Radical Gentleness

Healing Your Relationship with Your Inner Critic

by

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No matter what kind of inner work people do, they always encounter an experience that can be called the Inner Critic. This is often (but not always) a voice, often (but not always) harsh and attacking, that often seems to come when the person is close to some positive new steps, or touching on an inner vulnerability. This heartless Inner Critic seems to delight in crushing the small, the tender, the positive. Aspects of ourselves that might have bloomed into what they needed to be, instead are crushed and go into hiding.

Obviously this is a sad state of affairs. But there are no true villains or victims here. Everybody inside is doing their best to help us... as we will see...

The Radical Gentleness CD-set is a recording of a 5-week course on working with your Inner Critic. You may find it helpful to take a few minute to sit down and get settled in your body before you start to listen to each CD. Taking these moments to settle in will help you transition from the rest of your day into a space for deep listening and will help you get the most out of the processes I’ll be sharing with you as we go along.

Format

Each CD offers two guided Focusing exercises, a short one and a long one. We’ll begin with the short one and then discussion by the group who originally participated in the recording of this course. Next, there will be some teaching on the main topic for that CD session. Following the teaching, you’ll hear the longer Focusing exercise. And finally, the sharing among the orginal group participants about what came in that longer session, including any questions that arose. We hope that you find the exercises, didactic material and sharing of the recorded participants in the class enlightening as you journey toward being more gentle with yourself in your day-to-day life.

After Each CD

We recommend that you repeat the longer exercise from the CD again before moving on to the next CD in the set. The essential points of each exercise are in this workbook so you can set your own pace the second time or re-listen to the recorded exercise.
How to Get the Most Out of Focusing Exercises

If you’re used to Focusing alone or one-to-one with a partner or guide, it can be more difficult in some ways to do Focusing as part of a guided process. The instructions may come at a different speed, faster or slower, than you need them. There can also be a sense of being easily distracted or having more difficulty staying in the process. This is natural!

Here are some tips that can help:

1. Remember that you are an active participant. Rather than just letting the words you’re hearing float by, think of them as suggestions for something to do. You are taking inner actions, such as moving your awareness through your body, inviting something, etc.

2. Imagine that I am speaking directly to you. Visualize me sitting across from you, like a Focusing partner.

3. Feel free to go at your own pace if you need to go faster or slower than the verbal instructions. You can push the pause button if you need more time. Let your inner process guide you.

4. If you are aware of something distracting you, be sure to acknowledge that rather than trying to push it away. What we push away gets stronger!

5. It may help you to follow along on the workbook, and maybe even make some brief notes as you go along. Some people find that the act of writing briefly while Focusing can help concentration.
CD One: Encountering the Inner Criticizing Process

Exercise One:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are some of your inner criticizing experiences?</th>
<th>And what are some of the ways you react to them?</th>
<th>What are areas of your life where you encounter feelings of being wrong, inadequate, ashamed, and/or voices of blame inside?</th>
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Topic for this Week:
Three Secrets to Turning Around Our Experience of Inner Critics

1. The one who criticizes is afraid (worried, concerned)
2. The one who criticizes is nearly powerless
3. The one who criticizes is not criticizing you (you are not the target)
Exercise Two: Turning toward the criticizing one

For this exercise, let’s see if we can invite or evoke one of your typical inner criticizing experiences.

This is the longer guided exercise for session, and the one you are invited to repeat again before moving on to the next CD. You may want to use the space below to write what comes, either during or after the exercise.

› Bringing awareness into the body. Sensing how it feels right now.

› If you are feeling uncomfortable, saying to that, “Hello, I know you’re there.”

› Inviting the area of your life where you often feel under “critic attack.” Perhaps there is an action or an assertion that you often feel criticized for. You could picture it or repeat it now, and notice what comes.

› We are open to noticing any manifestation of an inner criticizing process, from a contraction in the body to a voice in the head.

Noticing how that comes.

› Notice what “it” feels or looks like, or what it says, how it manifests to you right now. Even if you can’t see it or feel it, you can still talk to it.

› Despite how you usually react, today turn toward the criticizer with interested curiosity. “Ah, there you are! I’d like to get to know you better.”

› Notice what happens.
› Say to it: “Might you be worried about something?” Or “concerned about something?”

