



Quieten Your Inner Critic.

This mindful activity will help you to cultivate self-belief and composure by quietening and replacing your inner critic with an 'inner coach'.

Read the Mindful Cricket book for further background in how the three tools which follow can help you with:

1. **Awareness** of how the critic limits your thinking
2. **Acceptance** that it's your thinking stirring up uncomfortable emotions
3. **Action** to coach yourself to be more mindful and composed.

NOTE. If your inner critic is concerning you then discuss this with a coach, psychologist or doctor to get their support.

'We all have an inner critic and it stirs up emotions with limiting thoughts past their use-by-date. Watch them, let the feelings roll through, and be your own inner coach: take a breath, observe, and then go back to basics.'

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Tool 1: Awareness. Meet Your Critic.

Can you recall times when you've been held back by unhelpful negative thoughts about (a) mistakes, (b) losing, or (c) worrying about other's approval?

These are the three most common ways the inner critic eats away at confidence and composure, so take a few moments to reflect on times when you've had this experience and how it made you feel and act. Use the real life examples from a Club Cricketer in the boxes below to guide you.

<p>Mistakes. I Want To Avoid Mistakes Because They Are Embarrassing</p> <p><i>Example. 'Frustrated at training when playing poor shots, and that just made it worse. Tentative bowling in my opening over. Hoping a catch didn't come my way last week after I dropped an easy one early in the match.'</i></p>
<p>Losing. I Want To Avoid Losing Because I Want To Prove I Am Good At Cricket</p> <p><i>Example. 'Got really annoyed when dismissed and threw the bat. Angry we lost the match and I think that was just showing that I'd lost composure. Too focused on the outcome!'</i></p>
<p>Approval. I Want To Be Liked Because I Am Part Of A Team Or Club.</p> <p><i>Example. 'Anxious so I didn't want to speak up at team meeting. I'm thinking a lot about what to do to get approval of the senior players instead of just playing my own game.'</i></p>

Creating this list will help you to be aware of the connection between your thoughts, feelings and how you act.

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Tool 2: Acceptance. It's Your Critic in Action.

When the inner critic takes over it's helpful to realise it's not the thought driving your behaviour, it's how you react to the uncomfortable feeling. For example, frustration about mistakes doesn't have to be acted on. You can choose to let the feelings roll through because it's unlikely they'll last for more than 30-90 seconds at the most.

You can go towards the challenge despite the feelings or you can let them control you. It's your choice.

Your Task Over the Next Two Weeks	
<p><i>Be observant of when your inner critic shows up. For example, you might notice you are thinking about what could go wrong before going out to bat, or at times in the field you could be hoping the ball won't come to you.</i></p> <p><i>This three-step process will help reduce the power the critic has over you.</i></p>	
Step 1.	<i>Pause for a moment and just notice the thoughts and the feelings they are creating. Don't judge, don't try to change them. Just accept them as they are.</i>
Step 2.	<i>Use your centred breathing skills, take between one and three breaths (depending on the situation). Be the observer of those feelings, not reacting immediately to them.</i>
Step 3.	<i>Choose your response. It's your choice to lean into the uncomfortable feelings and remain composed in the way you think and move.</i>
<p>Reflect on your experience with this activity (but don't judge too harshly).</p>	

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Tool 3: Action. Give Your Inner Coach Equal Time.

As you get better at **pausing** to observe the inner critic (instead of immediately reacting) there is a perfect opportunity to engage your '**inner coach**'. For example, if you beat the bat twice with perfect outswingers and then get hit for four and get really agitated with yourself and the batsman, the critic is around!

Try this three-step process.

Step 1.	Pause and observe the critic and the effects on your feelings
Step 2.	Breathe
Step 3.	Ask this coaching question, <i>What's the basic thing to do here?</i>

Try This Now.
Imagine you are bowling, and the inner critic is stirring up uncomfortable feelings like frustration about a dropped catch or anxiety about not getting a wicket. Pause and observe the critic. Breathe.
<i>What's the basic thing to do here? (eg: relax grip, focus on rhythm, use your stock ball etc.)</i>

'We all have an inner critic who can devastate even the best attempts at cultivating composure.

Notice the characteristics of the inner critic. 'All-or-nothing' thinking, rehearsing mistakes, and focus on weaknesses.

Mindful Cricket cultivates composure by helping you to be more aware of how self-limiting thoughts drive feelings, and what you can do to take back control.'