

Developing your Inner Coach

Sarah Archer



SARAH ARCHER

DEVELOPING YOUR INNER COACH

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sarah Archer is a successful Career Coach and founder of CareerTree (www.careertree.org.uk). She specialises in career change and building career confidence to enable clients to fulfil their potential. She is passionate about helping people discover work which is purposeful and that they love.

She writes regularly on careers for The Guardian Careers site and for Careerbuilder.co.uk and has contributed to articles on careers and interviews in various publications such as Glamour, You Magazine, Men's Health and others.

She is a Fellow of the CIPD and has recently completed an MSc in Career Coaching. Her published research focusses on using positive psychology techniques to boost career confidence, particularly before change.

Before she became a coach, Sarah had a successful career in Human Resources, her last role as a HR Director for children's literacy charity Beanstalk. She has also worked for Amnesty International and The British Red Cross, as well as blue chip firms such as Marks & Spencer. Following her own career change in 2006 she coached women returners in a social enterprise before starting CareerTree.

Sarah offers one to one sessions with coaching programmes tailored to client's needs, often covering areas of change, identity, direction, confidence and developing resilience. She has helped hundreds of people to change career or to re-energise their existing career.

She loves what she does and she wants her clients to experience that too.



INTRODUCTION

"It's never too late to be who you might have been."

George Eliot

Welcome to Developing your Inner Coach.

Congratulations for choosing to manage your inner critic and take a compassionate and positive approach to your thinking. Your inner coach will be your partner in your growth and development, and in being able to live a good and fulfilling life. In this book we take a holistic approach to the development of your inner coach, considering mind, body and spirit as important in achieving this new partnership with yourself.

Many people develop a harsh way of speaking to themselves from an early age, cementing a belief and view of themselves which is not accurate but which they persist with. This inner voice or critic perpetuates this negative view, and this constant battle with your inner critic can be tiring and debilitating. It can also get in the way of personal development and self actualisation. By choosing to change this you will be able to throw off the restrictions you place on yourself and engage in a more positive and enjoyable way of living and working.

This book is packed with tools and techniques to develop your inner coach. Much of it is based on research by experts and draws on current thinking in neuroscience, social research and positive psychology. You will find exercises and actions to enable you to experiment and discover what works for you. Have a notebook and pens at the ready to engage with the activities, you will benefit most from the book if you do complete the actions and commit to change.

1 WHY DO WE NEED AN INNER COACH?

“Your time is limited, so don’t waste it living someone else’s life. Don’t be trapped by dogma – which is living with the results of other people’s thinking. Don’t let the noise of others’ opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become.”

Steve Jobs

In this chapter we are going to explore, and attempt to understand your inner critic in order to be better placed to manage it in the future. We will also begin to create space for you to be able to develop your inner coach. There will be actions for you to undertake throughout, and exercises to complete at the end of the chapter.

1.1 NORMALISING THE VOICE IN YOUR HEAD

This voice, this inner critic is what you hear when you are embarking on something new, considering an opportunity or when you are feeling low in spirit. The inner voice speaks to you, and you surprisingly allow it to, in a way that you would not let anyone else speak to you. The voice can take many forms:

- It could be a personal attack – “You’re pathetic/unattractive/stupid/etc.”
- It could be performance related – “No one will listen to your ideas. You’ll fall flat on your face.”
- It may remind you of previous failures – “Last time you froze in the interview when they asked you about x, you’re bound to freeze again.”
- It can even be sympathetic, giving you plausible excuses for not doing something – “you’re not feeling great so best not to go to that networking event.”

or

- It could be the echo of unhelpful phrases from your childhood, school days or early work experiences.

I am sure you will have certain phrases or words that your voice says to you which can reduce your resolve, your confidence and your determination within seconds.

Action:

Write down the words or phrases you hear your inner voice saying when you are under stress/in a new situation.

It can be hard to admit that you have a critical and doubting inner voice, and it's certainly not the kind of thing you would talk about over coffee with a friend. It's not surprising then that you can find yourself pretending not to understand what other people mean when they talk about their inner critic, if they do, because for most people it's forbidden territory. This approach can be isolating and can make you feel as if you are the only one experiencing this unhelpful phenomenon.

Yet everyone has a critical voice, even the people who you think of as super confident and who seem to have their life sorted, only they have managed to adapt and use that voice to help them rather than hinder them (more on that later). It is important to understand that it is a normal part of our brain wiring, and surprisingly has a purpose.

Tim Gallwey, a tennis coach, was one of the first people to identify the inner voice and our struggle with it. In his book *The Inner Game of Tennis* he wrote "Every game is composed of two parts, an outer game and an inner game." The former being played against opponents in a tennis match and the latter which is played not on the court but within the player's mind where the main obstacles are anxiety and self-doubt. If you have ever watched the final of a tennis grand slam where often the players are matched both physically and in ability/technique, it is the player who is stronger mentally who will win the game and the tournament.

Part of the problem is that you can become so used to hearing the voice, it becomes so familiar, and your struggle to quieten it or battle it is so ingrained that you can't actually imagine being without it. You can think it is a part of who you are, and this combined with a belief that you alone have this nagging self-doubting voice can make it hard to deal with and change.

1.2 UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU FEAR AND WHY YOU SPEAK TO YOURSELF IN A NEGATIVE MANNER

Now we have established that everyone has some kind of inner voice that can fuel self-doubt and anxiety, we can try to understand where it comes from and what it means when you speak to yourself harshly.

Fear is a big trigger for the inner critic. Fear of change, of the unknown, of making a mistake, of stepping out of your comfort zone can all increase the noise in your head, the endless dialogue with yourself. Fear makes you vulnerable, change makes you vulnerable and that can be a very uncomfortable feeling.

So what happens when we are feeling scared and uncomfortable? Well, we want to get rid of that feeling or reduce it. What we don't realise, of course, is that it is being uncomfortable that helps us to grow and develop as human beings. In her book *Daring Greatly*, the social researcher and academic, Brené Brown states, "The simple and honest process of letting people know that discomfort is normal, it's going to happen, why it happens, and why it's important, reduces anxiety, fear and shame. Periods of discomfort become an expectation and a norm."

But because we don't understand that yet, our inner critic starts to take control and, talks to us in a negative and critical way to make us avoid doing the 'thing' that is causing the fear and discomfort.

What your inner critic is actually trying to do, and this is really important to understand, is protect you. It is trying to get you to avoid making decisions or taking action that is going to cause anxiety or emotional pain.

For example, perhaps you were invited to a job interview for the perfect job – a step up, a promotion from where you are but the selection process involves a presentation as well as an interview. You hate presentations, even though you can do them and often receive positive feedback, you always get very nervous, but you really want the job. What happens? Well your inner critic goes into overdrive, of course, and begins to attempt to persuade you to give up by being negative. It may say things like:

“You know you hate speaking in public – your nerves
will kick in and you won't be able to speak”

“Maybe you're not ready for this promotion after all – you won't get the job anyway”

“Remember the last interview when you had to make
a presentation – you really screwed up”

Your inner critic wants you to withdraw from the interview process in order to protect you from the pain of not performing well or of rejection. It doesn't care what tactics it has to resort to, whether its statements are accurate or true, it just wants you to avoid future pain. It, believe it or not, wants to help you.

1.3 UNDERSTANDING HOW YOUR CORE BELIEFS CAN HINDER YOUR PROGRESS

Your critic also draws on your long held beliefs, and depending on what core beliefs you hold this can be very powerful ammunition.

Self belief is developed from the inside and can be nurtured and cherished, or damaged and even crushed by others or by experiences around us. The echoes of our early influencers – parents, siblings, teachers, friends or foes can still be felt in the ripples of our implanted beliefs. These can be expressed views, throwaway comments, teasing or being compared to others unfavourably which you may have then chosen to take on as a core belief.

The belief you have decided to give credence to may have little or no basis in fact. Maybe you heard a comment expressed so often you believed it to be true, or it was said at a time when you had little resilience to rebut it. It is these unhelpful and often irrational beliefs that become more ingrained every time your inner voice uses them against you.

For example:

Jenny was labelled the non-academic sibling and told she wasn't as bright as other children, and regardless of whether this was true or not she took this to heart and then fixed it there by looking for, and, gathering evidence to support it. All the times she didn't get good exam results or when she didn't understand a concept as quickly as others she saw it as proof of the core belief she held about herself. And of course, she disregarded all the times when she did do well at school or work because she saw them as flukes, or that she was just lucky.

By unearthing and examining our core beliefs we can begin to shift them and get a new or different perspective on them. You will know them because your inner voice will reference them at times of stress or difficulty, and you will also know them because they hold you back and stop you being who you want to be.

Action:

What does your inner critic use against you? What are the unhelpful core beliefs you hold about yourself?

Write down the answers to the above questions – you will need to dig deep as some of the negative beliefs you hold about yourself you may not even be aware you hold.

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGING THE DAMAGE YOUR INNER CRITIC CAN CAUSE TO YOUR CAREER AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

I worked with a client once who described her inner critic as a huge lump of concrete to which her mind was chained. She christened it ‘the block’ and it held her back in so many ways – it felt immovable, it weighed her down and sapped her energy.

It can be very debilitating to have to ‘manage’ your inner critic, and there are many times when it manages you, and yet you can either feel resigned to living with it or it is so ingrained you can’t imagine life without it.

So in what ways can your inner critic hold you back:

1.4.1 STAYING IN YOUR COMFORT ZONE



I asked a client to describe her comfort zone and how she felt about leaving it, and this is what she said “In my comfort zone I have soft lighting, lots of beautiful cushions and soft throws, it’s always warm and there is a deep shag pile carpet! Why would I want to leave when the alternative outside my comfort zone is dark, cold and it feels like there could be a blizzard or certainly cold sharp rain.”