› Notice if there’s another part of you that reacts to the criticism, that feels upset or angry or small or weak in the face of that criticizing.

› Acknowledge that as well.

› Just take some time to hold both in a gentle spaciousness, where there is enough room for all.

› You might invite the criticizing part to let you know what it is worried about – with feelings, images, or words.

› Remembering that you are here – feeling your large self, supported by the chair, able to be with whatever comes.

› Before stopping, just acknowledge what is here for you now.

› Coming to a gentle completion
Let’s explore the experience of Self-in-Presence, the ability to hold every aspect of our own inner experience in acceptance and interested curiosity.

Presence is the ability to be with whatever arises in us, without choosing or judging. It is in the gentle and accepting atmosphere of Presence that true change can occur.

The opposite of Presence is being reactive. There are many forms of reactivity: getting scared, trying to solve or fix, escaping, getting angry, getting sleepy. All of these can be described as parts of us, or “partial selves.”

A part that criticizes is one type of reactive part, a type we call a “Protector.”

A part that reacts to being criticized is another type of reactive part, which we call a “Defender.” Later we will learn more about these reactive partial-selves.

Being identified with a reactive partial-self feels quite different from being Self-in-Presence. It can feel narrow, small, heavy, sad, angry... (what other words come for you?)

Moving into Presence is like moving into spaciousness, moving into a wider perspective, having the feelings and the reactions to the feelings without being caught in them.

We’ll support our ability to be Self-in-Presence by:

› feeling the solid, grounded support of our whole body
› sensing and acknowledging exactly how we are feeling
› bringing a gentle hand to the place where we are feeling something, or to the heart

Being Self-in-Presence is key to the experience of radical gentleness ... and it’s not necessarily easy! So we’ll be returning to it over and over all through this course.
Exercise Three: Turning Toward what Needs Gentleness

Any part of us that doesn’t feel like Presence is a part that needs Presence.

Any part of us that isn’t gentle is a part that needs gentleness, compassion, acceptance.

Let’s do an exercise where we practice turning toward the parts of us that are impatient, angry, in pain, reluctant, refusing, harsh, unhappy, afraid... and simply say hello.

Play the exercise on the CD now...
This is a place to reflect afterward on how it was.

› Take some time to notice how it was to do this exercise.

› Notice how you might be feeling now that’s different from how you were feeling before we started.

› You might want to be aware of something that surprised you, that wasn’t what you expected.

› Notice if there is something in you that found it difficult to do some part of this exercise.... and notice if it’s possible to just acknowledge that.

› You might want to be aware if there is something that feels unfinished, and would like more time and company.
Presence Language (Especially for Radical Gentleness)

Presence Language is a way of speaking that supports Presence. These simple phrases remind us that we can identify with Presence, and be with anything in us that is not Presence.

Presence Language can be especially important when we are learning to be gentle to ourselves.

There are just two phrases to remember:

“I’m sensing...” (or “I’m aware of...”)  
AND  
“...something in me...”

Criticizing parts often use pejorative labels like “stupid,” “inadequate,” “selfish,” etc. They do this for the same reason that people do it: in an attempt to influence behavior. (There may be other reasons, but that is an important one.)

When a part of you uses a LABEL, rephrase it with the word “says” or “calls,” as in the examples below. Notice what feels different as you say each sentence to yourself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example One</th>
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<th>Example Two</th>
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<th>Example Three</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. “This is stupid.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>B. “I feel inadequate.”</td>
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<td>A. “I should have known.”</td>
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<td>B. “Something in me says this is stupid.”</td>
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<td>B. “Something in me calls me inadequate.”</td>
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<td>B. “Something in me says I should have known.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>C. “I’m sensing something in me that says this is stupid.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>C. “I’m sensing something in me that says I should have known.”</td>
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</table>

Example Four

A. ____________________________
   (your own critic sentence)
B. “Something in me ____________________________”
C. “I’m sensing something in me that ____________________________”
Exercise Four: Turning toward the Criticized One

This is the longer guided exercise for this CD, and the one you are invited to repeat again before moving on. You may want to use the spaces below to write what comes, either during or after the exercise.

