

THE RED CHALLENGER

Living in the Now

Lesson Four

THE SECOND LAYER

YOUR THOUGHTS – SELF JUDGEMENTS

Welcome back. We are now ready to explore the second layer of thoughts on your map your Self Judgements. Let's dive in.

SELF-JUDGEMENTS AND THE VOICE OF THE INNER CRITIC

As you follow your natural evolution, it is common to experience fear and judgement. As you grow, you begin to follow your heart's path, learn to speak up for yourself, and develop the capacity to make honest choices about what is true for you. However, whenever you dare to step into the territory of following your heart, you meet an internal force that tries to stop you. You meet the voice of judgement or the inner critic. The inner critic was born out of all the times you were made wrong, ostracized, punished, or stood up for yourself. It is the voice of the reprimanding parent that tries to make you fit in so that you won't get into trouble. Like all the other defensive strategies, the voice of judgement tends to fade into the background just below your conscious awareness. It becomes the voice of right and wrong within you and for many never gets recognised let alone questioned.

The inner critic usually arrives as you venture out of your comfort zone, when you are invited to expand beyond your current view of reality. It can come up when you are moved to take care of yourself, when you feel the desire to make more money, or expand your horizons and try something new and exciting.

Another important aspect of the voice of the inner critic is that it is very happy to attack and judge other people. In fact for many people, the inner critic spends more time criticising other people than it does criticising you. We just have to look at the amount of critical feedback on social media to see how judgemental we can all be!

This voice will steal away the present moment faster than almost any other aspect on the map. It can be a 'thief of the night' that will have you sobbing into your pillow in an instant, or a seemingly constant companion that never lets up with it's criticism and negativity! Learning to hear this voice is extremely important if you are going to live in the now, and this will be the focus of our inquiry at the end of this lesson, but let us take a quick look at some of the ways this voice speaks to you.

THE SECOND LAYER: YOUR THOUGHTS – SELF JUDGEMENTS

There are three broad ‘themes’ that the inner critic finds most effective when it comes to stealing your energy and taking you away from the present moment. These three themes are written on your map and are:

- I am not enough or good enough (or someone you know is not good enough or enough).
- I am not lovable or likeable (or someone you know is not likeable or lovable).
- I am not safe or certain.

To help you hear the voice of the inner critic in action, it is useful to be aware of some of the things it ‘says’ under each theme. Tick the ones that feel familiar to you and please feel free to add your own!

To convince you that you are not enough or good enough, your inner critic will ‘say’ things like

- You are inadequate
- You are pathetic
- You are weak
- You are ugly/fat/old
- You are stupid
- You don’t matter
- Who do you think you are

To convince you that you are not lovable or likeable, your inner critic will ‘say’ things like

- You are not popular
- You are not liked
- No-one loves you
- You are not welcome
- You do not belong
- You are different
- You are unlovable

To convince you that you are not safe or certain, your inner critic will ‘say’ things like

- You are trapped
- You are not strong You will be overwhelmed
- You are unsupported
- You have to cope alone
- You’d better play it safe
- You’d better play it small

It does not take much imagination to recognise how these thoughts take you away from the present moment! These thoughts produce mental noise and clutter, close off your heart, and make you feel off centre in your body by creating feelings like fear, shame and anger.

Understanding the voice judgement is the work of your exercise and the subject of your meditation in this lesson. When you feel ready please move on to exercise three.

EXERCISE

As you allow your gaze to settle on the layer of the inner critic, think of an example of when your inner critic has been active recently. Maybe first thing in the morning as you looked in the mirror, maybe when you did something new at work, maybe even in your relationship. Bring your awareness to the voice of the inner critic, pay attention to the attacking, sarcastic, or superior quality of this voice. Notice the reactions and resistance this voice creates inside you, feel the ups and downs it creates and how little space it allows. Notice the energy it consumes from you and notice how it takes you away from the present moment.

When working with the inner critic we really do need to ensure we remain fully in mindful awareness. This form of unconditional acceptance and love for ourselves is essential to quieten this voice. THIS VOICE NEEDS YOUR LOVING AWARENESS MORE THAN ANY OTHER ASPECT OF YOUR BEING.

When you are ready ask yourself

'In what way does the voice of my inner critic ensure I flee the present moment?'

Does it clutter my mind with lots of thoughts?

Close my heart and make me unavailable to others?

Mean I lose contact with my body?

(Remember anytime you are not feeling clear, open and grounded you are avoiding or fleeing the present moment)

You may not always find these questions easy to answer because the voice of your inner critic has become so normalised. It is important that you stay open and curious and not judge what arises, because that would be the inner critic getting involved in the inquiry! If it does get involved simply and unconditionally pay it the same quality of attention as you would a crying baby...nothing to do, simply hold the space.

You can spend a long time on this aspect of the map! I still work on this to this day. So my suggestion is to do this exercise for a couple of weeks and then move on. You can (and will) revisit it as part of the last session when I will give you an exercise that puts everything together.

If you are struggling listen to the guided meditation called 'Your Thoughts' it will support you with this inquiry.