It is safe and non-threatening to remain where you are, to not push or stretch yourself. It can be very scary for a lot of people to move out of their comfort zone which by definition suggests moving to an uncomfortable place. This is doubly hard when your inner voice is encouraging you to stay, reassuring you it's better to remain where you are.

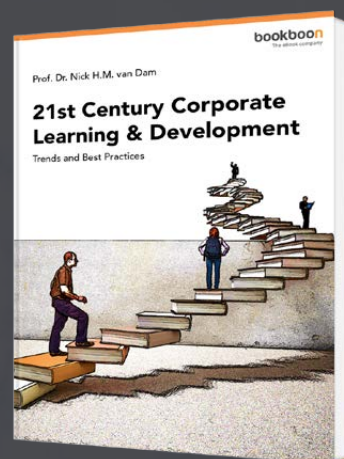
However, staying static and within the confinements of the comfort zone does eventually feel restrictive and stagnating. In order to grow and develop we must push past our comfort zone and try new things. You need challenge and the opportunity to learn in order to stimulate and energise yourself. Stepping outside opens your world and opens up possibilities.

As you step out of the first comfort zone you move into a new zone, which, when you have mastered and learnt what there is to learn in that zone, becomes your new comfort zone and so on. This is how we expand our world.

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1.4.2 MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Fear can make you say “no” to opportunities or avoid situations which may stretch or challenge you. The fear you will not be able to do something, that you will look foolish, feel silly or exposed means instead of grasping these chances, you hide from them. And all the time your inner critic is soothing and congratulating you on escaping from the possibility of humiliation.

Yet, while you feel immediate relief from taking the easy option and avoiding potential pain, deep down you know you are somehow letting yourself down. These opportunities may have brought exciting career development, personal fulfilment, possible friends or partners.

1.4.3 FEELING LIKE AN IMPOSTER

If you suffer from Imposter Syndrome you may find yourself constantly waiting to be found out at work, living in terror of the day when someone is going to walk into your office and ask what on earth you think you are doing in such a great job.

Research shows that around 70% of people feel they aren't worthy of the job they are doing at some point in their career. Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes revealed in their research that an estimated 2 out of every 5 successful people consider themselves frauds. Women, in particular, are more vulnerable to this particular syndrome.

This term was coined following an academic study in the 1980s that was centred on women who were able to break the glass ceiling. It revealed that they believed they were only promoted because they were lucky or judged to be better than they actually were. This tell-tale sign of a disconnect between actual and perceived performance is key – despite lots of proof that they are doing well those with Imposter syndrome believe they are ‘faking’ it and even praise made them feel uncomfortable, compounding their feelings of incompetence.

The causes of Imposter Syndrome are complex and could stem from two different sources. Firstly it can be a result of low parental expectations – if parents did not perceive their child capable of success then this can instil a belief in the child that they are not someone who can succeed without luck or fortune playing a part, or maybe they had a sibling who was labelled as the ‘clever’ one, and they felt no matter what they did they were never seen in that way by their parents. Secondly, societal conditioning plays a role – men are conditioned from an early age to be successful whereas women have generally been conditioned to be feminine.

If you feel you have Imposter syndrome then your inner critic is probably compounding this by constantly reminding you ‘you’re not good enough’, that someone will ‘unmask’ you and that one day you’ll be exposed for the fake that you really are.

Action:

What have you said no to because of your inner critic? What opportunities have you missed?

Are you suffering from Imposter Syndrome? How has this affected you?

List the things you would have done if you’d had the courage to not listen to your inner voice.

1.5 THEORY OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

“If there was no change there would be no butterflies.”

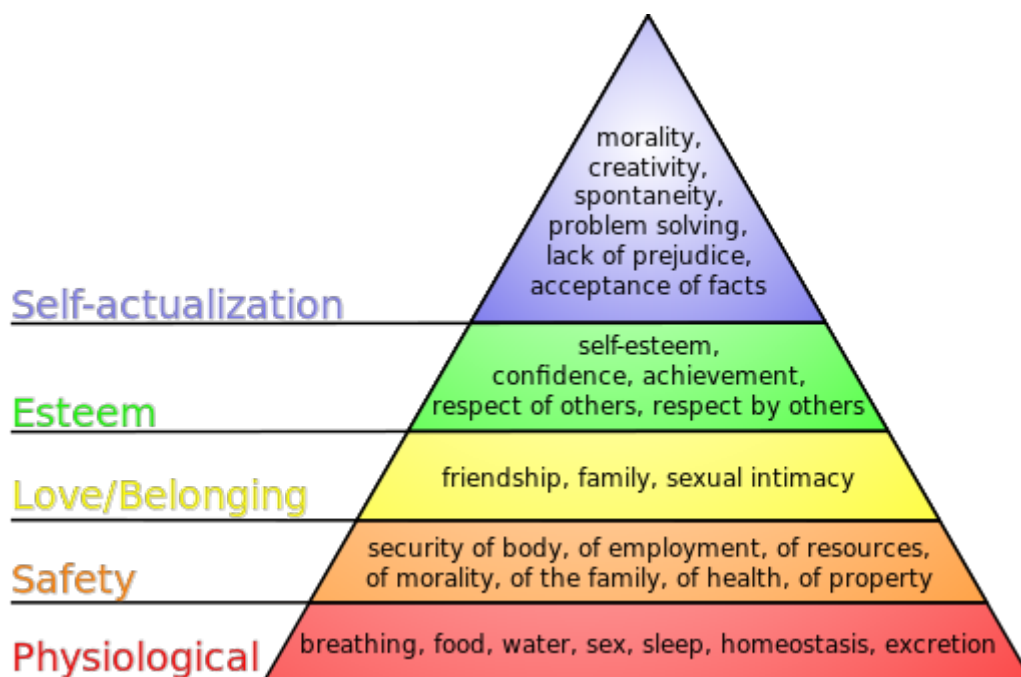
Anon

Change is important for your own personal growth and development, and being able to fulfil your potential. However, your inner critic, as you know, doesn’t like change and therefore tries to put the brakes on to keep you safe. Understanding what motivates you to change and grow can be useful in making the best choices for yourself.

Maslow (1970) suggests that everyone has an in-built need for personal development which occurs through a process called self actualisation. He described this as:

“What a man *can* be, he *must* be. This need we may call self actualisation...It refers to the desire for self-fulfilment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualised in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming.”

Maslow suggests that the extent to which people develop depends on certain needs being met and he developed a hierarchy of needs with self actualisation being at the top.



(Illustration 2: Maslow's Hierarchy of needs)

He identified basic needs as Physiological needs such as food, water, warmth, etc. and Safety needs such as security, then came Psychological needs such as belongingness and love, that is, having friends and relationships. This was followed by Esteem needs such as prestige and a sense of accomplishment. Finally Self actualisation and fulfilment needs follow where you achieve your potential including creative activities.

Once the basic needs are met then the other needs can become motivators, and they may vary from individual to individual with some focussing on self-esteem or some love and belonging but ultimately we are all driven by the need fulfil our potential.

In order to promote your personal growth, it is important to learn to be authentic, to become aware of your inner self and to hear and recognise your inner feelings and needs. Through allowing yourself to discover your talents and creative skills you can find a career that allows you to express your values. As you begin to move towards fulfilling your potential you will begin to experience joy in life, and become open to seeing the good in all kinds of situations. It is hard to do this however, if you continue to have an unhelpful inner voice and that is why it is important to allow your inner coach to speak up.

1.6 UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF AN INNER COACH

What is an inner coach? Maybe a good place to start is to define coaching itself. The Association for Coaching sees coaching as:

“A collaborative solution-focused, results-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experience, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee.”

Imagine if you could facilitate that for yourself – where you are working with yourself, not against yourself, to achieve the things that will make you happy, allow you to grow and be more of the person you want to be. It is very powerful to enable yourself in this way.

There may be a time you can remember when you felt like you had someone on your side, acting as a support, as a ‘cheerleader’, who wanted you to do well and be happy, and that feeling is what we want to create by enabling you to access your inner coach. We will be exploring this further and looking at different ways you can develop your inner coach in Chapters 2 and 3. In the meantime we will celebrate the benefits of having an inner coach.

1.6.1 LESS INNER TURMOIL

There is a finite amount of physical, mental and emotional energy available to you on a daily basis, and a busy hectic way of life often means there is not much of any of them to spare. So imagine the energy you would save from not having to battle with yourself, of having no inner turmoil to deal with on a daily basis. It would be amazing wouldn't it? Not to feel that drain of energy from arguing with yourself, rebutting unhelpful comments and having to deal with the regular helping of negativity served up by your inner critic. Imagine what you could achieve with the positive energy you would generate instead.

1.6.2 MORE SELF BELIEF

When you have an inner voice that encourages you to do things, that gives you warm words of support and, metaphorically holds your hand as you try new things this has a huge impact on your self belief. In turn this gives you the courage to be brave and develop your skills and talents which then allows your confidence in your ability and belief in yourself to grow and flourish. It becomes a positive upward spiral because the more things you do the more confident you become and the more belief you have in your ability to be successful in whatever you do.

1.6.3 SAYING YES INSTEAD OF NO

An inner coach can help you develop a positive response to potential opportunities instead of a negative one. Yes, you may still feel fearful and full of trepidation but by allowing your coach to guide you through accessing positive past experiences and helping you plan to overcome any anxieties you may have, then you will find you are approaching the new experience as your best self. Opportunities are necessary as they move you out of your comfort zone, help you to grow and allow you to experience the ‘rush’ from trying something new. Once you have done it and it has gone well you are more likely to say ‘yes’ again and again.

1.6.4 BE ENGAGED WITH LIFE

Your inner coach can help you to be fully engaged with your life, not standing in the shadows anxiously holding back, feeling scared and fearful. Instead you can be fulfilling your potential and feeling positive and motivated about your choices and direction. Being fully engaged also equals feeling happier in your career and life.

