



Your Drunken Monkey

HOW TO QUIET YOUR INNER CRITIC AND FIND YOUR GOOD INNER VOICE

By Noelle Sterne

If you're like me, the thoughts in your head are sometimes far from friendly: "Hey, stupid, use the big bowl for all that pasta!" "The Phillips screwdriver, idiot!" "You can't do that – you're too lazy."

Inner voices like these whirl around endlessly. Psychologists call them the superego, inner judge, censor, internalized parent, and many other fancy names. The East Indians name this part of the mind the "drunken monkey," always chattering and condemning.

The mind is notoriously resistant to being quiet. As soon as we sit still it seems to do everything it can to distract us. Negative habitual thinking kicks in and within a few minutes an internal dialogue takes over, the body starts to fidget, or trivial things that need to be done suddenly appear vitally important. Just as a monkey leaps from tree to tree, the mind leaps from one drama to another, constantly distracted, and criticizing.

Whatever you want to call your inner

critics, their words are harsh, negative, and relentless. They are insistent, stubborn and can easily dominate our mind. The more we try to ignore or quiet them, the more they clamor for attention. If we're ever going to get beneath these raucous thoughts to really listen to ourselves, we must show them who's boss.

QUIETING YOUR CRITICAL VOICES

Of the many voices that drown out our Inner Voice is the Inner Judge. This is the master and the ultimate disapproving and demeaning internal parent, the ever-demanding, never-satisfied god to which we've all sacrificed too much emotional energy and too many years. I'm sure you know it well. How do we turn off this endless doom-saying loop? To suppress it is almost impossible. It's as stubborn as weeds. If you try to grind it into the ground, it will spring up again the minute you lift your foot. If you try to reason it to sleep, it will stay awake forever and stare at you

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with hollow glee. Other lines of attack are more productive.

Talk Back

Shout that monkey down. Give it some of its own medicine. Tell it, with all the force you can muster, “Shut up! You’re wrong! I am *not* crazy! I’ve never been saner, and you’re not gonna stop me!” Even if you don’t quite believe your own retorts, shout them anyway. Bellow as if you believe.

Affirmations

Affirmations are wonderful, elevating replacements that quiet the Inner Judge. A version of verbal prayer, they have been used for centuries. Repeated aloud or in our minds, affirmations “make firm” our positive thoughts. Many books contain excellent affirmations. Louise Hay’s *You Can Heal Your Life* is one of my favorites. At the end of every chapter, she prints a meditation that sends you to the ceiling. Although specific to the subject, each begins with this: “In the infinity of life where I am, all is perfect, whole and complete.”

You can also create your own affirmation for any event, circumstance, person or quality you want to feel better about. There’s only one rule: Always decree your affirmations in the present tense. Here are some broad-spectrum ones to get you started:

- ✓ I am worthy of all good in my life.
- ✓ I deserve to love and be loved.
- ✓ I forgive myself and I am forgiven.
- ✓ I lack nothing. All I need is here now.

- ✓ I hear my true Voice now.
- ✓ I am guided to the right words, decisions and actions in this situation.

Pray

Praying doesn’t commit you to going to church on Sunday or major holidays, or joining committees. If you think you don’t know how to pray, take a verse or hymn from childhood, a psalm, or even a Christmas carol, and repeat it to yourself. Or try a contemporary prayer, like one from Marianne Williamson’s *A Course in Miracles*: “Let every voice but God’s be still in me.”

Silently or aloud, as you say a sentence like this or passage of your choice, focus on what it means. Let it saturate your attention. Keep repeating it and feel yourself lifting and lightening. That’s prayer.

Meditate

Although it’s close to prayer, meditation doesn’t need to be religious or mysterious. Like prayer, meditation is now routinely written about and advised in books, magazines, and online sites.

It’s quite simple. In a quiet place, with no distractions, take a few deep breaths. Choose a word, phrase, or sentence, or one of your affirmations if you wish. The important thing is to pick something that grabs you or has special meaning. Repeat it steadily, without pressing or hurry. It doesn’t have to be a mysterious mantra, or right according to any authority. It only has to be right for you.