When being criticized feels bad, either from inside or from outside, we have the opportunity to turn toward something in us (a part) that feels criticized, and has all the other feelings that come from that. In this exercise, remember an area of your life where inner criticism often occurs, and invite the part of you that feels criticized to have its turn at being felt and heard.

› Bringing awareness into the body

› Taking time to remember an area of life where you often feel criticized, inadequate, wrong, or there’s a sense of impatience or "not good enough."

› Use Presence Language to describe what that inner criticizer is doing or saying: “I’m sensing something in me that says __________,” or “that calls me______.” And say Hello to that part of you.

› This time we are going to invite the criticized one, the part of you that reacts to being criticized. We are inviting something in you that feels the impact of being criticized, perhaps feeling heavy, small, worried, sad....

So invite it, and wait.... Noticing how it feels in your body. This type of part is often quite visceral. Take some time to get to know how it feels.

› Describe it freshly, how you are feeling it right now. Say: “I am sensing __________.”

› Approach it gently, and invite a sense of what kind of contact it would like from you right now. How IT would like YOU to be with IT.
› Notice if you’d like to continue to describe what it feels like. Notice what descriptions help you be with it.

› Take your time to just be with it, to sit with it, to keep it company.

› Sense for ITS emotion, its mood, its point of view. And let it know you hear it.

› It’s likely that this is a part of you that often feels like “you.” Refresh your sense of Self-in-Presence by feeling your whole body, perhaps moving and stretching so you can sense your body-frame. Take some time to sense your body’s contact on the floor and the chair. Then say to the criticized one inside: “Yes I know you’re there, and I’m with you.”

› You might let a gentle hand go there.

› Be its listener, in case there’s something it wants to let you know or show you.

› Notice how that feels in your body.

› Coming to a gentle completion.
Exercise Five: What it’s like to not feel criticized.

We make mistakes. We goof. We do things we later regret. But none of that has to feel like our very worth as a person is being questioned. It’s possible to acknowledge mistakes and still feel fine about one’s essential self.

Let’s do an exercise in which we take time to sense:

- the difference between “criticism” and “feedback”
- the difference between “I failed” and “that didn’t work”
- the difference between “I’m bad” and “I made a mistake”

Play the exercise on the CD now...

After the exercise:

Did you get a glimpse of what it would be like to live your life without inner or outer criticism?

Perhaps you also got in touch with a part of you that can’t stand anything less than perfection... and could sense the pain and terror it feels. (We’ll come back to it later.)

The Criticizing Part is Afraid (Worried... Concerned...)

Once we can be Self-in-Presence with a part of us that is criticizing, we can turn toward it with interested curiosity and find out more about it. Ideally, from Presence we can feel compassion and warm interest in this part of us that feels so strongly about something. But this can be difficult with an attacking, controlling part, because there is often another part of us that fears it and is angry with it for its tyranny.

There is a powerful shortcut to being able to feel empathy and compassion for an inner criticizing part: Knowing that the criticizing part is afraid. Of course it is, or it wouldn’t be behaving this way! There’s something it’s worried about, something it’s afraid will happen if you don’t listen to it very very carefully.
Make a list of the typical things that the critical part says, especially what seem to be predictions about the future:
(for example)

“You’ll never succeed.”
“I’ll always be alone.”
“We’ll mess this up.”

In the case of “future predictions of doom,” try putting the words “I’m worried that” in front of them:
(for example)

“I’m worried that you’ll never succeed.”
“I’m worried that I’ll always be alone.”
“I’m worried that we’ll mess this up.”

Another type of inner criticizing remark is about what you should or shouldn’t do:
(for example)

“You should try harder.”
“I shouldn’t be so emotional.”
“We just need to get over it.”

These can also be seen as expressions of worry—of what will happen if you don’t follow the advice.

“I’m worried what will happen if you don’t try harder.”
“I’m worried what will happen if I don’t stop being so emotional.”
“I’m worried what will happen if we don’t get over it.”

Finally, there are the times when a criticizing-type of part shows you frightening images, of houses on fire or car crashes for example.

Try starting a sentence with “It’s showing me ________________” and understanding that what it shows you is what it doesn’t want to have happen, not what it wants.