1.6.5 INCREASING YOUR CONFIDENCE

Confidence is not a fixed trait, it can increase or decrease depending on our experiences, the people around us and the choices we make. Confident people attract positivity and opportunities because they are seen as having potential to do things well and be successful. They can also inspire other people to be confident too. You can be socially confident but lack career confidence or vice versa. Your inner coach can help you to be resilient and protect your confidence by learning from your experiences, reviewing feedback and deciding what to take on and what to reject. They can also reinforce your ability to bounce back from setbacks when they happen.

1.6.6 BEING COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN SKIN

This means not comparing yourself to friends, family or colleagues, and finding yourself or your life wanting. Your inner coach can help you counter those feelings that someone else’s life and career is so much better than yours. It can help you celebrate what you know about yourself and your imperfections, and accept that other people’s lives are different, not better, just different. And it can help you value and be grateful for what you do have rather than what you don’t have.

Action: List the benefits of having an inner coach for you. What are the main differences it would make to your life?

Exercise 1:

Review your answers to the actions in this chapter. What do you notice about them?

My reflections on my answers are...

Exercise 2:

Inner Critic	Inner Coach
<i>Describe how your inner critic makes you feel</i>	<i>Describe the qualities you would like your inner coach to possess</i>
<i>How has your inner critic held you back?</i>	<i>What would you like your inner coach to enable you to do?</i>

2 PREPARING TO DO SOME INNER WORK

"Before anything else, preparation is the key to success."

Alexander Graham Bell

In this chapter we are going to explore the importance of preparing ourselves in order to enable our inner coach to flourish.

In the same way that you might prepare a garden for new plants you need to create the best conditions for the new way of thinking that you are going to develop. By clearing the weeds and brambles, digging and aerating the soil, adding fertiliser and clearing the big stones before sowing the seeds you give those plants the best chance of taking root, growing, flourishing and producing beautiful blooms. So it is with your thoughts.

If you don't prepare then it is going to be much harder to allow these new thought patterns and way of being to take root.

This chapter will show you it is worth spending some time preparing before you begin the journey of change. There will be actions and exercises to help you work through the steps to become prepared to bring your inner coach into your daily life.

2.1 LETTING GO OF EXPECTATIONS – YOURS AND OTHER PEOPLE'S

Part of the process of preparation is knowing what to let go of. We, and other people, can put expectations on ourselves to do certain things or act in a certain way. This creates pressure and stress, and can ultimately hold back our progress. It's like trying to cook a meal with one hand tied behind your back – very difficult.

These expectations can often stem from our earlier life. Messages we have received from parents, teachers, friends, bosses, colleagues and society about how we should 'be' if we are going to lead a good life. Some may be very helpful, for example good manners are societal expectations which help us navigate social settings and communicate messages about our upbringing and values. You have to decide which are the helpful expectations and which have become distorted over time.

For example:

Joanna was told as a child she should do her chores first and then she could enjoy herself but, over time, she added a level of perfectionism into the expectation. This led her to believe that she not only had to complete her work before she could relax but also complete it to a very high standard. This took so much time that she then found she had very little time left to enjoy herself. A level of complexity was added as her belief was reinforced by a promotion at work and positive feedback, even though she was becoming increasingly stressed.

This can be challenging but you need to work out and recognise what is an unhelpful expectation or expectations that you place on yourself. Be true and honest with yourself.

Action:

Think about your patterns of behaviour and list the expectations of yourself that are unhelpful, make you feel negative and which you want to let go of.

Hopefully you won't have too many unhelpful expectations but if you find you have a fairly long list then prioritise them as you won't be able to work on them all at the same time.

2.1.1 AWARENESS

Awareness is one of the keys to letting go. The first step to letting go of a belief is noticing when you are engaging in unhelpful behaviour based on the belief and then ask yourself the following:

- Do I **want** to do this?
- Will it make me feel positive or negative?
- Could I approach this differently?
- How could I make it more helpful to me?

2.1.2 ASSERTIVENESS

Being assertive is about prioritising your needs and desires, and deciding how and what you want to do. Saying 'no' to something isn't always received negatively. Explain why you can't make it in a polite but firm way.

If for example, your expectation is that you should say yes to every invitation otherwise people will think you are rude, then with the next invitation decide firstly whether you want to go or not and if you don't then start to become comfortable with saying no.

Still struggling? Observe people you see as assertive and test out some of their techniques to see what works for you. Maybe they use humour or they offer an alternative solution.

2.2 PRACTICING SELF COMPASSION

Practicing self compassion is an important aspect of preparing yourself for your inner coach, and when letting go of expectations. Self compassion is associated with being more optimistic, curious and resilient and overall greater happiness.

2.2.1 WHAT THE RESEARCH REVEALS

Dr Kristin Neff, Professor of Human Development and Culture at the University of Texas has carried out pioneering research into self-compassion. She describes self-compassion as “being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail or feel inadequate rather than ignoring our panic or flagellating ourselves with self-criticism.”

She goes on to explain that “self-compassionate people recognise that being imperfect, failing and experiencing life difficulties is inevitable, so they tend to be gentle with themselves when confronted with painful experiences rather than getting angry when their life falls short of set ideals.”

One way of thinking about this is to imagine what you would say to someone who is in distress when something has gone wrong in their life, and practice responding to yourself in the same manner that you would to that person. This is a good opportunity to engage your inner coach and expand his/her repertoire into caring and empathy as well as positivity.

2.2.2 BEING KIND

It's important when you are making a behavioural change that you don't beat yourself up about your decisions. Being kind and nurturing to yourself at this time can be the key to long term change so watch for how you 'talk' to yourself. If you find yourself being negative and feeling you should revert to fulfilling the unhelpful expectation you are trying to let go of then try to catch the thoughts, write them down and create a dialogue to replace it with. This dialogue should be encouraging, should acknowledge the challenge of change but reinforce why you need to let go of that particular expectation.

Acknowledging that everyone struggles at times can give you a feeling of connectedness to others and therefore allows you to be more compassionate to yourself.

Actions:

If negative thoughts are overloading you when you try to let go of the expectation, imagine what you would say and how you would treat your best friend if s/he was struggling with a challenge and feeling negative. How could you apply that approach to yourself right now?

If you want to explore self-compassion in more detail Dr. Neff has exercises and guided visualisations available on her website www.self-compassion.org

2.3 ACHIEVING INNER CALM

We have between 30,000 and 75,000 thoughts per day of which 80% are random 'nonsense'. Being able to let go of the worrying thoughts and achieve relative calmness can help create space to be able to hear and listen to your inner coach.



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2.3.1 RECOGNISING UNHELPFUL THOUGHTS

It is easy to think you have no control over those thoughts or that they can't be changed, but when you start to focus on those thoughts and hear the 'nonsense' you begin to realise that they do not reflect who you are or what you really think and feel. Many of these thoughts are fear based, fuelled by things we read, listen to or see – just thinking about the news make you realise how negative much of the daily news is. Many of the thoughts are judgmental and we often don't challenge them which means we unconsciously accept them as our thoughts. By accepting them we give them permission to shape the beliefs we hold about ourselves and our lives.

Now you can recognise the unhelpful thoughts you can begin to question and then change them. You can choose to put a thought in your mind that more accurately reflects how you feel.

2.3.2 PRACTICING ACCEPTANCE

To achieve inner calm you also have to practice acceptance, where you simply accept what is. By acknowledging that the only person you can change is yourself, you are enabled to move towards inner peace and calm.

Once you find yourself having judgmental or negative thoughts about situations or people you are moving away from acceptance by wanting to control what is beyond you, and, outside of you. Using and developing your inner coach is part of accepting yourself for who you are and acknowledging the good in yourself rather than focusing on the negative.

Action:

Find a way that works for you to achieve inner calm.

Ideas include:

- **Listening to music**
- **Get outside and go for a walk**
- **Practice deep breathing or meditation**
- **Enjoy nature**
- **Decluttering**
- **Laughing**

Whatever approach is right for you build it into your daily/weekly life so it becomes a regular practice.

2.4 RECOGNISING PATTERNS AND TRIGGERS

To effectively prepare for changing your thought patterns and developing your inner coach you need to raise your awareness even more. You need to be able to recognise any patterns of behaviour or thinking that promote negativity, and any triggers that encourage your inner critic. By identifying them you can spot early warning signs and avoid them.

Thinking back to the work you did in Chapter 1 identifying beliefs, and, the work in this chapter on expectations, block out some time to reflect on what could trigger these or other patterns of behaviour that have become established.

2.4.1 TYPES OF TRIGGERS

Triggers could include:

- Working with or being around negative people
- Certain words or phrases associated with your belief
- Certain environments or situations
- If someone acts towards you in the same way a parent or teacher or authority figure may have acted in the past
- Being tired or overstretched
- Being stressed
- Feeling anxious

2.4.2 AVOIDING TRIGGERS

If you recognise early signs that you may be about to engage in unhelpful thoughts or behaviour, consider what strategies you could employ to avoid the trigger

For example:

I worked with a client whose anxiety was triggered when she collected her children from school. Not being part of a friendship group with the other parents triggered her own unhappy memories of primary school. This led her to feel anxious, and she was conscious she didn't want to pass that anxiety onto her young children. Having recognised what was happening we developed a strategy for her to reframe her experiences to realise a lot of the parents didn't know one another. She decided to make the effort get to know some of the other parents, to talk to them when waiting to collect her children and volunteering to be the Parent Class Rep. This all enabled her to feel more positive when entering the playground and she was able to use positive self talk to manage any anxiety she felt.

Having a plan and a coping strategy will make it easier to avoid the behaviour or thought. These could include things you have already identified in the Achieving Inner Calm section, or could be practical things like:

- talking to a good friend
- journaling
- taking action to address the situation
- doing an activity you enjoy
- watching something funny
- reading something humorous

Actions:

Identify what your triggers or patterns are and develop a plan to avoid them or deal with them if you notice the signs early.

