Self-criticism worksheet

Be fair about the difficulty and about yourself. Use one recent example.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What happened?

What did the critical voice say?

What effect did that response have?

What would a fair, supportive person notice?

What can I say that is kind and believable?

What useful action or support do I need now?

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Self-criticism worksheet - guide

Use alongside the worksheet on page 1. Adapt it to your needs and any therapy plan.

What this helps with

Self-criticism can feel as though it will keep us motivated or prevent mistakes. A harsh response may also leave us ashamed, stuck or afraid to try. This sheet helps you keep any useful information while responding in a fairer and more supportive way.

How to use it

1. Write the event separately from the judgement you made about yourself.
2. Notice the effect of the criticism. Does it help you learn, or make you withdraw or overwork?
3. Imagine a fair supporter who knows the full context. Include pressures, needs and anything you did manage.
4. Write a response you can believe and choose a useful next step, such as repairing a mistake, resting or asking for help.

A fictional example

After cancelling a plan because she was exhausted, Leah calls herself selfish. She notices this pushes her to agree to more than she can manage. A fair response is, 'My friend matters and my energy matters. I can explain and offer another time.' She sends one clear message instead of repeatedly apologising and checking whether the friendship is secure.

Keep in mind

A supportive response does not mean denying a mistake or accepting harmful treatment from others. You can take responsibility for an action without attacking your whole character. If supportive wording feels false, begin with a neutral description of the facts or discuss it with a therapist.

Review your learning

Did this response make space for learning and a useful action?

Sources informing the approach

Beck, J. S. (2020). Cognitive Behavior Therapy: Basics and Beyond (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.

NICE (2022). Depression in adults: treatment and management. NG222.

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