



Effects of Self-Criticism

A number of people, especially highly trained professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, tend to believe that if they don't criticize themselves, they wouldn't be successful. It's important to break through that belief.

Self-criticism is helpful when it allows for the acknowledgment of mistakes and failures, as well as cultivates humility, along with positive change. However, when this self-criticism impedes one's ability to thrive, its benefits are overshadowed by the harms to mental well-being.

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Example

Imagine the following scenario:

Shelley, 44, reported a mild but constant dissatisfaction with her life. She had a supportive, involved family, a productive and fulfilling work life but she felt anxious most of the time, despite her marital life also being happy. On exploration, it was seen that her external circumstances were not the problem.

It was her tendency to persistently criticize herself that was causing her anxiety. She, however, was barely aware of this tendency of hers.

Self-Criticism and Depression

Unrelenting self-criticism paves the way for depression and anxiety and to some extent, may

also predict depression. A study cited in the “Wall Street Journal”, reported that those who were most self-critical were also more likely to be depressed and have relationship difficulties.

The tendency to blame oneself when things go wrong may lead to feelings of failure and low mood. Highly self-critical individuals may feel guilty or ashamed when something goes wrong, believing the fault lies with them.

Self-criticism has further been linked to eating disorders, self-mutilation, and body dysmorphic disorder, which is preoccupation with one’s perceived physical flaws.

Relationships with Others

Projection is another phenomenon often observed among self-critical individuals. A tendency to criticize oneself leads to projecting certain negative beliefs onto others, which then leads to the expectation of negative feedback or criticism from another.

This expectation may therefore cause havoc in interpersonal relationships. Both internal criticism, as well as expectation of external criticism, lead to the development of feelings of isolation and loneliness. As a consequence, the individual may withdraw from others.

Defending Your Views

The self-critical individual often finds it difficult to assert personal needs and desires and may exhibit submissiveness in relationships. This is caused by a fear that asserting one’s own opinion may give rise to criticism. This kind of relationship drains out the individual emotionally over time, in turn, having an effect on the relationship.

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