2.5 TRUSTING YOURSELF

Trying new things, whether it is salsa dancing or developing a new way of thinking, requires you to trust in yourself and believe you are capable of doing it.

Self efficacy is a cornerstone of confidence, and was developed as a concept by psychologist Albert Bandura in the 1970s. He believed that by doing something, by having a go, we develop competence and self belief.

One of the aspects which he identified helped increase self efficacy was identifying and remembering when you had done things before. For example, if you have a fear of public speaking reminding yourself of times when you have made successful presentations and had positive feedback about your performance can make you feel more confident about your next speaking engagement.

He also identified that we can increase our self belief through vicarious experience so seeing someone similar to ourselves perform well can help us believe that we too will perform in the same manner. This belief can also be increased, he believed, by social persuasion or verbal feedback. Being told by others we are good at what we do and what we are capable of can also increase our confidence. The final part that he suggested was essential to self efficacy was management of our emotions and thoughts. Positive emotions increased our belief in our ability to do something whereas negative feelings decreased our perceived self efficacy.

2.5.1 STRATEGIES TO INCREASE SELF EFFICACY

Bearing in mind Bandura's cornerstones of self efficacy, you can look for role models who are performing well, for example, if your colleague who has the same number of years of experience as you resigned and got a new more senior role in a rival company this should help you believe you are capable of finding a new role too.

Keeping a journal or using notes on your phone to record positive feedback can be a great way to boost your confidence and allow yourself to trust that you can do this, you can get through this adversity or you can step out of your comfort zone.

Managing your negative emotions and developing this inner trust in yourself will enable you to feel you can trust your inner coach and allow their voice to become louder.

Actions:

Make a note of things you have done in the past that were scary but that you made yourself do and were successful in. Start thinking "well if I did that then I can do...."

Notice who your role models might be both in your career and social life and look at what they have embarked on that you might find daunting. How did they do it?

For one week look out for and record positive feedback or positive evidence of something you have done well. Review it at the end of the week and notice how you feel.

2.6 HOW YOUR BODY CAN HELP

If you're feeling low, stressed or nervous then you may notice you are hunched, sitting badly and closing down – sometimes we actually try and become invisible by making ourselves take up as little space as possible. It's not surprising therefore that when we do this we feel worse.

And if our body is closing down then it is even harder for our inner coach to be heard.

Research has shown that our posture and how we hold our bodies has an effect on our brain chemistry. Professor Amy Cuddy of Harvard Business School found that adopting a power pose where we open up our bodies, become aware of our posture and stand or sit purposefully has an effect on our hormones so that we cope with stress better and open ourselves to testosterone energy. This, importantly, makes us feel better. Her research showed that just 2 minutes adopting a power pose alters brain chemistry.

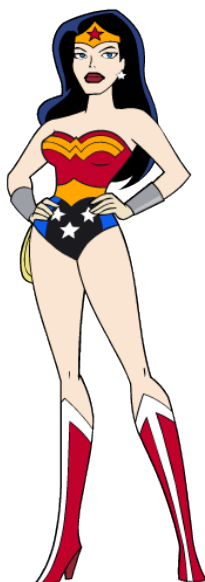
Action:

Try these power poses and develop a daily practice. Notice how they make you feel.

The most well-known and versatile high power pose is nicknamed “The Wonder Woman” pose. You simply stand tall with your chest out and your hands on your hips. Tilt your chin up to maximise the pose. Despite its name this pose is as effective for men as it is for women.

Or try “The Performer” in honour of Mick Jagger. Before the interview or meeting, throw your hands in the air and widen your stance, as if you’re soaking in the applause after an encore performance. Do it in private, perhaps in the lift or in the bathroom.

Hold both poses for two minutes to set those hormonal changes in motion and give you the confidence you need.



(Illustration 2: worldartsme.com)

2.7 CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE TO HAPPEN

If change doesn't happen straight away we might be tempted to give up. This is really challenging when it comes to behaviour or cognitive change as it does require a commitment and a desire to stick with it, and put the effort in in order to reap the benefits of a different mind set. This is important to address before we begin changing our thoughts.

2.7.1 CREATING THE RIGHT FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE

- Accept it won't happen overnight
Being prepared that this is a journey that may last a while, and knowing that you are progressing even if it is with small steps or occasionally going backwards. Mentally being prepared to continue with the journey despite setbacks is a good place to be starting from, and you can remind yourself that although it may take a while it will be worth it in the end.
- Don't overthink things
There will be times on the journey when you feel nothing is going right and your inner critic is winning, and at times like these you need to get out of your head. Do something instead – any activity can help distract you and boost your mood. So whether it's cleaning the house, walking the dog, gardening, running or painting let yourself be absorbed doing something and allow your mind switch off for a while.
- Notice your energy levels
When thinking about changing your mindset notice when you have positive energy and use this to boost your change activity.

Try and avoid making stretching cognitive changes on days when your energy is low as you'll be less successful at embedding the change. Consciously cultivate your positive energy by eating well, making sure you get enough sleep, spending time with people who make you feel good, exercising, developing a grateful practice (see section 3.8) and savouring the moment.

2.8 MAKING TIME AND SPACE IN A BUSY WORLD

Developing your inner coach may feel like it is another thing to add to your 'to do' list, and as we're all overstretched, over worked and caught in a cycle of busyness it could quite easily fall off your list or never get done.

It can be a challenge to create both the time and the headspace to allow your inner coach to emerge. You do need to consider how you can create the time to develop this because without regular practice and commitment it will be much harder to establish your inner coach.

2.8.1 HOW TO MAKE TIME

Consider the following:

What have you achieved so far when thinking about your inner coach?

- List all the actions/thoughts you have had so far about developing your coach – seeing what you have managed to accomplish to date can give you a boost.

How important is it on a scale of 1–10 for you to make time for to develop your coach?

- Working out your motivation level can help you prioritise over other less important things.
- If the number you select is lower than you would have thought think about what you could do to increase your motivation by one number.

How much do you need to create for your inner coach?

- Deciding how much time you need can be so liberating – if you realise that initially all you need is one evening a week then that can feel much more manageable to make time for.

What actions do you need to take?

- Break down the idea of developing your coach into some specific actions and this will feel more achievable and manageable.
- It will also allow you to see what you can achieve by yourself and where you might need some help.

2.9 INCREASING YOUR READINESS FOR CHANGE

Understanding how ready you are for change and what could increase your motivation will be key in the successful development of your new way of thinking.

Even if you have set yourself some lovely SMART goals it can be hard to stay motivated to make the changes know you need to. However, not following through on the changes can mean you're stuck with an inner critic that hinders rather than helps you.

Research by Angela Duckworth from the University of Pennsylvania, shows that there are three factors that need to be present to enable us to make changes to our lives: self discipline, grit and self regulation.

It is worth taking some time just to consider each of the above, and work out whether one of them is missing or is a weaker factor. It is also useful to think about other times when you have tried to change a behaviour unsuccessfully e.g. losing weight, learning the piano, etc and recognise which of the factors were present and which were missing.

There are some very simple and easy things you can consider to increase all or just one of the areas.

2.9.1 SELF-DISCIPLINE – THE ABILITY TO CHOOSE SUCCESSFULLY AMONG CONFLICTING IMPULSES

Allocate specific time in your calendar to focus on making your change happen and set yourself a realistic target for each timeslot. Make a mental contract with yourself that this time is sacrosanct so you don't have to wrestle with your conscience should a 'better' offer appear.

Design a reward scheme for yourself when you achieve your targets or milestones – choose rewards that you know are motivating to you.

2.9.2 GRIT – PERSEVERANCE AND PASSION FOR LONG TERM GOALS

Think about a time when you have persevered successfully to do or learn something. Tune into the satisfaction you felt when you did it – hold onto that feeling and return to it if you feel you are wavering

Find a picture or image that sums up your change and engages your passion – put it somewhere you can see when temptation calls.

2.9.3 SELF-REGULATION – THE PROCESS BY WHICH WE SEEK TO CONTROL OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS AND IMPULSES

The enemy of self regulation is your inner critic, which often urges you to give up on your goals. It is important to remember that you are in control of your thoughts and feelings and can choose not to listen to this voice. Have a strategy for managing the times when the ‘voice’ appears – go for a walk, listen to music, read something positive, write it all down and then contradict the comments using your rational mind. Work out what is going to be most effective for you.

2.9.4 MEASURING YOUR READINESS FOR CHANGE

Try this technique to identify how ready you really are:

- a) On a scale of 1–10 where 1 is not engaged with change, no motivation at all, and 10 is ‘I can’t wait to start – I am so ready to develop my inner coach and to think positively’, score yourself. Be as honest as you can.
- b) Ask yourself why you are not the number below where you scored, for example, if you scored a 6 ask yourself why you are not a 5. Write down your answer. Think about what you have done or have in place already that will help.
- c) Now ask yourself what it would take to move you to the next number or 2 above your original score, for example if you scored a 6 what would you have to do to move to a 7 or 8. Write down your answer.
- d) Imagine how it would feel to be at 10. Write down the feelings.
- e) Make a plan of actions that could increase your motivation and start putting them into practice.

2.10 THE IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE

The final step in the preparation to develop your inner coach is in understanding the importance of practice. For any new habit to be established, and changing your thought patterns is about creating a new habit, then you must be prepared to invest in practice, practice and practice.

2.10.1 HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Research conducted by Philippa Lally, a health psychology researcher at University College London discovered that it takes 66 days on average before a new behaviour becomes automatic. Be prepared that you need to be committed for the long haul, and don’t expect immediate changes or give up if you haven’t ‘cracked’ it in 21 days.

