

# What is self-criticism?

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Self-criticism is a relationship we have with ourselves, and it involves how we evaluate ourselves. Highly self-critical people tend to set very high standards from themselves. When those standards, inevitably, are not met, they express hostility toward self.

## It's good to be self-critic, or is it?

A lot of us view self-criticism as a good trait to have. We tend to think that criticising ourselves will make us question ourselves, work on our flaws, and motivate us to improve our shortcomings. However, a number of studies conducted on this topic point in another direction. Self-criticism can have adverse effects on our physical and mental health.

## How does self-criticism work?

Self-criticism pushes people to create a stressful environment - it hinders people's ability to experience enjoyable

life events (such as having fun with friends). Such a negative environment can cause a great deal of stress, which in turn might increase self-criticism.

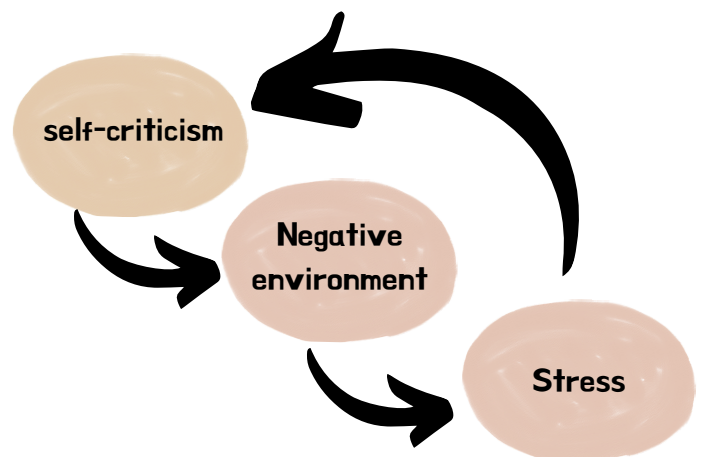


Figure adapted from Shohar, G. (2016). Criticism in the self, brain, social relations and social structure: Implications to psychodynamic psychiatry. *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, 44(3):395-421.

## What can I do?

- Pay more attention to your thoughts - you might be surprised how you talk to yourself.
- Not all of our thoughts are true - examine the evidence.
- Think about what would you say to a friend having the same issue? Would you be equally critical?
- If you are getting lost in the same thought over and over again, break the cycle by doing something you enjoy.