

Coaching Tip: How to Help Your Clients Manage Their Inner Critic

Welcome to my coaching tip of the week on how to help your clients manage their inner critic and boost their self-confidence.

If you've been coaching for any period of time, you understand that one of the biggest challenges our clients face is their inner critic, or what we lovingly refer to in the Martha Beck world as our *inner lizard*. The inner critic or lizard is the voice inside of us that plays negative commentary tapes about who we are and how we behave. We all have an inner critic, it's the part of us who tells us:

- I must be perfect.
- I'm not good enough the way I am.
- I need to please you.
- I'm ugly, fat, stupid, etc.
- Everyone must like or love me.
- Don't do that or you'll make a fool of yourself.
- Who the hell do you think you are?

These perfectionistic thoughts will cut you down like no one or nothing else and will remain a constant distraction in getting the results your clients crave.

So, here are some powerful strategies I've used to help my clients kick their inner critic to the back seat of the bus.

Before I do that, it's important that you understand that the underpinning of these tips is to shift your client's mindset from

perfectionism to progress. It's based on the "growth" mindset concept that I discussed in my last coaching tip. Remember, the growth mindset is based on the belief that we can grow our brain's capacity to learn and solve problems. A fixed mindset is the belief that our abilities are based on our innate talents, intelligence (for example, "I have a good voice", "I'm good at math", "I was born with good eye-hand coordination", etc.) and other fixed assets. Studies have shown that one of the most effective ways to instill greater self-confidence and gain mastery is to take risks, experience failure, cope with that failure and pick yourself back up again. Quieting and redirecting your inner lizard toward a "am I making progress" vs. "am I good enough" is a key component to taking risks and getting back up when the going gets tough.

This is where you come in, Coaches! Encouraging your clients to focus on the process or progress in pursuit of their goal - their effort, grit, determination resistance, engagement vs. the outcome - promotes a growth mindset. A growth mindset not only means that you're in charge of your brain, but it also means that you can get smarter, will likely welcome challenges and be willing to do hard things. It's the stuff that builds genuine and sustainable self-confidence.

Here are some of my favorite questions and tips to help your clients manage their inner lizard, feel less afraid of making mistakes and more eager to learn and to grow.

1. **If this (failure, mistake, misstep) were happening for the greater good, what would that be?**
2. **What are three things you did well?** Even if things were a colossal failure, encourage your client to give themselves credit for doing something hard and for doing his/her best. (Be specific - what strategies did they try? In what ways did they show up?)
3. **Can you think of 2-3 failures that no longer sting that you overcame?** What did you learn from those experiences?
4. **Find the humor it in.** Ask them to sing their setback/mistake/failure to their favorite song. For example, if they tripped in front

of an audience, you can have them sing, “I tripped and looked like an idiot” to “Mary Had a Little Lamb” or if they disappointed someone, you can try Pat Benatar’s “You’re a Heartbreaker”. Laughing at our mistakes punctures the balloon of perfectionism. We don’t have to take everything so seriously.

5. **What gifts are you selfishly hoarding** because you’re not willing to make a mistake or suck at it?
6. **Nudge your client to take a small risk.** Dissolving thoughts plays an important role in our confidence but it can be tempting to over indulge in thought work as a way of avoiding taking action. Taking a turtle step towards a goal is what ultimately builds our confidence muscle because it provides tangible proof that we are stronger, braver and more capable than what our minds tell us. It also shows us that the world will not end if we make a mistake.
7. **Permission Slips.** I took this one right out of Brené Brown’s playbook. Ask your client to make real permission slips when they’re about to do something outside of their comfort zone.

I give myself permission to _____ (make a mistake, forgive myself, have fun, be less serious, enjoy nerdy music, dance unapologetically).

Suggest that they craft several permission slips and carry it around with them in their purse or glove compartment. Pull them out and read when needed.

8. **Ask them to get together with a friend and compliment each other for 5 minutes.** Encourage them to praise one another based on the growth mindset concept. So, rather than saying “I admire your beautiful body”, try “I really admire your discipline to go to gym everyday”. “I love how dedicated you are to creating such a loving home to your two daughters” is much better than “you’re such a good mom”. Most importantly, the person receiving the compliment can only say two words: THANK YOU.

I hope you are enjoying my coaching tips and as usual, I'd LOVE your feedback. Shoot me a line at Jackie@jackiegartman.com and let me know. It really makes my day when I hear from you guys.

Also, if there's a tip you'd like me to create, let me know. What issues or clients are most challenging to you? What gets sticky for you when you coach?

Cheers,

Jackie