2.10.2 WHAT IS THE SECRET TO ESTABLISHING A NEW HABIT?

Gretchen Rubin, author of *Better Than Before*, a book specifically written about how to change your habits, says there is no magic formula, and the secret, she explains, is to pinpoint the specific strategies that will work for us. She suggests asking yourself ‘When have I worked well in the past? What did my habits look like then – and how can I replicate them?’ The answers will help you decide what is going to work best for you, as you create this new way of thinking.

2.10.3 WHAT MIGHT HELP?

You can decide whether any of the following might be the answer:

- setting deadlines for yourself
- some sort of reward structure
- short bursts of practice or a continual effort over a longer period
- morning or evening reflection time
- having a partner in this
- getting support from those around you



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You can take Gretchen's habits Quiz to discover more about your habit preferences on her website www.gretchenrubin.com

There is also research that suggests that only spending 30–45 mins on an activity you dread, and combining the activity with something that gives you pleasure, for example, eating cake, listening to music, helps you to retrain the brain. You then associate pleasure with the activity and it becomes more enjoyable.

So if there is an activity which you are dreading, for example, networking, where you know your inner critic normally goes into overdrive experiment with combining your preparation (your positive thinking) with something that gives you pleasure.

2.10.4 WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU SLIP UP?

Phillippa Lally's research also showed that 'missing one opportunity to perform the behaviour did not materially affect the habit formation process.' Just because you occasionally lapse into negative thinking, letting your inner critic shout for a while, does not mean you aren't going to be successful.

Making a mistake once or twice does not have a measurable impact on your long term habitual thinking.

Action:

Identify what would help you create a new habit.

Have a support plan in place to help you if you do slip up.

Exercise 1:

Review your answers to the actions in this chapter. What do you notice about them?

My reflections on my answers are...

Exercise 2:

List the progress you have made so far in enabling your inner coach
What changes have you noticed? - have you said 'yes' to something that would take you out of your comfort zone? - have you been more assertive?

3 STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP YOUR INNER COACH

"Believe you can and you're halfway there."

Theodore Roosevelt

You have now created the right conditions to establish your inner coach. You are now ready to explore the techniques in this chapter that are designed to develop a more positive and compassionate way of talking to yourself. In this way you will develop your inner coach.

This will mean trial and error and exploration of the suggestions in this chapter. Some techniques will work for you, others may not but the key is perseverance and tenacity because the outcome will be a more optimistic and healthy you, able to fulfil your potential and enjoy work and life.

3.1 MAKING THE DECISION TO LISTEN TO YOUR INNER COACH NOT YOUR CRITIC

When you have developed a pattern of thinking which has become engrained even when it has not served you well, it is tempting and, even comfortable, to stay with that way of being. You might be tempted to think 'I'll have a go at some of these strategies and see what difference it makes, and then I'll decide what works and whether it's worth investing my time'.

However, bear in mind that there is a school of thought which suggests that making the decision creates confidence rather than the decision coming at the end of the process once you have evaluated all the facts.

This has been illustrated by journalist Eve Fairbanks' experience of learning to surf. She, as many people do, believed that she had to acquire all the skills and techniques before she could be successful on her surfboard, but as she progressed in experience she was still failing to stay on her board. Eventually her surf instructor told her she just had to 'decide to stay on the board'. When she made that commitment everything changed for her and she began to catch the waves. Making the decision, committing to something creates confidence and impacts our ability both mentally and physically to create success.

So if I have one piece of advice for you it is to commit to your inner coach now. Be clear with yourself that this is what you want. Don't be half hearted about it thinking 'I'll give it a try'. If you can decide that you want to have a positive way of talking to yourself, encouraging yourself and being different then commit to it **NOW**.

Action:

Make the decision and write your commitment down. Keep it somewhere you can see it regularly.

3.2 LETTING GO OF THE NEGATIVE VOICE

Now you've committed to developing and encouraging your inner coach it is time to say goodbye to your inner critic.

As we discussed in chapter 1 your inner critic has probably developed as a defence mechanism to protect you from being hurt, exposed or feeling vulnerable. Unfortunately it uses ways and means to protect you that damage your self esteem and confidence, and fixes beliefs about yourself that may not be true. Just like any letting go of or saying goodbye, having a ritual can be a useful way of marking the end of the power of your inner critic.

3.2.1 HOW TO SAY GOODBYE

Try one of these rituals:

- Write a letter to your inner critic expressing your feelings towards it and the effect it has had on you in your life, thanking it for the work it has done and saying goodbye. Keep the letter somewhere in case you need to remind yourself the "relationship" has now ended.
- Draw a picture that represents your inner critic and its impact on you. Give it lots of detail connecting the emotions you are feeling with the image. Then find a way to let go of the image in some form – let it sail away on the sea/river, tear it into small pieces or burn/bury it.
- Record a message to your inner critic on your phone expressing how you feel about its role in your life and saying goodbye. Listen to this when and if you need to.

Now you have formally ended your relationship with your inner critic you have created a space, a vacuum that can be filled with your inner coach and the subsequent positivity it will bring. By engaging in a ritual that marks the end of the negative self talk you are giving yourself confidence and certainty that you can be effective without the inner critic. You don't need it to protect you from the new, the scary and the exciting because you are approaching these things in a new way and you know it will no longer be holding you back.

If it pops up you can simply remind yourself you have already said goodbye to your inner critic and you don't need to engage with it anymore.

Action:

Choose a ritual to say goodbye to your inner critic or develop your own.

3.3 CHANGING HOW YOU THINK TO DEVELOP MORE POSITIVE THOUGHT PATTERNS

One of the main routes to developing your inner coach is to be able to move from thinking negatively about yourself and your actions to thinking in a more positive and compassionate way. Cognitive behavioural psychology has lots to offer to help with this transition.

Albert Ellis is the father of cognitive behavioural psychology. He understood the connection between our thoughts, feelings and our behaviour which ultimately leads to our helpful or unhelpful actions. What he saw quite clearly was that by being able to change our thoughts we could change our behaviours.

For example, if you are faced with a situation that is difficult such as a job interview you may start thinking negatively. Some of the thoughts may run like this:

- “I'm rubbish at interviews”
- “I don't have the experience they want”
- “I'm going to do really badly”
- “My last interview was awful I couldn't answer one of the questions”

You then start to feel nervous and begin to dread the day of the interview. You may even contemplate pulling out and not attending. When the interview does come round, you may experience going blank when asked a question or thinking negatively during the interview “I'm waffling/not answering these questions properly” which further impedes our performance. Sound familiar?

3.3.1 TAKING A COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH

However, taking a cognitive behavioural approach you can change what you choose to think and therefore how you feel and behave in that situation. The outcome may still be the same, you may not be offered the job, but you will be less stressed and be able to perform at your best.

3.3.2 POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

Thinking differently and using positive affirmations or statements we can change our feelings and behaviour. For example, when you receive the interview invitation you may think like this instead:

- “I’ve generally been successful at interview for jobs I’ve really wanted”
- I do have the experience and skills they want, and I can demonstrate I’m a fast learner for any gaps I have”
- “I will do as well as I can, and try and enjoy the experience”
- Although my last interview wasn’t great I know I didn’t prepare that well, whereas I am much better prepared for this one.”
- I am going to feel a bit nervous but I can use that adrenaline to help me to do well”

The first step is to create awareness of your thoughts. Just as a coach would listen and reflect your language to you, encouraging you to reframe your language, so you must notice when you are thinking negatively, putting yourself down, being critical or making yourself feel bad. Find a way to stop those thoughts – some people find a physical action can break the train of negative thoughts – hitting the desk with your hand, clapping your hands or saying the word STOP out loud. Then you need to replace the negatives with positive statements. Not just saying ‘I am great, I am wonderful’ but specific statements that are meaningful. This has to become a regular practice whenever you find yourself thinking negatively. You are training your brain to think in a different way.

Action:

From today start noticing when you are thinking negatively and practice replacing those thoughts with positive affirmations instead.

Notice how you feel at the end of 1 week of actively thinking more positively.

3.3.3 A MORE IN DEPTH APPROACH

If you find this isn't addressing your negativity or that you find it hard to think of positives then you may need to devote more time to a more in depth technique, adapted by Martin Seligman, the founder of Positive Psychology and based on Albert Ellis' theory, known as the ABCDE technique.

A stands for **Adversity** – a situation or difficulty faced at work or during the process of change

B stands for **Belief** – what you believe to have caused the difficulty either something external or internal, or how you explain it to yourself.

C stands for the **Consequence** – how you feel as a result of your belief and the action you then take or don't take.

So for example, if you receive a rejection following a job interview (A) you may tell yourself that you are useless at interviews, that you are not going to be able to make the change you so want (B). You then feel unhappy and demotivated and you put off applying for another job (C).

However, if you focus on changing B you can change C. After all your beliefs may or may not be true you have simply given them power. The key to changing B is D.

D stands for **Disputation** – you are going to argue with yourself by using:

1. *Evidence* – what evidence is there to disprove your belief, for example, if you think 'I am rubbish at interviews' – collect evidence to counter that – maybe you realise that actually during your career you have been pretty successful at interviews, and got most of the jobs you really wanted, or you have had positive feedback on your interview technique.
2. *Alternatives* – what other alternative explanations could there be? E.g. the successful candidate had a closer matched skillset than me, or I knew I didn't really want that job and that probably came across.
3. *Implications* – is it the end of the world? Get some perspective on the situation – there will be other opportunities.
4. *Usefulness* – is it useful to ruminate and think about this right now? If you know that by thinking it through right now it will bring you down, then make a date with yourself for when you will consider the result. By the time you come to review it you will have had time to get a bit of distance from it and will realise it is maybe not as dire as you first thought.

E stands for **Energization** – notice how your energy level shifts when you take a more positive approach, and the knock on effect that has on the actions you then take.

