

*understanding your  
inner critic*

A Reflection Journal

SIMPLY BEING THERAPY



BEFORE WE BEGIN

# Welcome

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This is a shorter version of Understanding Your Inner Critic — the same reflections and exercises, without the extended reading. Choose one recent situation where you were especially hard on yourself, and return to it throughout each page's short setup and prompts.

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SIMPLY BEING THERAPY

## CHAPTER 1

# Meeting Your Inner Critic

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Most of us carry a harsh inner voice. Bring one real, recent situation to mind, and notice what that voice said and how it felt to hear it.

## WORKBOOK

## MEETING YOUR INNER CRITIC

## 1 Bring one situation to mind.

*Choose a recent moment when you were especially hard on yourself. You'll return to this same situation throughout the workbook, so pick something specific and real.*

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## 2 What did your inner critic actually say?

*Try to recall its exact words, as closely as you can.*

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## 3 What tone did it use?

*Circle all that apply.*

Harsh · Cold · Panicked · Disappointed · Exhausted · Mocking · Flat · Urgent · Familiar

## 4 Circle the emotions you noticed in that moment.

Shame · Anger · Fear · Sadness · Numbness · Anxiety · Relief · Loneliness · Embarrassment

## 5 Rate how intense the experience felt.

*Mild* 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 *Overwhelming*

## 6 Where did you notice it in your body, if anywhere?

Chest    Throat    Stomach    Shoulders    Jaw    Hands    Not sure

## 7 If your inner critic had a job title, what would it be?

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## 8 What do you notice now, just from having written this down?

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## CHAPTER 2

# What Is This Part Trying to Protect?

This voice may be trying to protect you — from failure or old wounds — using the only strategy it's ever known. Let's look at what it's guarding against.

## WORKBOOK

## WHAT IS THIS PART TRYING TO PROTECT?

### 1 Return to your situation.

*In one sentence, remind yourself what happened.*

### 2 What do you think this part was trying to protect you from?

*Circle any that fit; add your own.*

Embarrassment · Rejection · Failing publicly · Disappointing someone ·  
Being “found out” · Getting hurt again · Losing control

### 3 If this part could talk about its intentions, not just its insults, what might it say?

*Example: “If I don't say it first, someone else will say it worse.”*

### 4 Has this part ever actually helped you — even if the method was harsh?

Yes  No  Not sure

*If yes, how?*

### 5 What is this strategy costing you now?



### 6 Complete this sentence:

“I think this part is trying to keep me safe from \_\_\_\_\_,  
and it's using \_\_\_\_\_ to do it.”

## CHAPTER 3

# Where Did This Voice Learn Its Job?

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This voice was learned, not born. Listen for whose voice it echoes, and what it was taught to believe.

## WORKBOOK

## WHERE DID THIS VOICE LEARN ITS JOB?

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### 1 Whose voice does your inner critic resemble?

*A parent, teacher, sibling, culture, or “no one in particular” are all valid answers.*

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### 2 What did you learn, growing up, about each of these?

*Jot a word or short phrase for each.*

Mistakes: \_\_\_\_\_

Emotions: \_\_\_\_\_

Asking for help: \_\_\_\_\_

Achievement: \_\_\_\_\_

Your worth, in general: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3 Which of these messages do you still hear echoed in your inner critic today?

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### 4 Rate how strongly this voice resembles a specific person from your past.

*Not at all 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 Almost exactly*

### 5 If this belief was taught rather than simply true, what might that change?

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## CHAPTER 4

# Listening to Your Body

The inner critic shows up in the body, too — tension, tightness, a racing heart. Grounding and breath can help you notice it, and settle.

## WORKBOOK

## LISTENING TO YOUR BODY

## 1 Return to your situation once more.

*Close your eyes if that's comfortable, and notice: where did you feel it first, in your body?*

## 2 Describe the sensation, if you can.

*Circle any that fit.*

Tight · Hot · Cold · Heavy · Fluttery · Numb · Tingling · Shaky · Frozen

## 3 Try this now:

*Place both feet flat on the floor. Notice the contact. Slowly look around the room and name three things you see.*

## 4 Take four slow breaths, making the exhale slightly longer than the inhale.

*What do you notice now, compared to before?*

## 5 Rate your body's sense of alarm right now, in this moment.

*Calm 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10 On high alert*

## 6 What helps you feel even slightly more grounded, in general?

Feet on the floor    Slower breathing    Cold water    Movement    A specific person's voice    Naming what I see