What the Criticizing Part of you is Not Wanting to Have Happen to You

After sensing the worry or concern, it’s very natural to move on the sensing what this part of you is worried about—what it is not wanting to have happen to you.

Sometimes what it’s not wanting is for you to be criticized by others.

Sometimes it doesn’t want something from the past to happen again.
Exercise Six: Getting to Know What the One Who Criticizes is Not Wanting

This is the longer guided exercise for this CD, and the one you are invited to repeat again before moving on. You may want to use the spaces below to write what comes, either during or after the exercise.

› Bringing awareness into the body.

› Inviting an area of your life where you often feel under “critic attack.” Perhaps there is an action or an assertion that you often feel criticized for. You could picture it or repeat it now, and notice what comes.

› If you feel something in you feeling criticized – small, beaten up, resentful, collapsing – say Hello to it, and then look around for the part that is criticizing it.

Noticing how that comes. We are open to noticing any manifestation of an inner criticizing process, from a contraction in the body to a voice in the head.

› Maybe just say Hello to it – even if it seems to be hiding.

› Turn toward the criticizer with interested curiosity. “Might you be worried? It sounds like you might be worried.”

Take some time to sense that it is worried or concerned. It doesn’t have to say anything to you (though it might). You can sense it with your empathic ability.

› Sense what it is worried will happen to you if you don’t follow its advice or let it control you.

› Sense or invite it to let you know what it is not wanting to have happen to you. There’s something it’s worried will happen, perhaps something that happened in the past that it is worried will happen again. Take some time to sense, either vaguely or specifically, what that is.
› Let it know you hear it.

› Compassionately invite a sense of what is under that: what it is trying to prevent or avoid or protect you from, that would happen if THAT happened.

› And again, let it know you hear it.

› Notice if your awareness of this part of you has changed now that you sense it trying to protect you from some unpleasant or uncomfortable outcome.

› You may even have a sense of what felt experience it is trying to protect you from having to feel.

› Notice if you are beginning to have a sense of what it DOES want for you, what it wants for you to be able to go through or feel or experience.

› There may even be an enjoyable body experience as this part of you shows you what positive experience it has been trying to help you feel. If so, let it be there as fully as it wants to be.

› Take time to acknowledge all that has come, and if there is a sense of more company or attention needed, let it know you’ll be back.

› Coming to a gentle completion.
Exercise Seven: Self-in-Presence with Criticizer and Criticized

Our first exercise lets us practice cultivating Self-in-Presence by holding a large space for all the parts, including parts of us that are criticizing (and therefore worried, anxious, powerless, frustrated, impatient, etc) and also parts of us that are reacting to the criticism (by feeling bad, low, small, resentful, angry, rebellious, etc). In this shorter exercise we will acknowledge what is here, whatever is here, and sense the quality of the larger Self right now.

Play the exercise on the CD now...

A space to record what you were aware of:

The Controlling/Reacting Pattern...

What we have realized by now is that a criticizing part is behaving out of a desperate need for control, and therefore out of fear. Amazingly, this fearsome part of us is actually a part that feels itself to be powerless. It’s like the moment in The Wizard of Oz, when we realize that the great and terrible Oz is really just a little old man behind a curtain.
**Controlling**
When a part of us feels desperate for some kind of change, and at the same time feels helpless ("has its hands tied"), it may resort to trying to control another part of us through criticizing, attacking, manipulating, etc. We call this type of part a “Protector” because protection is its ultimate goal.

With empathy from Presence, we can understand that this need to control is driven by fear. By empathizing with the fear underneath the controlling, we can begin to help this part to shift and change into true empowerment and life-forward direction.

**Types of Controller**

Protectors can be harsh and attacking (“You’re so dumb.”) or subtle and manipulative (“Don’t you think you could try a little harder?”) They can criticize your actions (“That wasn’t a very smart thing to do”) or undermine your very being (“You’ll never be enough.”) They can even sound helpful, making suggestions for how you could improve. (“Just try a little harder.”) The difference between a Protector and a helpful inner voice is that Protectors believe you have to be changed in order to be OK. And they are driven by fear of what would happen if you didn’t change.

**Reacting**
Whenever there is something in you that is criticizing, there is always another part of you present as well: something in you that is feeling criticized, and reacting to that somehow. That’s right – this isn’t YOU, although it often feels that way! You are not the target.

