

# BETTER TOGETHER

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coaching

## ***Month 3 Workbook***

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDER



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# WELCOME

HELLO FRIEND,

This month's work is about reframing and disempowering your inner critic to free yourself from perfectionism and imposter syndrome. We will begin to understand the power we give other people in establishing our opinions of ourselves, and work to be our own biggest source of approval.

Let's get to work!

- ADRIENNE, TYRA & THE BT TEAM





# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Do you ever worry that:

- your success is undeserved (or due to chance, luck, or connections)?
- you'll be "found out" or exposed as a fraud if someone sees that you don't really know what you're doing?
- you are somehow inferior to your colleagues
- even though you generally get positive feedback, that the other shoe is surely about to drop?
- that if you relax for even a minute, you'll fall behind or lose what you have?

Let's talk about imposter syndrome

Definition:

It is a collection of thoughts and beliefs that produce feelings of inadequacy that persist **despite evidence to the contrary**.

Prevalence:

This is super common! As many as 75% of clinicians experience these beliefs. Imposter syndrome is most common in junior providers.

You are not alone!

Cause:

An overactive Inner Critic. Let's dive in.

# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

*Why are we like this?*

Because of an overactive inner critic that hijacks our amygdala!

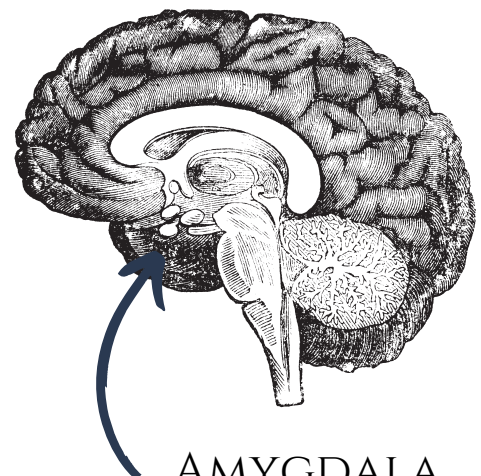


THE INNER  
CRITIC

The inner critic is the voice inside your head offering unsolicited opinions and criticism that hold you back from pursuing your goals. Though the critic is trying to protect you, the commentary keeps you from enjoying a peaceful moment, feeling satisfaction, or fully celebrating your victories. This voice has a strong negativity bias.

The human brain evolved to be hyper-alert and cautious to keep us safe. The amygdala drives automatic actions when our safety is at risk. It bypasses the prefrontal cortex and allows us to respond reflexively to danger. Cool!

Except, when that response is caused by a non-threat and the inner critic is activated.



AMYGDALA  
HIJACK



# IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Okay, so now what?

First of all, those of us with an overactive inner critic or imposter thoughts are not broken. We don't need to be fixed. We can learn to adjust or reframe our thoughts to correct the skewed narrative in our heads.

Think of it like correcting your vision of yourself by putting on glasses.

After bringing awareness to these thoughts, by doing a thought download, the next step is to put them into a model to see what results are created for you.

Do these thoughts serve you, or are they keeping you stuck?

You get to decide to keep them around or start the work on gently thanking your inner critic for their suggestion, but choose a different thought for yourself.

# GETTING TO KNOW YOUR INNER CRITIC

This worksheet is a tool to help you learn to identify the voice of your inner critic. Bring anything that comes up to *Ask for Coaching*.

Write about memory of a time you have been critical of yourself.

What are the common words or phrases your inner critic regularly uses?

What is the volume or the tone of this voice?

What emotions or sensations do you feel when you hear these words?

If this voice had a human form, what would they look like? Would they have a name? What would they wear? What facial expression or body language would they have? Can you describe or draw them?





# GETTING TO KNOW YOUR INNER CRITIC

What are the feelings or needs of your inner critic? What is important to them? What are they trying to protect you from?

My inner critic feels:

My inner critic needs:

In what ways is your inner critic trying to protect you?

Can you appreciate and even be grateful for how much your inner critic is trying to do for you? Write a short thank-you note to them.

What can you think on purpose next time you hear your inner critic?

# YOUR INNER CRITIC'S TRIGGERS

This worksheet is a tool to develop awareness of circumstances that bring out your inner critic.  
Bring anything that comes up to *Ask for Coaching*.

What time of day do you tend to be more critical of yourself or others?

Are there specific people, events or situations that trigger your inner critic?

In the past, when has your inner critic been most active?

What urges come up for you when you try and sit with the voice of your inner critic? What do you tend to do or not do?

Next time you notice your inner critic, see if you can hold space to sit with what arises. This is like processing an emotion. Can you stay there a moment longer? What happens?

# PERFECTIONISM

Many of us grew up believing that perfection, and therefore perfectionism, was a badge of honor and something to aspire to.

Perfectionism is among the most pervasive traits found in clinicians, and its prevalence is increasing (Curram, 2019).

Perfectionism refers to a collection of thoughts that set the bar so high AND so ambiguously that it is impossible to reach. Perfectionism drives imposter syndrome. Striving for an ill-defined, impossible goal, with no tolerance for failure or struggle, pits us against ourselves in an unwinnable fight.