Some examples:

- ✓ Peace

- ✓ One
- ✓ Love
- ✓ Ahhhh
- ✓ Joy
- ✓ I am whole
- ✓ I have all I need
- ✓ I like myself
- ✓ “Divine order is established in my mind and body”
- ✓ God is with me

A warning, though: When you pray or meditate, your Inner Judge, that old drunken monkey outraged at your audacity, will do its utmost to get your attention. It will ridicule, condemn, and bombard your mind with random thoughts, scenes, lists and worries.

Recognize its antics and just keep coming back to your chosen meditative words. Like a good parent to yourself, be patient, steadfast and forgiving, shepherding your mind to the sidewalk out of traffic. Keep practicing.

FINDING YOUR GOOD INNER VOICE

You may not believe it yet, but you can ignore that unruly creature; shut it out; starve it; and listen to something else instead that’s much more positive and supportive to you. Beneath the frenzied surface of our daily trivia, endless judgments, catalogues of chores, and swirling wisps of past regrets and future fears, is our Inner Guide, our Voice, who lives quiet and untouched, free from the violence going on in our head.

The Voice has many names: inner

knowing, intuition, right brain, soul, higher power, inner self, your heart, your gut. Over the centuries, many have acknowledged and developed it – artists, scientists, great leaders, enlightened beings, philosophers and countless people like you and me. Most of the time, though, the Voice has been talked of or written about largely by mystics, and it's been reserved for saints or schizophrenics. However, with the current exciting reawakening of spiritual consciousness throughout our culture, the Voice has again become respectable. It's being rediscovered as a quality we all have and can develop.

As we lose our society's embarrassment about drawing on resources other than the material and palpable, we gain the strength to recognize the value and virtue of our Inner Voice. Our Inner Voice is making a comeback! It's resurfacing not only in the writings of best-selling authors and self-help gurus, but even in the popular media; a testament to our society's growing hunger for spiritual content.

All this acknowledgment doesn't mean the Inner Voice is easy to find or listen to. We may read about it or hear dramatic accounts of how other people found theirs. But no one else's experience can substitute for our own. Like life, each of us must go through the stages of finding it ourselves.

Why should you care about finding your Inner Voice? Why is it so important? Like a kid pushed to violin lessons, you may be whining, "Aw, do I have to?" No, you don't. But, if you don't, those other destructive voices will rule you, as they may have already. And they

will lead you to decisions and actions that may not really nurture, sustain, satisfy you, or use your talents as they could and should be used.

In our sophisticated know-it-all culture, we haven't given attention to allowing, much less recognizing, our Voice. Despite the increasing and encouraging openness about spiritual matters, most of us find the concept of the Voice strange and slightly suspect. We need determination and some courage to recognize it. Here are ways you can make room for our true Inner Voice.

Cultivate It

Cultivating your Voice takes desire and practice. Expect to hear it and make room for it. As you quiet your critical voice with one of the methods above, you can listen for your good inner voice. Schedule times to practice. You don't have to limit yourself to these times. Give your Voice a chance in any situation. As you're getting dressed, having lunch, or driving, consciously tone down the automatic background noises we're so accustomed to. This may mean resisting the instant flip of the stereo or news the moment you get up, or tearing your eyes away from the TV in the lunchroom, or turning *off* your iPhone for a little while. Cultivating your Voice may mean *not* grabbing the latest *People* magazine in the dentist's office and devouring as much juicy pseudo-news as possible before your name is called.

Welcome It

Your Voice is given to you to be developed and used, for anything you want or need to know. In all the

ways that the Inner Judge condemns you, the Inner Voice – in reverse – helps you see the past more wholesomely, gain insights into present events, and make moves that will benefit you in the future.

As you quiet those other insidious voices, you make room for your Voice to emerge. Ask it anything. Without second-guessing it, figuring it out, or rationalizing, wait in quiet. You will hear what you need to know – about the next step, the next information, even where that lost file could be hiding. Your Voice is your friend and resource. Give it a chance and a hearing, many hearings. Invite it in and it will serve and support you. **GB**

About the Author

Noelle Sterne is an author, editor, writing coach, and spiritual counselor. She has published over 250 articles, essays, stories, and poems in print and online venues. A current bimonthly guest blog about writing for writers appears on Inscribing Industry www.inscribingindustry.blogspot.com. Noelle holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University and for over 28 years has had a dissertation coaching and editing service helping doctoral candidates complete their dissertations. In her new book, *Trust Your Life: Forgive Yourself and Go After Your Dreams* (Unity Books), she uses "practical spirituality" and examples from her consulting practice and other aspects of life to help readers let go of regrets, re-label their past, and reach their lifelong yearnings. Visit Noelle's website at www.trustyourlifenow.com.

