fix.

This disguises itself as empathy or consideration, but it's actually your inner critic creating an impossible standard where you're responsible for managing everyone else's emotional experience. The result?

Exhaustion, hypervigilance, and relationships where you never feel you can just be yourself.

Breaking Free to Reclaim Your Power : What Actually Works? If several of these patterns resonate with you, you're not alone. Most of us have internalized some version of these patterns. The good news? You don't have to live under your inner critic's control.

What makes these patterns so sticky is that they operate largely outside conscious awareness and are deeply wired into your nervous system. They're not choices you're actively making; they're automatic responses your brain has perfected over time.

The most effective approaches to quiet the inner critic for good work directly with your nervous system to interrupt these automatic patterns and create new patterns – and thus new possibilities.

Programming (also known as Trinity Activation) is particularly powerful for this because it combines physical intervention (activating the DDK points) with cognitive techniques from modern psychology, effectively creating a “pattern interrupt” that allows your brain to form new neural pathways. This helps you break those patterns of negative self-talk, and rebuild new ones of greater self-compassion and acceptance.

In our Programming series, we have several guided sessions specifically designed to address inner critic patterns, helping you create more self-compassion and internal freedom.

These short sessions can help you start shifting these patterns in just a few minutes a day.

Remember : Your inner critic developed to protect you. You can honor its protective intention while creating new options that better serve who you are now and who you’re becoming.