Dr. Brené Brown defines perfectionism as the 20-ton shield we carry around to protect ourselves, but which ends up holding us down. It is a self-destructive, addictive belief system that fuels this lie:



*"If I look perfect and do everything perfectly, I can avoid uncomfortable feelings of blame, judgment and shame".*

# WEEK 2: PERFECTIONISM

## PERFECTIONISM IS NOT:

- "Healthy striving" or seeking healthy achievement and growth. In perfectionism, the fear of failing keeps us from true, healthy competition and striving.
- Self-improvement. At its core, perfectionism is about earning the approval of others. True self-improvement comes from a place of self-acceptance and a desire to grow.
- The key to success. In fact, evidence suggests that perfectionism hampers achievement and is correlated with depression, anxiety, and addiction.
- A way to avoid shame. Perfectionism is fuel for shame.

## YOU MIGHT BE A PERFECTIONIST IF:

- You have all-or-nothing thinking (in your workout plans, diet, check-lists, etc.).
- Your inner critic is harder on you than anyone else.
- You are motivated by what other people think of you.
- You focus on the result more than the process.
- You have a hard time bouncing back from disappointment or unmet goals.
- You don't like trying new things.
- You get stuck in overwhelm.
- You procrastinate.
- You become defensive when getting constructive feedback.
- You struggle to accept positive feedback.
- You over-work, and don't allow yourself active rest.
- You have trouble asking for help.
- You are an overthinker.
- You re-do or perfect unimportant tasks.
- You notice and judge what other people do wrong.

## PERFECTIONISM



## HEALTHY STRIVING

Driven by fear of failure

Accomplishments are never enough

Desires to impress others

Self-critical when mistakes are made

Must always appear strong and in control

Sets standards beyond reach or reason

Defensive when criticized

Never satisfied

Sees mistakes as proof of unworthiness

Preoccupied by failure or disapproval

Driven to grow and change

Proud and satisfied by efforts

Believes you are worthy as you are

Sees failure as an opportunity for growth and learning

Not afraid to be vulnerable or expose gaps in skill or knowledge

Sets standards that are high but clear and achievable

Sees opportunities for growth in criticism

Enjoys the process and the outcome

Seeks excellence, but not afraid to experience anxiety and disappointment



# UNDERSTANDING YOUR PERFECTIONISM

*This worksheet is adapted from the work of Dr. Jennifer Hunt.*

How does perfectionism show up for you?

What do you notice about your perfectionism? What is going on around you and in your head when these tendencies pop up?

What actions do you take or not that keep you from achieving your goals?

Why do you think you need your perfectionism? What does it do for you?

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR PERFECTIONISM

This worksheet is adapted from the work of Dr. Jennifer Hunt.



What's keeping you stuck? Imagine a person who's overcome perfectionism. What thoughts or judgments do you have about them? Who do you think would criticize you if you got rid of your perfectionism? What would they say?



Now that you have insight into perfectionism, is there any part you may want to change?



## TIPS WHEN WORKING WITH YOUR PERFECTIONISM

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1. Get really clear on your own definition of success.
  2. Understand your standards for yourself. Do you know what you mean when you say you want to be a "good provider"? How will you know when you get there?
  3. Challenge any beliefs that are not serving you. Ask yourself what you are making it mean about you when other people think, feel, or do things?

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# ACCEPTING PRAISE

People with impostor syndrome feel cognitive dissonance when offered praise. If you have critical thoughts about yourself, when someone gives you positive feedback, it conflicts with your beliefs, so you might throw out or undervalue that positive feedback. With some deliberate thought work, it's possible to understand and re-write those cognitive tendencies.

Think back to a time when someone gave you positive feedback like a compliment or praise. What was it? Was your initial instinct to rebuff, minimize, or deflect? How? Why?

What would it be like instead to sit with the positive feedback? To believe it? Name the feeling: Is it joy? Pride? What does it feel like in your body?

Where is the truth in the positive feedback? What strengths does this reflect?

Notice if your brain wants to tell you not to allow yourself to bask in the glory. But allowing yourself to accept praise is NOT the same as arrogance. It does not put anyone else down to allow yourself the natural pleasure of feeling pride and accomplishment.



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# APPROVAL ADDICTION

...AND PEOPLE PLEASING

I know, I know. We just talked last week about allowing ourselves to accept praise. This week, though, we'll look at when *seeking* praise gets in our way.

IT'S NO SECRET, APPROVAL FEELS GOOD.

Our brains evolved to seek approval because it prevented social rejection. As a social species, this was important for human survival. Back in the day, if you were rejected by your tribe, you probably wouldn't survive. Humans adeptly learned to monitor other people's opinions to protect themselves. It's normal! Now though, if you are reading this, physical survival is less reliant on tribes. So here we are, with an amygdala that believes our supervisor's feedback is literally life or death, and behaving as such.

Each tiny bit of praise triggers a surge of dopamine in our brains, just like a piece of candy or getting a like on social media. In the same way that addiction to substances exist, a neurochemical dependency to external validation can occur. Approval addiction requires increasing amounts of stimulus to achieve the desired dopamine surge, or even to feel "normal".