As before, you do need to consciously notice what is going on and write down the ABCDE situation, and practice the technique as much as possible so you are reprogramming yourself to take a positive view of adversity rather than allowing your mind to wallow in negativity.

3.3.4 EMBED IT WITH PRACTICE

Like any new habit – practice and perseverance are required before it becomes second nature but you will see the advantages of following either of the 2 approaches in both how you feel and what you do.

Action:

Experiment with the 2 approaches. Make space for them very day and review what has worked. Notice how your thoughts are changing.

3.4 CHANGING YOUR LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATING CONFIDENTLY

Have you noticed the language you choose to use when talking to yourself? We have all developed language patterns that aren't necessarily helpful but we have used them for so long they are invisible to us. Language is important because it shapes our thoughts and how we act. Thinking about your choice of language is key to developing a new vocabulary for your inner coach to use to assist you in being more positive when faced with adversity.

3.4.1 WORDS AND THE BRAIN

Research by Andrew Neuberg M.D. and Mark Robert Walman shows that positive language can change your brain by strengthening areas of the brain's frontal lobes and promoting cognitive function. By both using and hearing, positive language it can boost your mood and make you feel good. Negative language, however, can block the brain's natural de-stress mechanisms.

Neuberg and Walman explain in their book *Words can change your brain* that a “single word has the power to influence the expression of genes that regulate physical and emotional stress”. Positive words according to the authors propel the motivational centres of the brain into action and also build resilience.

3.4.2 THE EFFECT OF NEGATIVE LANGUAGE

Neuroscience also reveals that our primal brains were hard wired to protect us from threats and therefore we are naturally programmed to worry. This means that negative language can increase the activity in our amygdala (the primitive part of the brain) which in turn produces more stress producing hormones which can interrupt the brain's functioning especially around logic and reason.

3.4.3 THE POWER OF ONE WORD

Neuberg and Walman state that 'by holding a positive and optimistic (word) in your mind, you stimulate frontal lobe activity. This area includes specific language centres that connect directly to the motor cortex responsible for moving you into action. And as our research has shown, the longer you concentrate on positive words, the more you begin to affect other areas of the brain. Functions in the parietal lobe start to change, which changes your perception of yourself and the people you interact with. A positive view of yourself will bias you toward seeing the good in others, whereas a negative self-image will induce you towards suspicion and doubt.'

So there you have it, the science of the brain supports what we have known intuitively, that if you think positively and use positive language it will have a long term effect on your optimism, your world view, how you think and your own self talk.

Action:

Choose a positive word to hold in your mind when you are feeling out of sorts or low. Or choose a positive word each week to focus on, write it on a card and put it somewhere you can see it regularly or use it to meditate on.

3.4.4 WORDS TO AVOID

Be observant of the language you use and notice the kinds of words you want to change your usage of such as should, ought, just, sorry but, can't, etc.

Action:

Over one day notice the language of your thoughts. How often do you use modal verbs or apologetic words?

3.4.5 EXPERIMENTING WITH LANGUAGE

Decide what you want to change and experiment with different words that have a more positive effect.

For example

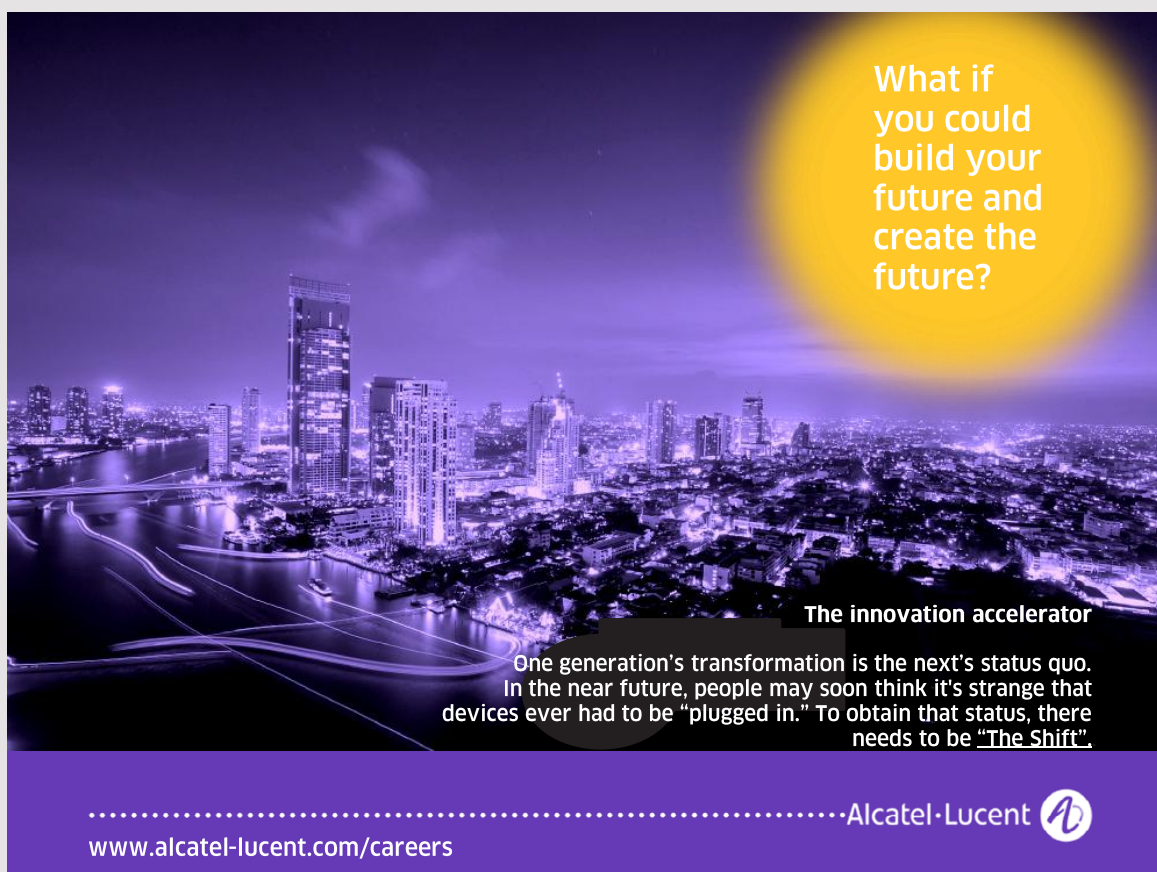
Change

"I really should call xxx because she's having a hard time, she will think I'm such a bad friend because I haven't called".

To

"I really want to call xxx because she's having a hard time although I'm really busy but I'll make a quick call after 5pm".


Notice the difference that makes to your intention to do something and your subsequent action.



What if you could build your future and create the future?

The innovation accelerator

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Action:

Try turning around these everyday phrases to boost your positivity and think about what positive words or phrases you can add to your daily vocabulary

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|----------------------------|
| ➤ ‘Why not’ | becomes | ‘Sounds good’ |
| ➤ ‘No problem’ | becomes | ‘Definitely’ |
| ➤ ‘Can’t complain’ | becomes | ‘Everything’s going well’ |
| ➤ ‘I’m exhausted’ | becomes | ‘I need a rest’ |
| ➤ ‘I missed you so much’ | becomes | ‘it’s so great to see you’ |

3.5 LEARNING TO CELEBRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

When developing your inner coach it is very important to recognise and celebrate your achievements at work and in your personal life. By stopping, reflecting and giving yourself the opportunity to say well done, giving yourself a pat on the back and realising the progress you have made, you are giving yourself evidence and proof that you are someone of worth, someone who achieves things which contributes to developing a positive image of yourself. Your inner coach can use this evidence to help you feel optimistic, hopeful and positive.

3.5.1 LEARNING TO REFLECT

Society today can send messages that we must constantly move onto the next thing, that we are never enough, must aim for more and keep striving. This constant focus on the next and the new can mean that we never look back and see how far we have travelled and how much we have learnt and grown. And this is important if we want to stop feeling like we’ve failed, never succeeded, or never been good enough.

For example

One of my clients, Jacob was constantly stressed and getting close to burn out. He worked in Marketing and was always searching for the new, both professionally where he wanted to be seen as innovative and creative, and in his personal life where he wanted to prove to others that he was successful. He came to me with a real sense of having failed and feeling as though he couldn’t keep on top of all the social media changes which were key to his role. It became clear as we talked that he spent little time thinking about what he had achieved, focussing instead on all the things he hadn’t done. When we looked at his achievements big and small, and collected them on a flipchart, they filled the page and he was overcome by the realisation of what he was doing to himself. He now builds reflection time into his weekly schedule.

3.5.2 DEVELOPING A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

To counter this constant pressure to always move forward, striving for the new, we need to develop a personal perspective, and your inner coach can help with this. This means not taking positive events for granted and developing a practice of savouring the moment and celebrating events and achievements, which can simply be something that has a good outcome.

This helps you to stay more in the moment with the positive event or happening, and means you can develop a bank of positive memories which your inner coach can draw on when your self belief slips or your resilience is low.

By physically recording your successes and achievements you can revisit them when you need to, to boost your confidence, self belief and increase your resilience.

Action:

Choose one or two options that you think would work for you or create your own.

- **Keep an achievement journal – spend 10 minutes each week writing down achievements at home or work.**
- **Keep a note of any positive feedback you receive either by email or verbally.**
- **Start an achievement scrapbook with pictures and words that signify all you have achieved for the year.**
- **Savour the moments that bring you joy – create a mental photograph/memory for yourself.**
- **Reward yourself when you have achieved something. Choose something pleasurable but not necessarily materialistic.**
- **Talk about your achievements on a regular basis with your family, friends and colleagues.**

3.6 USING VISUALISATION TO FOCUS ON BEING YOUR BEST POSSIBLE FUTURE SELF

Our inner critic can be more easily silenced or reduced if we have a positive vision of the future to aim for, and our inner coach can then help us move towards our vision.