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BONKERISM

The toes you step on today
may be attached to the cheek
you must kiss tomorrow.

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Letter from the Editor



Dear Friends,

Greetings! This time of year is all about transformation. The leaves change, color palettes transpose, our wardrobes reflect the seasonal hues, so it's only fitting that we begin the process of transforming too.

What would you like to change? Your perspective? An unhealthy habit? Your waist size? A relationship? Any and all changes are within your reach. If you don't like something in your life, then change it! Yes, the decision to change really is that simple!

Here at Bonkers, we've already begun the transformation process. We're gearing up for the year ahead, and we have lots of exciting surprises coming your way, like more Bonkers Special Editions, and new Bonkers Books, and even some FREE products for our fans! But to learn about the free ones, you'll need to join us on facebook! We share our breaking news, as well as daily Bonkerisms, with our subscribers and fans through our Facebook page. All we ask is that you take a moment and go to our Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/GoingBonkers.Magazine and click "like." When Bonkers news happens, you'll read about it there, and for sure you won't want to miss out!

Speaking of being a fan, we're huge admirers of Jack Canfield. We are so honored to have him on our cover and to share his "Transformation" article with you. He's a visionary, and an icon for success, self-help, personal growth, and for change, and the message he's delivering in our pages will truly transform you.

And you'll notice that this issue is packed with articles that are specifically intended to inspire and guide us to change our life. The valuable insights and information from our best-selling authors, psychologists, doctors and experts can help us to transform our bodies, minds, and relationships into whatever we desire.

This has been an exceptionally busy and challenging year, but truth be told, we have loved every second of it. Your letters and emails have inspired, motivated, encouraged, and generously cheered us on! We have especially *loved* the up close and personal interaction that we have with you on Facebook, and we *sincerely* thank you for your support! See you there!

Blessings to each and every one of you!

J. Carol Pereyra

Editor in Chief

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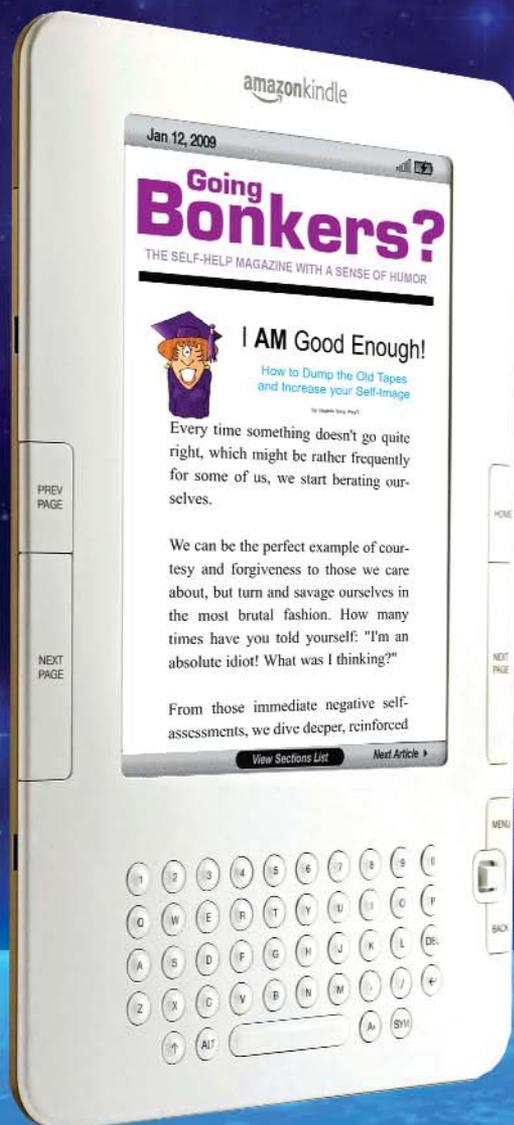
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