

# Stopping the Cycle of Self-Hatred

## Objective

To eliminate your critical inner voice and break your pattern of self-hatred.

## You Should Know

Do you constantly compare yourself to others, perceive only negative things about yourself, and believe you will never be "good enough?" Do you believe you do not deserve the best that life has to offer?

Self-hatred refers to feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and low self-esteem. Self-hatred affects many aspects of daily living – preventing you from making important decisions, taking risks, connecting with others, and achieving your goals. If you struggle with self-hatred, you probably experience its consequences in many areas of your life.

If you are unsure if you are engaging in patterns of self-hatred, check if you have any of these symptoms:

- **You frequently engage in all-or-nothing thinking.** You see your life as a list of ultimatums, often resulting in catastrophe.
- **You tend to only focus on the negative.** It does not matter how good your day was, all you can think about is what went wrong.
- **You believe a feeling is a fact.** Instead of thinking, "I feel like a loser," you think, "I am a loser."
- **You have low self-esteem.** You do not feel like you are good enough – to have a great job or experience the best opportunities.
- **You use drugs or alcohol to numb negative feelings about yourself.**
- **You consistently punish yourself.** You might sabotage relationships or deprive yourself of what makes you happy.

If any of these statements sound familiar, there is no need to panic. Things might feel hopeless or overwhelming right now, but you can overcome the unkind inner voice and begin to love and value yourself.

As you were growing up, you unconsciously adopted and integrated patterns of destructive thoughts about yourself. Over time, this deeply painful self-loathing impacts your choices and shapes the direction of your life. Exploring these feelings is the first step. If you currently struggle with hateful thoughts about yourself, think about what sparks them. Identifying what triggers the unkind inner voice allows you to diffuse it. Reflect on things that trigger feelings of inadequacy or worthlessness:

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Other than immediate triggers, the roots of self-hatred can often be traced to environmental or cultural reasons. Your upbringing and personality can also contribute to and sustain self-hatred. Once these feelings take hold, they can be difficult to release; the stories that form around your early experiences become deeply entrenched. Think about early experiences or environmental and/or cultural reasons that contribute to your struggle with self-hatred:

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## What to Do

To stop the cycle of self-hatred, there are steps you can take to stop this pattern:

**Identify your inner critic.** First, identify what your negative inner voice tells you, and recognize self-criticism and self-loathing is separate from what is real and true. Remember, your unkind inner voice is not always a reflection of reality – it is a viewpoint you adopted based on damaging early life experiences and attitudes you have internalized as your own point of view.

What does your negative inner voice tell you? Write down six examples, and try to be specific.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Separate yourself.** One way to separate from your negative inner voice is to write these thoughts down in the second person (as “you” statements). For example, if you think, “I can’t

get anything right. I'm such a loser," write down, "You can't get anything right. You're such a loser." You will begin to see these thoughts as alien, untrue points of view. Really notice how unkind your internal enemy is!

Re-write the above statements as "you" statements:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Respond.** Write down more realistic and compassionate evaluations of yourself in the first person (as "I" statements). If you think, "You're such loser," you can write, "I may struggle sometimes, but I'm actually smart and have lots of skills."

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

**Persist and avoid acting on the negative inner voice.** Do not act on what your inner negative voices says; instead, take actions that represent your true point of view. Who do you want to be? What would you like to achieve? The unkind inner voice might get louder, putting you down and reminding you why you hate yourself. However, by identifying, separating from, and acting against destructive thoughts, you will grow stronger and your inner negative voice will quiet down.

What can you do to challenge the destructive behaviors the negative inner voice encourages you to engage in? Be specific.

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What are some negative traits in yourself that imitate your parents or other important figures in your life? For example, if you had a bossy or demanding father, you can try to challenge ways you are controlling in your life.

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**Identify your own beliefs, values, and ideals.** How do you want to live your life? How do you want your future to look? Reflect on your wants and desires, which gives your life unique meaning. If you persist in challenging the internal enemy, it will become weaker and weaker. You will eventually free yourself from feelings of self-hatred.

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

After completing this worksheet, has your self-hatred decreased? Why or why not?

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How helpful was this exercise? \_\_\_\_\_  
(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?

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