We call this type of part a “Defender” because it is defensive and also because there is a third part, a wounded small part, that it is actually defending.

**Types of Defender**

**Collapsing:** This is an attitude that says, “You’re right, I am that bad, and I feel so bad about it.” When collapsing, we feel shame, embarrassment, and guilt.

**Rebelling:** From this stance we say, “I am NOT!” “I won’t and you can’t make me!” It often has a stubborn teenager quality about it. The use of addictive behaviors, or the stuck part in action blocks, may be a rebelling part in action.

**Escaping:** This is an attitude of disappearing when under attack. Going blank, forgetting, getting confused, going to sleep... Anything to “get me out of here.” (Use of addictive behaviors may also be an escaping part.)

**Reasoning:** This is an attitude that tries to reason with the Controller, coming back to it with “I couldn’t be stupid, I got A’s in school.” The Reasoner may even use positive affirmations, like “I am enough” or “I am an intelligent loving person.”

Which of these resonate for you?
Exercise Eight: Spending Time with Both Sides

This is the longer guided exercise for this week, and the one you are invited to repeat before moving on. You may want to use the spaces below to write what comes, either during or after the exercise.

› Bringing awareness into the body.

› Inviting something in you that doesn’t accept you completely the way you are, that says you should be different. We welcome it!

› We are open to noticing any manifestation of an inner criticizing process... from a contraction in the body to a voice in the head.

Noticing how that comes.

Taking time. Noticing how that feels in your body, or in relation to your body. This type of part may not be physically felt, may be a voice or a sense of something outside you. That’s OK.

› Acknowledge it. “Yes, I know you’re there – and I know you are worried about something.”

› Now sense for a part of you that is reacting to that criticizing. This one might feel like “you” at first, but it is actually “something in you.” Say: “I am sensing something in me feels ______________.”

› When you become aware of this reacting to criticism part, notice how and where you feel it right now. Sensing what it feels like.

› And you might let it know you know it’s there. You might sense if it would be right to put a gentle hand on the part of your body where you feel it.
› Take some time to refresh your sense of Self-in-Presence—YOU are here, supported, larger than any part, holding it all. You may want to stretch or move your body to feel your body’s structure. You may want to breathe deeply once or twice to experience the spaciousness of your breath.

› As Self-in-Presence, say to both parts, “I know you are here, and I could just stay with both of you, or maybe one of you can have the first turn to be heard.” Wait, and sense if your awareness moves more toward one of the parts. The other one will probably move back out of the way, or may want to stay close to you while you listen to the first one.

› Noticing how you would describe the one you’re sensing now. The most important thing here is to be in contact with how it is, more than can be easily described. Then let any descriptions come from that.

› You will probably be able to sense that there is still more to it, even after the descriptions.

› You might check with it, how IT would like YOU to be with IT. This is another way to check if you are in Presence.

› Take your time to just be with it, to sit with it, with interested curiosity. If you are in Presence you will be genuinely curious!

› Sense for ITS emotion, its mood, its point of view. If it’s a criticizing part, you can guess that it might be worried or concerned. If it’s a criticized part, it’s emotion could be anything. When you sense how it feels, let it know you hear it.

› You might invite it to let you know what it’s NOT WANTING. Listen to it, keep listening. This is not a time for discussion! It needs to feel fully heard for what it’s NOT wanting.

› You might invite it to let you know what it is about that, that it doesn’t like or doesn’t want.
› And you might invite it to let you know if there is some feeling or felt experience that it is NOT WANTING you to have to feel.

› And if it feels ready for another invitation, you might invite it to let you know what it IS wanting. What it wants you to have instead of what it’s worried about. What it wants for you to be able to feel or experience.

› Let it know you hear it... and if this is an enjoyable feeling, take time to feel it in your body.

› Coming to a gentle completion.
Exercise Nine: Moving Around in the World in Self-in-Presence

We’re going to go through a typical day in your life and sense what it’s like to be Self-in-Presence, rather than identified with a criticizing Protector or a reacting Defender.

Start with waking up in the morning. For many of us, morning can be a time of low mood. As you get out of bed, let a gentle hand go to your heart. Try saying something kind to yourself, your heart, your body. It might be something as simple as, “I hope you have a great day.”

