

FREE WORKSHEET

Inner Critic Pattern Decoder

A five-step shadow work worksheet for turning one episode of harsh self-talk into something you can actually examine.

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| 1. TRANSCRIPT | What did the critic say? |
| 2. TRIGGER | What happened first? |
| 3. RULE | What must you always or never be? |
| 4. REJECTED PART | What quality is being pushed away? |
| 5. CLEANER RESPONSE | What is accurate without humiliation? |

Use one real moment.

Do not use this worksheet to label your whole personality. Pick one recent episode of self-criticism and work with the facts of that moment.

Goal: move from punishment to accurate observation.

1. Capture the Critic

Write the exact self-critical sentence before interpreting it. A transcript is easier to examine than a vague feeling that you are "not good enough."

What did I say to myself, word for word?

What happened immediately before the criticism?

What emotion was underneath the attack?

CHECK: Am I describing behavior, or condemning my whole identity?

2. Find the Rule

Harsh self-talk often carries a rule about what you must always be or must never become. The rule is usually more revealing than the insult.

What rule does the criticism reveal?

Where did I learn that rule?

What does the critic believe will happen if I stop obeying it?

Examples of hidden rules:

- I must always be productive.
- I must never disappoint anyone.
- I must not look foolish.
- I must never need help.

3. Find the Rejected Part

Ask what human quality the rule keeps pushing into the shadow. Do not copy the critic's label too quickly. Look for the healthier energy underneath it.

What quality does the critic call unacceptable?

What healthier version of that quality might I be rejecting?

SELFISH	might conceal self-priority / self-respect
LAZY	might conceal rest / play / lower output
ARROGANT	might conceal confidence / pride / visibility
NEEDY	might conceal honest need / support / tenderness
FAILURE	might conceal experimentation / learning

4. Measure the Cost

The critic presents itself as protection. Protection should be evaluated by results. What does obeying this voice actually cost?

What does self-criticism make me do more of?

What does it make me avoid?

If this voice stays the same for five more years, what will it cost?

What responsibility is actually mine in this situation?

5. Write a Cleaner Response

A cleaner response is not forced positivity. It tells the truth, keeps responsibility, and removes unnecessary humiliation.

The critic says:

The facts are:

A fair response without self-attack is:

One small behavior I will test for the next seven days:

Next Step: Structured Self-Love Work

If persistent inner criticism, shame, self-rejection, or "never enough" thinking is the pattern you keep returning to, A Light Among Shadows is the most directly matched guided resource in the Inner Shadow Work library.

A Light Among Shadows

Self-paced digital resource - \$35

- Self-judgment and inner criticism
- Shame and self-rejection
- Insecurity and fear of being seen
- A deeper approach to self-love than surface affirmations

[VIEW A LIGHT AMONG SHADOWS](#)

Prefer to keep journaling?

Use the Shadow Work Journal: 240 Daily Shadow Work Prompts.

Boundary: This worksheet supports education, journaling, reflection, and self-inquiry. It does not diagnose or treat mental-health conditions and should not replace qualified care when distress is severe or safety is a concern.