*Circle what's present. More than one is okay.*

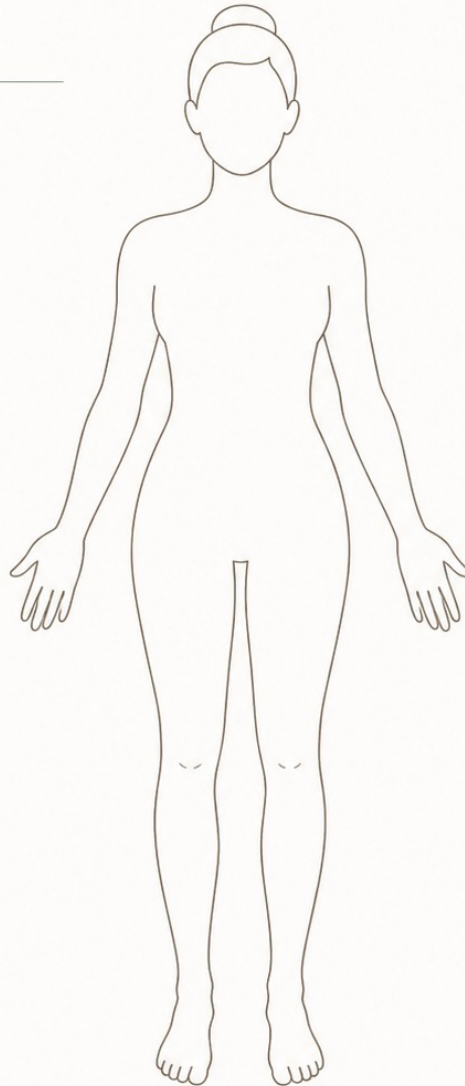
## WORKBOOK

# Body Map

Our inner critic lives in the body. It shows up as tension, tightness, pressure, heat, or discomfort. This map helps you notice where you experience self-criticism so you can respond with compassion and care.

## How to Use This Map

- 1 Close your eyes and take a few slow breaths.
- 2 Notice where you feel sensations in your body when self-criticism shows up.
- 3 Use the legend (right) to mark the areas on the body map that match what you feel.
- 4 You can use more than one color.
- 5 Notice any patterns. Is there a place you feel it most often?



### Therapist's Reflection

Encourage curiosity and kindness. The goal is not to change anything right now, but simply to notice.

### LEGEND

Use these colors or choose your own.

- Tension**  
(tight, clenched, on guard)
- Pressure**  
(heavy, pushing, overwhelming)
- Heat**  
(hot, burning, agitated)
- Numbness**  
(empty, flat, disconnected)
- Other**



### Reflection

What do you notice about where you hold self-criticism in your body?

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### Compassionate Reminder

Your body is not the problem. It is trying to protect you. Noticing is the first step toward healing.

♥ You are not too much. You are not alone. You are becoming more you.

## CHAPTER 5

# Another Voice Is Possible

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A kinder voice can exist alongside the critical one — not to replace it, but to offer another perspective.

## WORKBOOK

## ANOTHER VOICE IS POSSIBLE

## 1 Picture someone you deeply love in your exact situation.

*What would you say to them? Write it as if speaking directly to them.*

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## 2 Now read what you wrote as if it were meant for you.

*What do you notice?*

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## 3 What makes it difficult to offer yourself those same words?

*Circle any that fit.*

Feels indulgent · Feels untrue · Feels unfamiliar · Afraid I'll stop trying ·  
Don't feel deserving

## 4 Common humanity check:

*Is there anyone else, anywhere, who has ever felt this same way in a similar moment?*

Yes, definitely    Probably    Hard to imagine right now

## 5 Try writing one sentence of self-kindness in your own natural voice.

*Not a script — just something true and gentle.*

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## 6 Rate how believable that sentence felt as you wrote it.

*Not believable at all*   **1** — **2** — **3** — **4** — **5**   *Fully believable*

## CHAPTER 6

# Carrying It Forward

Return to where you started, and notice what's shifted. Change tends to happen gradually, not all at once.

## WORKBOOK

## CARRYING IT FORWARD

## 1 Return to the original situation, one final time.

*What has changed about your understanding of it, if anything?*

## 2 Which idea from this workbook felt most true or useful to you?

*Circle one, or write your own.*

This is a protective part · It learned its job somewhere · My body knows before my mind does · A kinder voice is possible · Change is gradual

## 3 What would you like to remember about this part, going forward?

## 4 What's one small, sustainable practice you could return to when the critic shows up?

Naming it ("There it is")    Asking what it's afraid of    Grounding through breath or the senses    Asking what I'd say to someone I love

## 5 Rate how supported you'd feel trying this practice on your own, right now.

Not very **1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5** Quite supported

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Did the critic show up?							
Intensity (1-5)							
What helped, even a little?							

### READY TO TALK TO SOMEONE?

*If this brought up more than you expected, Simply Being Therapy offers free consultations for new clients. [simplybeingtherapy.com](http://simplybeingtherapy.com) or 615-601-1182.*

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