As you wash and get dressed and look ahead to your day, if any inner criticizing voices arise, say to them kindly, “Ah, you are worried or concerned about something.” Notice how that makes a difference.

Imagine going forward through your day. You are a learning, curious, interested person, as you encounter your world. If there is an inner criticism, you turn toward it kindly for a moment. “Something you’re worried about? Something you’re not wanting?”

There might be a time when you hear something “negative” from another person about yourself, your work, your appearance, your habits, etc.

Imagine saying to that person: “Thank you for that feedback. I’ll take it into account.” Or, if speaking to the person directly isn’t practical or appropriate, imagine saying internally, “They must be worried about something.”

Notice if it is possible to be interested and curious about what that person was worried about, or
what needs of theirs they were trying to meet.

As you go through your day, if there is something in you that feels something like it needs care, protection, tenderness, see if it’s possible to be with that part of you inside, even as you do whatever else you need to do in your life.

Let’s imagine the end of the day, getting into bed. As you think back over your day, you might put your hand on your heart again, and give yourself thanks and appreciation for being you today.

Theme for this week: Living Forward

Let’s review all that we have learned and begun to practice, and look ahead to incorporating this way of being in daily life.

The essence of what I have to show you about inner criticizing is this:

There is no part of you that wants to hurt you. Every part of you is on your side, trying to help you, trying to save or improve your life or protect you from pain.

In the first class I told you three secrets to the true nature of inner criticizing parts. Here they are again:

Three Secrets to Turning Around Our Experience of Parts that are Criticizing

1. The one who criticizes is afraid (worried, concerned)

Even if it doesn’t seem that way, any part behaving in a critical or controlling way is really concerned or worried about future consequences, where things as they are will lead, and it is worried for you, not wanting something (it feels is) negative to happen to you.

It may also be oriented to something painful that happened in the past, not wanting you to feel the pain of that, or not wanting that to happen again.

2. The one who criticizes is powerless to act in the world

It can’t be you in the world. It doesn’t have the car keys, it’s not in the drivers’ seat. And it is very concerned. Something is really important to it, something matters. YOU matter. (Since it is a part of you.) SO it is concerned, worried, afraid, perhaps even terrified or panicked. The combination of powerlessness and concern slides into inner criticism along the line of least resistance. Only being Self-in-Presence can shift this.

3. The one who criticizes is not criticizing you (you are not the target)

You don’t have to identify with who the criticizing part is talking to. You can say, “One part of me criticizes another part of me.” There is no need to be reactive. If something in you
reacts, you can say Hello to that as well.

Reactive parts of us may collapse, rebel (fight), or escape. Even though some of these responses feel better than others, they all keep us stuck in an endless inner war. This part of us holds or guards past pain, and may be wary, suspicious, untrusting. If we connect with it directly, it may need time in order to trust us, as Self-in-Presence. This time is worth taking.

In time, after a number of Focusing sessions with the Not-Wanting/Wanting process, the criticizing/reacting dynamic begins to shift. Parts of us that are controlling and criticizing right now can relax and begin to bring gifts of discernment and support. Parts that are reacting can feel safer and more trusting, and bring gifts of power and passion to our lives.

**Not-Wanting/Wanting and Crossing**

Every part of us has something positive it wants us to be able to experience, something it wants to contribute to our lives. When the Wanting in a part of us is touched and felt, the living-forward within it begins to carry forward again. Wanting is the living-forward experienced in our bodies. (These insights and methods come from the Treasure Maps to the Soul work that I’ve created with Barbara McGavin.)

But often this positive Wanting is bound up in fears, blocks, anger, and stuck places. There is just as much living-forward energy in such places – but it is “reversed,” expressed negatively instead of positively. Barbara McGavin and I call this “Not-Wanting.” The Not-Wanting is a bridge between where we are right now and the Wanting that connects us with the living-forward energy that is enfolded in a part. For Not-Wanting to turn into Wanting, it needs first to be fully acknowledged, and experienced.

**Relationship first!**
Before you can sense for what a part is Not-Wanting or Wanting, you need to be grounded in Self-in-Presence. It needs to trust you sufficiently so that it can be vulnerable about how it is feeling. This process of trust-building may take some time. You need to be able to sense how it is feeling, its own emotion.

