

# Inner Critic modes and therapists

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Many of us are aware of an inner voice that comments about our performance as a therapist as well as during our daily life. It's not uncommon for therapists to believe their inner critic is necessary for a variety of reasons, with many stating they need their inner critic for motivation for high standards, staying on task or being a moral person.

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Despite what some therapists see as the helpfulness or necessity of their critic, the problem is that the critic is often the very thing that makes it hard for us to get our needs met and thrive as a therapist. It keeps us stuck in old self-defeating patterns and can be responsible for intense feelings of shame.

In schema therapy, the critic is viewed as a part of us that is like an echo of a voice from childhood, most often a parent but can also be contributed to by repeated negative childhood experiences such as bullying. The critic often holds critical or negative messages received in childhood and plays them on repeat. It is not seen to be an authentic part of your true self.

Critic messages are repetitive as critic parts rarely have any depth or flexibility.

## Inner critics also come in types:

- **demanding,**
- **punitive &**
- **guilt-inducing**

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# The demanding critic

The type of critic sets high expectations for you and a high level of responsibility towards others. It creates a constant sense of pressure for you and others to perform. It is often associated with the self-sacrifice and unrelenting standards schema.

*The demanding critics shows up with messages that you are not doing enough in session, you don't prepare enough, it looks for tiny imperfections in how you respond, expects others to judge small imperfections or normal errors harshly. It says you can always do better and is a common contributor to burnout in therapists.*

## The remedy:

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Use your own internal "good parent" to guide you and help you have fun and relax. Replace unrelenting messages, with kind and fair internal self talk such as:

*"I am allowed to live life in balance, I am good enough, I do a good job to a high standard and that is more than enough"*

*"All humans are imperfect, it isn't fair to hold myself to perfection. I deserve time to relax and enjoy things. I deserve to protect myself from the wear and tear of constant internal pressure. I am an adult now. I can choose my own standards rather than live to my parents hypercritical standards"*

Work on the schemas that relate to the demanding critic. Underneath unrelenting standards and self-sacrifice schema there is a driving schema from the attachment and/ or autonomy domain of unmet core needs.



## The punitive critic

This critic part restricts, criticises or punishes the self or others. It has messages such as I'm bad, worthless or unlovable and is associated with deep feelings of shame. In therapists it is often associated with the subjugation, punitiveness, defectiveness schemas,

*This critic shows up with messages that shame the therapist. The therapist may feel unworthy and have thoughts that the client should work with someone else who is better. Therapists may be afraid the client will judge them as bad or wrong. Strong coping modes may develop in order to avoid this type of critic.*

### The remedy:

Use your own internal "good parent" to support, value and nurture you. Work on eliminating or significantly reducing punitive messages and replacing with caring, supportive and validating messages.

*"I am a good person and my clients like working with me"*

*"I am just as valuable as other therapists"*

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*"I deserve to think well of myself"*

*"I don't believe the message of my punitive critic. I am grown now and know that those messages belong in the past"*

Work on the schemas that relate to the punitive critic.

Developing a stronger caring and nurturing internal "good parent" in therapy may also be required.



## The guilt-inducing critic

This critic part tells you that you are selfish for putting your needs first and that others cannot ever be let down. It has often developed as the result of being required to take care of a parent's needs as a child or through religious teachings. As its name suggests, if you have this type of critic, you will experience feelings of excessive guilt or feel guilty in a lot of situations that others do not. It is often associated with the enmeshment, subjugation and self-sacrifice schemas

*Therapist feels excessively guilty for putting in boundaries, does not hold clients to session time, gives a lot of time out of session, may feels guilt for priveledged life compared to clients. This critic says "you should give more, your needs don't matter, you are being selfish if you feel resentful or won't give them what they ask for"*

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### **The remedy:**

Use your own internal "good parent" that promotes your needs and values you. Use it to challenge unhelpful messages about the needs of others being more important than your own, over the top messages about selfishness and helps support you putting in boundaries with people.

*"I matter, my needs matter"*

*"Taking care of myself is important.. I can care about others"*

*"It's not fair that my critic makes me feel guilty for normal human needs"*

*"I am allowed to live life in balance, I am good enough as I am. I don't need to care for others to prove my value or be accepted."*

Work on the schemas that relate to the guilt-inducing critic.

Developing a stronger internal "good parent" in therapy may also be required.



***Each type of critic voice creates its own kind of distress and problems for therapists .***

***It's important to reduce our inner critic/s and replace with self-compassion.***

***Our vulnerable part is always listening and will absorb and feel the pain of the critic's messages.***

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***Just like your clients you deserve kindness and fair guidance, not criticism.***

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