We all have a best possible future self. The person we would like to be, living the life we want to have, working in a career that gives us enjoyment and satisfaction. It's out there waiting for us, it may be known to us, in that we have spent time picturing it, we may have caught a glimpse of it occasionally, or we may not be aware of the possibilities of it yet. Being able to visualise it and understand it in detail we can begin to realise how we can make it a reality, and our inner coach can be integral in helping with this.

3.6.1 WHAT IS VISUALISATION?

Visualisation is the ability to recreate all the images, sounds and feelings in your mind around an activity in order to practice in a perfect environment. Using this technique we are going to create your best possible future in a perfect environment.

3.6.2 HOW CAN VISUALISATION HELP?

Research tells us that the more we visualise something, especially in detail, the more it is likely to turn out how we want it to. Australian psychologist Alan Richardson conducted an experiment with basketball players. He measured the individual's baseline performance in free throws and then divided them into 3 groups. Group 1 practiced as normal for 20 minutes each day, Group 2 visualised making free throws but were not allowed to practice physically and Group 3 did nothing. Surprisingly the performance of Group 2 was as good as those who practiced every day.

So let's prepare to carry out a visualisation:

- 1) Find a quiet space where you won't be disturbed and which is comfortable and where you feel safe.
- 2) Start to relax – close your eyes, take some deep breaths and let your body relax – uncross your arms or legs and let any tension you're holding dissipate.
- 3) Imagine yourself in 3–5 years' time (or a timeframe of your choosing). Everything in your life has gone well and you are being your best possible future self (NB you may generate more than one best possible future self and this is ok you can explore them all over time)
 - Think about your environment – where are you? What is it like? Describe it in detail.
 - What do you wear to work?
 - How do you travel to work?
 - Who is around you?
 - What skills are you using?
 - What have you achieved?
 - What aspirations do you still have?
 - What are you known for?
 - How would people you work with or for describe you?
- 4) Now come out of your visualisation and slowly let the image fade. When you feel ready open your eyes and begin to write or draw as much detail as you can remember of the visualisation.

- 5) Reflect on what you have written or drawn and pull out the key themes and what they might mean. For example if you envisioned yourself working in a office with expensive furniture and beautiful art work perhaps this means you see yourself working in a corporate environment or that you are financially successful at what you do, or if you imagine wearing a smart suit and heels then this could signify working in a formal environment.
- 6) Identify how close you feel to your vision on a scale of 1–10 (10 being I have achieved it), and then ask yourself ‘what would I need to do to move up by one number?’ – this can give you some actions to start working towards.

Actions:

Keep your vision of your best possible future self accessible and check in with it on a regular basis, make changes, finesse it and keep it alive.

3.7 JUMPING OFF THE HEDONIC TREADMILL

3.7.1 WHAT IS THE HEDONIC TREADMILL?

The Hedonic Treadmill is a concept developed by 2 psychologists, Brickman and Campbell in the '70s. The concept suggests that regardless of what happens to you your level of happiness returns to your baseline happiness after the event.

For example, if you get promoted you get an initial spike of happiness and pleasure but then you return to your general level of happiness. The reason it is called a treadmill is that it can lead to you constantly chase these little spikes of pleasure, pushing yourself to achieve more, buy more, and have more, but ultimately not increasing your happiness quotient.

This can provide fuel to your inner critic who may use the message ‘it’s never enough’, ‘if you want people to think you’re successful you must have more, do more, be more’ and this can be very stressful. Brené Brown in her book *Daring Greatly* quotes global activist Lynne Twist from her book *The Soul of Money* who says:

‘For me, and for many of us, our first waking thought of the day is “I didn’t get enough sleep.” The next one is “I don’t have enough time.” Whether true or not, that thought of *not enough* occurs to us automatically before we even think to question or examine it. We spend most of the hours and the days of our lives hearing, explaining, complaining or worrying about what we don’t have enough of.... Before we even sit up in bed, before our feet touch the floor, we’re already inadequate, already behind, already losing, already lacking something. And by the time we go to bed at night, our minds are racing with a litany of things we didn’t get or didn’t get done, that day. We go to sleep burdened by those thoughts and wake up to the reverie of lack.... This internal condition of scarcity, this mind-set of scarcity lives at the very heart of our jealousies, our greed, our prejudices, and our arguments with life...’

Use your inner coach to step off the treadmill and take time out to review, using your best possible self what it is that will let you feel that you don’t lack what you need, that will give you meaning in your life or eudaimonic wellbeing.

3.7.2 MOVING TO EUDAIMONIC WELLBEING

Eudaimonic wellbeing was first discussed by Aristotle who believed that realising human potential and leading a virtuous or good life brought wellbeing rather than fleeting spikes of happiness.

Feeling that your life has purpose and meaning (and remember the definition of meaning is personal to you), and that you are growing and developing can be a good starting point, with the help of your inner coach to consciously step off the treadmill. You can then choose to pursue a life that is more enriched and rewarding.

Action:

Review – are you caught on the hedonic treadmill? If yes, how can your inner coach help you to get off?

Think about your best possible future self and identify how you can increase elements such as meaning and growth in order to increase your eudaimonic wellbeing.

3.8 THE ART OF GRATITUDE

“Gratitude for what is there is one of the most powerful tools for creating what is not yet there. What does gratitude mean? It means you appreciate what is. You value, you give attention to, you honour whatever is here at this moment.”

Eckhart Tolle

To boost the effectiveness of your inner coach and to nourish it you can start to develop a grateful practice. This will over time make you more optimistic and resilient. It's not exactly rocket science to realise that by focussing on what we have already, what positive events have happened that we are thankful for or people around us who give us joy or strength we are going to feel better about our life.

3.8.1 WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Scientific research undertaken by Martin Seligman and others in 2005 also reinforce this. In tests, people who tried noticing and capturing 3 good things that had happened to them or that they had experienced during the day, every night for a week were happier and less depressed one month, three months and six months later.

Imagine what it would do for you if it became your regular practice and when you are in a positive frame of mind you are much more able to listen to and tune into your inner coach.

Action: Choose one of the following or think of your own way to practice gratitude

Keep a gratitude journal and capture at least 3 good things that have happened/ you have experienced every day

Sign up to www.gratitude.io who will send you an email every day to ask you what you are grateful for. They then store your answers privately online for you to access at any time.

Start a gratitude jar – write things you are grateful for on a slip of paper and add them to your jar. It is a lovely visual representation of the good things you have in your life.

3.9 BREATHING AND RELAXATION TECHNIQUES TO MANAGE ANXIETY

As we develop our inner coach the journey may become a bit bumpy. Our inner critic will certainly keep popping up from time to time as we choose to grow and fulfil our potential and our anxiety levels may rise as we try new things or step out of our comfort zone.

Being aware of our physicality and the power of our breathing can be incredibly useful to manage our anxieties and fearfulness.

Outlined below are some techniques which may work for you and help you achieve a calm state physically and mentally.

3.9.1 SQUARE BREATHING

Brené Brown introduced me to square breathing when I attended one of her talks and I find it a really useful technique that is really simple to remember and use. You can do it anywhere and anytime to help you calm your anxieties and manage the physical feelings that come with the surge of adrenaline produced through the ‘flight or fight’ response, which we can experience when confronted with something new or challenging.

- ✓ Breathe in for the count of 4
- ✓ Hold for the count of 4
- ✓ Breathe out for the count of 4
- ✓ Pause for the count of 4
- ✓ Repeat until you feel calmer.

3.9.2 YOGA

Amy Cuddy in her book *Presence* interviewed Emma Seppälä about her work on post traumatic stress with war veterans through a yoga based approach. Seppälä explained that, “Breath is such a wonderful way to reduce your physiological activation. Understanding that you can control your breathing is a first step in understanding that you can control your anxiety – that you have the tools to do it yourself. When your mind is racing, when something unexpected happens in a social situation, when you don’t know what to do, you know you can calm yourself by controlling your breathing.”

Engaging in practices that focus on the breath such as yoga, Tai Chi, meditation and chanting can all provide relaxation and calming benefits.

3.9.3 POWER POSING

As mentioned previously Cuddy has also been conducting research into how our posture can help us to feel more positive and less anxious. She concluded that “carrying yourself in a powerful way directs your feelings, thoughts, behaviours and body to feel powerful and be present (and even perform better) in situations ranging from the mundane to the most challenging.”

She identified that by holding an open power pose for just 2 minutes each day can increase confidence.

See Amy’s TED talk at

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are?language=en

3.9.4 DUCHENNE SMILING

“Sometimes your joy is the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

A Duchenne smile is a smile that reaches both your eyes and your mouth. Research shows that when we smile we automatically feel better about things and smiling increases our wellbeing. In 1989 Dr Robert Zajonc proposed a detailed, physiology-based explanation for this cause-and-effect relationship. In his hypothesis, he suggests that the facial changes involved in smiling have direct effects on certain brain activities associated with happiness.

Your brain is aware of the activity of smiling and actually logs it. The more often you smile, the more effective you are at interrupting the brain’s natural tendency to think in a negative way. Smiling often enough enables you to rewire your brain to make positive patterns more often than negative ones.

A fake smile which is the one that only reaches our mouth but not our eyes can be useful at times that we don’t feel like smiling but need to feel better. It can stimulate some of the same feelings as a Duchenne smile so you still get the same results.

Action:

Reflect on the physical techniques you use to reduce anxiety and consciously experiment with others to increase your toolkit for attaining calmness and, managing fear and doubts.

Exercise 1:

Review your answers to the actions in this chapter. What do you notice about them?

My reflections on my answers are...

Exercise 2:

What do you notice about your inner coach now?

How can you turn up the volume of your positive voice even more?