**Going deep into Not-Wanting**
Being Self-in-Presence is key. Impatiently pushing at this point will damage the relationship of trust and respect that we have been patiently building up with our parts. It might also push us into experiences which can overwhelm and even retraumatize.

Let us assume that we are starting with Not-Wanting. There is a series of invitations that progressively go deeper and deeper towards the heart of what something in us has been trying to protect us from – the direct experience of stopped process.
The first invitation
When you have noticed that something is feeling scared, angry, anxious, worried...

› First let it know that you can sense how it is feeling, just as it is.
› Then you can give this part an opportunity to let you know what it is like from its point of view.

If you (Focuser) can sense that it is afraid or anxious or worried you might say something like this:
› “Maybe there’s something you don’t want to happen to me.”

If it’s angry, frustrated, sad, distressed the invitation could be phrased this way:
› “Maybe there’s something happening or something has already happened that you don’t want.”

Here are more invitations. Notice that even though these speak of “wanting,” they are really about what is not-wanted.
› “Maybe there is something you’re wanting to protect me from.”
› “Maybe there is something you want to prevent happening to me.”

With a criticizing part that’s telling you to do something:
› “Maybe there is something you aren’t wanting to have happen if I don’t listen to you.”

With a part that doesn’t want you to do something:
› “Maybe there’s something you’re not wanting me to have to go through if I go ahead and do this.”

Outer world circumstances come first naturally
Usually the responses that come at the beginning (and they might come in words or images), will be about some outer world circumstance. Losing one’s job is an outer world circumstance. So are being rejected, being criticized, being alone... All of these are outer world events and circumstances – not feelings. And this is OK. And we need to go deeper.

Sensing what’s under the first not-wanting
Once a part has responded to your not-wanting invitation, and you have let it know you received that, you can offer it the next invitation:
› “Maybe there’s something you don’t want to happen if _______________happens.”

Moving from circumstances to feelings
Quite naturally there will be a movement towards not-wanted feelings. Usually what is revealed first are the names of not-wanted feelings: overwhelmed, lonely, humiliated, ashamed. This is usually before they are felt in the body. For example:
› “I’m sensing that It doesn’t want me to feel powerless.”

Let it know you hear that... and be open to sensing more.
When Not-Wanting is heard, Wanting follows naturally
You may sense a part’s readiness to show or reveal to you what it wants for you.
  “It’s not wanting me to feel powerless – it’s wanting for me to feel confident and empowered.”

The Wanting may emerge naturally, or it can be invited. If it is invited too soon, it simply won’t come!
  “I’m inviting it to let me know what it does want.”

You can invite the Wanted Feeling:
  › “Maybe there’s something that you want me to be able to feel.”

Symbolizing the Wanted feeling
You need to be able to feel the Wanted feeling in your body to do the next step: symbolizing this experience.
  › Find a phrase, image, gesture, sound, body posture or combination of any of these forms that captures what this experience feels like in your body.
  › Make sure the symbolization really matches.
  › Take all the time you need to get it just right.

Crossing
Gendlin has coined a term, “crossing,” for what happens when two or more experiences come together and blend into something new. They don’t just mush together. Something is created which carries forward the elements within each of them in a unique, new configuration which could not be logically predicted, but in hindsight makes perfect sense. This new experience is more intricate and finely ordered than the original experiences.

Crossing cannot be made to happen; we can only create an environment in which it might happen.

An ideal place to do Crossing is when we have parts which have been in conflict. We can invite the positive Wantings of all the parts to be felt in the body at the same time. All parts of you hold aspects of your essence. When you sense the positive wanting of a part of you, you are connecting directly with the living forward energy contained in that part of you. Here we are creating a space where the positive life-affirming energy of the parts which have been in conflict, can come together and create something new.
Exercise Ten: Not-Wanting, Wanting, and Crossing

There are a lot of steps to this exercise! Please know that if something in you isn’t ready to go into one of these areas, it won’t! And it will probably let you know that by giving you fog, sleepiness, blankness, etc. If that happens, just stay with what came up to that point, or take a half step back to what you sensed just previously. We need to respect the timing of your process. It’s all written out here so you can continue the process later at your own pace.

› Bringing awareness into the body.

› Remembering an area of your life where you often feel under “critic attack.” Perhaps there is an environment or setting where it’s more challenging to feel OK about yourself. You could remember it now... and notice what comes.

› Take some time to invite both sides to come into awareness, as they are right now. This would be a part of you that is criticizing or feeling the need to control what’s happening, and another part that’s reacting to feeling criticized or controlled.

If you can’t find one of the sides at all, acknowledge it anyway, honoring that it is around here “somewhere.” After acknowledging it, invite it into awareness, and notice what happens.

Take your time. Notice how all that feels in your body.

› Take some time to sense both sides. Wait until one or the other is clearly the one that needs to have the first turn to be heard. Let the other one know that you will be back later.

› Notice how you would describe the one you’re being with. The most important thing here is to be in contact with how it is, more than can be easily described. Then let any descriptions come from that.

You will probably be able to sense that there is still more to it, even after the descriptions.

› You might check with it, how IT would like YOU to be with IT. This is another way to check if you are in Presence.
› Take your time to just be with it, to sit with it, with interested curiosity. If you are in Presence you will be genuinely curious!

› Sense for ITS emotion, its mood, its point of view. And let it know you hear it.

› You might invite it to let you know what it’s NOT WANTING to you have to go through. Listen to it, keep listening. This is not a time for discussion! It needs to feel fully heard for what it’s NOT wanting.

› You might invite it to let you know what it’s not wanting to have happen to you if THAT happens.

› And if it feels ready for another invitation, you might invite it to let you know what it IS wanting. What it wants for you to be able to feel or experience.

Let it know you hear it... and if this is an enjoyable feeling, take time to feel it in your body.

› You might invite it to let you know what it is wanting you to feel from feeling THAT.

› And let this be felt in your body as fully as it wants to be felt.

› Take some time to find a symbol that captures this Wanted Feeling. And remember it. You might want to write it down or draw it.

› Now sense if it would be OK to move to the other side, the other part of you. Invite it into your awareness with respect.

› Notice how you would describe it. The most important thing here is to be in contact with how it is, more than can be easily described. Then let any descriptions come from that.
› You will probably be able to sense that there is still more to it, even after the descriptions.

› You might check with it, how IT would like YOU to be with IT.

› Take your time to just be with it, to sit with it, with interested curiosity. If you are in Presence you will be genuinely curious!

› Sense for ITS emotion, its mood, its point of view. And let it know you hear it.

› You might invite it to let you know what it’s NOT WANTING to you have to go through. Listen to it, keep listening. This is not a time for discussion! It needs to feel fully heard for what it’s NOT wanting.

› You might invite it to let you know what it’s not wanting to have happen to you if THAT happens.

› And if it feels ready for another invitation, you might invite it to let you know what it IS wanting. What it wants for you to be able to feel or experience.

Let it know you hear it... and if this is an enjoyable feeling, take time to feel it in your body.

› You might invite it to let you know what it is wanting you to feel from feeling THAT.

› And let this be felt in your body as fully as it wants to be felt.

› Take some time to find a symbol that captures this Wanted Feeling. And remember it. You might want to write it down or draw it.
› Now, if it feels right to go on, invite both Wanted Feelings to be felt in the body at the same time. Wait. Don’t try to force anything, just be open to what arises.

› Notice how you would describe or symbolize the fresh body feeling that comes now.

› Invite a sense of walking around in your life with this feeling. Notice and acknowledge how that feels in your body now.

› Coming to a gentle completion.
Let’s take some time together at the end of our course to gather the gifts we’ve received, and to sense how it feels now to sense forward into the next steps of life.

Do you sense you have a new way to relate when inner criticizing comes?

In what life situations would you especially want to remember this new way?

With which of your life issues do you especially want to remember to be gentle with yourself?

Let’s also acknowledge that this is new learning and it will expand and get stronger with practice.

Maybe you sense something in you that doesn’t feel ready yet to put all we’ve learned into practice... and just acknowledge that.

You might also say “This much I do know,” or “This much I can do,” and feel what comes there.

And give yourself appreciation for all your dedication!