Identify 3 things to focus on

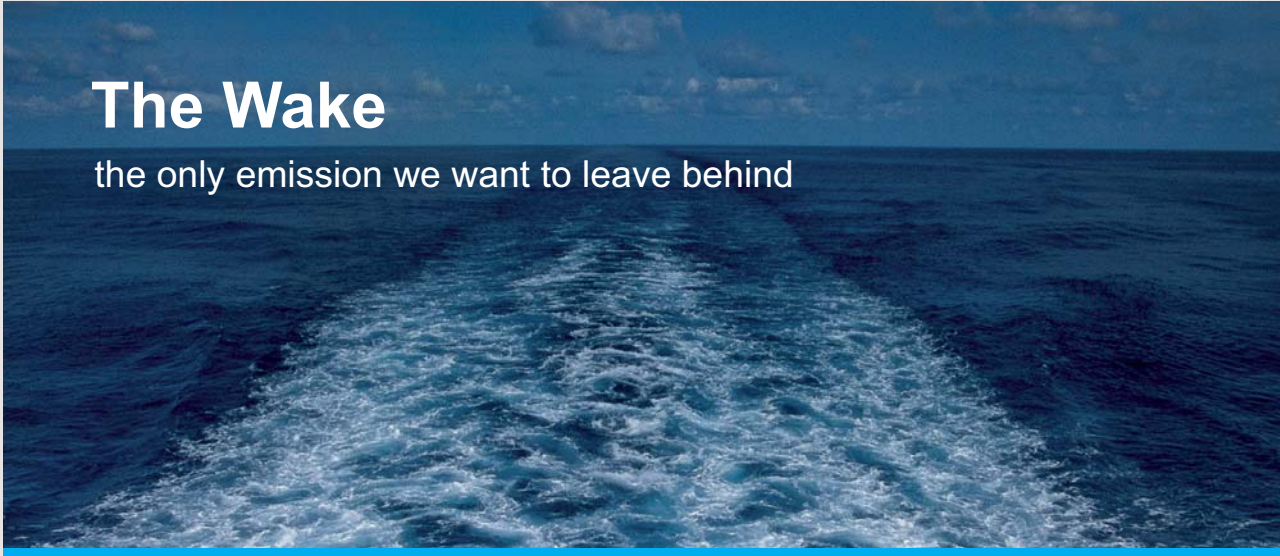
4 SUSTAINING AND NOURISHING YOUR INNER COACH

Congratulations!

"If you can change your mind, you can change your life."

William James

You've completed a lot of the hard work in establishing a new way of thinking that will support and encourage you, rather than demotivate and berate you. You should now be beginning to experience and feel some of the benefits of having a coach rather than a critic.




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This chapter is going to briefly explore how you can maintain and nourish your inner coach. Keeping your inner critic at bay and encouraging your inner coach is a long term process so finding ways now to make that an easier and ultimately unconscious process is time well invested.

Look out for techniques and actions to experiment with and work out what is right for you.

4.1 BUILD IN REGULAR REVIEWS AND CHECK INS

New habits are easy to break and bad habits are easy to slip back into. You need constant awareness and to notice when you have ‘slipped’. As we discussed in Chapter 2 it doesn’t matter if you do slip occasionally as long as it doesn’t become a permanent slip. You can develop a script for your inner coach to use for the times when you may slip up, so your critic doesn’t get the chance to engage.

To support this, vigilance is required especially in the initial days of change or when you are engaging in something outside your comfort zone. Regular reviews and check ins are essential to maintain your new approach.

Every month you can diarise a check in with yourself just to review how that month has gone, what the challenges and the successes were, and how your inner coach helped you. It is an opportunity to reflect on your progress, celebrate what has gone well and learn from the things that were more challenging.

Action:

Schedule regular reviews at time intervals to suit you to reflect on how your inner coach has supported you.

Use www.futureme.org to set goals and activate reminders to review your progress

4.2 DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET

4.2.1 MINDSET THEORY

Carol S. Dweck, a psychologist at Stanford University, proposed mindset theory as a way to understand the effects of the beliefs individuals hold about the nature of intelligence. She said “Some believe their success is based on innate ability; these are said to have a “fixed” theory of intelligence (fixed mindset). Others, who believe their success is based on hard work, learning, training and doggedness are said to have a “growth” or an “incremental” theory of intelligence (growth mindset).”

4.2.2 ROLE OF THE COACH

Having a growth mindset where you want to learn, develop and grow as an individual means experimenting and trying new things. To support your inner coach development you can continually look for new techniques to expand the breadth of your experience. Remember your inner coach's role is to encourage you to grow and stretch yourself but it needs exposure to new ideas, exercises, books, workshops, etc. in order to have the 'fuel' to encourage you.

Actions:

Revisit the chapters in this book and try techniques that you didn't do originally.

Read magazines like Psychologies, blogs or inspiring books by authors such as Brené Brown, Amy Cuddy, Ariana Huffington, etc.

Engage in online courses to boost your confidence and self belief.

Make a plan to stretch yourself and learn something new.

4.3 LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Living a healthy lifestyle and balancing work, home and life will enable you to maintain the healthy mental approach you are developing through your inner coach work. Paying attention to what your body needs is vitally important when developing your inner coach.

If you are sleep deprived, surviving on coffee and chocolate with little exercise then you are definitely making it harder for your inner coach to thrive, and in fact you are creating fertile conditions for the reappearance of your inner critic.

4.3.1 PERFECT TIME FOR A LIFESTYLE REVIEW

Ask yourself:

- What changes to my diet would I like to make?
This could be as simple as increasing your intake of fruit and vegetables, and reducing your sugar intake. It doesn't have to be a radical change, although it can be if you want it to.
- How could I increase my fitness level?
Perhaps this is joining a gym or fitness class or perhaps this is getting off an extra stop from home/work and doing more walking.

- Am I getting enough sleep?
Think about how you could increase the number of hours sleep you have per night, perhaps going to bed 30mins earlier or improving your bedtime routine so you can fall asleep quickly.
- Is my work and life in balance?
Consider how you can create more space for the important people in your life and get more enjoyment from life, even just making sure work calls and emails stay at work.

Action:

Initially focus on improving one of the areas listed and notice the difference in your physical health and the link to the strength of your inner coach.

Make a schedule for addressing the other areas of your health that need attention.

4.4 EXPRESS YOUR CREATIVITY

Being creative can decrease negative emotions, reduce stress and anxiety, and improve your health. All things that will be useful in nourishing your inner coach.

4.4.1 WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

Many experts believe that creativity has something to do with the ability to come up with new ideas, new links between ideas and new solutions to problems, and research suggests that creative people are actually happier than others. According to creativity researcher Dr Shelley Carson “Increases in positive mood broaden attention and allow us to see more possible solutions to creative problems.”

Experts also believe that anyone can be creative you just need an open mind.

If you suppress your creativity because you feel inhibited or that you might get it ‘wrong’ then you are missing the chance to engage in an outlet from our 24/7, always connected and on demand society.

By engaging in our creative side we can become absorbed, meditative and enjoy the process, whether it’s cooking, writing, painting, photography, crafting or problem solving. This absorption will help us to recharge and ‘switch off’, allowing our inner coach time to engage with the positive experience.

Actions:

Choose a creative project – don't worry about how good it will be, it's only for your pleasure.

Engage the right side of your brain more by challenging yourself to take a creative rather than logical approach to problem solving. Ask yourself “how can I think about this differently?”

Engage in word games or enrol on an improvisation class to use your brain differently

4.5 TRUST YOURSELF AND YOUR INTUITION

“Follow your instincts. That's where true wisdom manifests itself.”

Oprah Winfrey

Your inner coach is inexplicably linked to your intuition and your gut instinct. When you trust your gut instinct you are often making a wise decision about what to do next. It is when we listen instead to others or our ego, and know we are going against our intuition that we often make decisions or take actions we then regret.

According to Dr Deepak Chopra, a neuro endocrinologist and alternative medicine advocate, gut feelings are something that truly happens in your stomach. He says ‘If you say ‘I have a gut feeling about such and such’ you're not speaking metaphorically, you're speaking literally. Your gut makes the same chemicals that your brain makes when it thinks.’ He goes on to explain that the nervous system in your gut doesn't have the ability to doubt itself, it doesn't have an inner critic and therefore the information you receive from it is in a much purer form.

4.5.1 CREATING SPACE TO LISTEN

Give yourself space to listen to your intuition and your inner coach. Sometimes this might be about leaving your desk or a meeting to get a change of scene or some fresh air. If you can take a long walk, do some meditation or indulge in simple people watching to allow your intuition to surface.

Free flow writing can help to allow your intuition and your voice to emerge.

4.5.2 BE HONEST

When you are ignoring your intuition and your coach, perhaps because you still fear failure, be honest and explore why you don't want to listen. Consider what is being triggered and take time to think how you might manage it.

Action:

Thinking about decisions you have made over the last month, notice where you listened to your intuition and where you didn't.

Observe the outcomes to both and think about what you might do differently next time.

Consider what role your inner coach could play.

Exercise 1:

Review your answers to the actions in this chapter. What do you notice about them?

<p><i>My reflections on my answers are...</i></p>

Exercise 2:

<p>What ideas do you have to nourish your inner coach and yourself?</p>
<p><i>My ideas...</i></p>
<p>Write a plan to put them into action</p>

CONCLUSION

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be?"

Marianne Williamson

The development of your inner coach is a long term process and commitment. It is not something you can dabble with, the neuroscience has already shown us that we are programmed to worry and focus on the negative, so focussing on the positive is about retraining our brains and making new habits.

The prize is worth having though as the benefits show:

- Developing in your career
- Positive mental health
- Engagement with learning and growth
- Management of anxiety and fear
- Fulfilling your potential
- Having positive relationships
- Feeling confident
- Having good self-esteem and self-belief

I wish you all the success in developing your inner coach – you won't regret it!

Best wishes

Sarah

Sarah Archer
Career Coach,
CareerTree

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