Think about how much time you spend thinking:

*"What will they think if I \_\_\_\_\_?"*

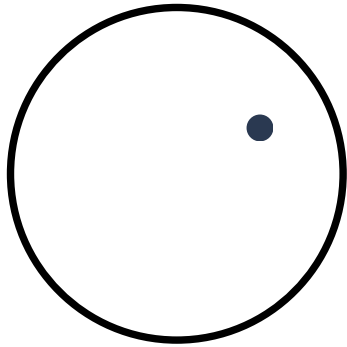
*"Did that email sound okay?"*

*"Will they think that I am \_\_\_\_\_? "*

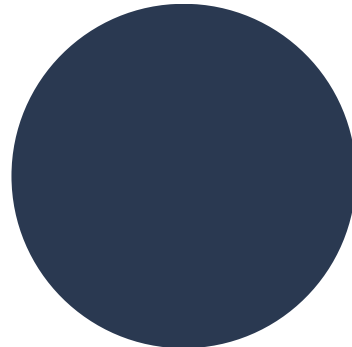
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# APPROVAL ADDICTION

A waste of time.



THEM THINKING  
ABOUT YOU



YOU THINKING ABOUT THEM  
THINKING ABOUT YOU

Imagine you are at a party with 10 other people. They all see and hear you chatting and telling stories. If their opinion of you were based on how you show up, everyone would have the same opinion of you. But they don't, right?

You are on the C line of their model. Everyone in that room has a different sentence about you on their T line. That sentence says more about them than it does about you.

They might have a thought that you remind them of their childhood best friend, or they might think something like "I could really use a restroom right now" and not be thinking about you at all. We never really get to know what people think, so it's best (for everyone) if we stop trying to control it.



# APPROVAL ADDICTION

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT YOU IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

Thank goodness! Managing other's opinions is an energy suck. Ironically, when we try to influence or manipulate someone's opinion of us, we tend to show up as clingy, desperate, or needy with them. We are people pleasing and not even showing up as ourselves. Can you think of times this was true for you?

ALL THE EXTERNAL VALIDATION IN THE WORLD WILL NEVER BE ENOUGH.

We can all see this in other people, and it can be painful when we see it in ourselves. We can chase that approval-high over and over, but until you see your own worth independent of what other people think about you, you will never be satisfied.

NOW WHAT?

Freedom comes from letting people think what they think and not taking this on as your reflection of yourself. There are people in this world who aren't your favorite, right? That's OK, right? That's ESSENTIAL, right? You might not be someone's favorite, and that's OK, and essential too.

You get to decide who's opinion of you matters to you.

Choose yourself, it's the only one you actually control!

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# WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK

Did you know that it's possible to decide to stop worrying about what other people think of you? Let's look closer at your "what they think".

Pick someone you want to think highly of you. What do they probably think about you now?

What exactly do you want them to think about you?

If they thought that about you, what would you make it mean? See if you can write a model from this:

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# WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK

In what ways are people often right about you?

How are they sometimes wrong about you? Are you willing to let them be wrong?

What are you committed to believing about yourself no matter what others think?

You are allowed to think whatever you want about yourself.  
When you believe the best about yourself, you prove those thoughts true.

Here are some thoughts to try on:

*"I am already worthy of \_\_\_\_."*

*"I am capable of amazing things."*

*"I have big goals that I am capable of achieving."*

What other thoughts would you like to think?

# HOW TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

By now you have practiced noticing your thoughts and understanding how they influence your feelings, actions, and results. The flip side of this skill is that you know that it is your thoughts that create your suffering. You may be asking yourself HOW CAN I THINK DIFFERENTLY SO I CAN FEEL BETTER NOW?

## **Here are the steps to working into a new model:**

1. Accept that your unintentional model exists, without judging or rejecting it. This means believing it's your T, not your C causing your F and having self-compassion about it.
2. Ask yourself "What is the problem with staying in this current model? Why do I want to feel differently?"
3. From there, it's helpful to start on the R line. What result do you want?
4. Now go to the A-line. What actions do you need to take to achieve your new result? What actions do you need to stop? List as many as you can.
5. On the F line, what do you need to feel to take those actions? Note: you won't be able to go from hating something to loving it in one step. Trying to convince yourself you love something you hate is like putting lipstick on a pig. You won't believe it and it won't work.
6. Now the meat of it: what thought do you need to think to feel that feeling? Is it believable to you? It needs to be for this process to work. If not, what is another thought you could try?
7. Finally, try that new thought out "in the wild". Does the thought feel true? If you feel like you are trying to fool yourself, go back to the model. Do you need a smaller bridge thought? Are you aiming for the result you want? What other thoughts could get you closer to it?

# HOW TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

## EXAMPLE:

Jenna has decided to stop drinking soda. She likes her reasons for this decision and is 100% committed to this goal. But she has noticed that she still thinks about grabbing a Diet Coke whenever she is in the cafeteria, or when she is feeling tired.



- C** LUNCH
- T** I WANT A SODA
- F** DESIRE
- A** CHATTER AND NEGOTIATION IN HER HEAD. LOOK FOR JUSTIFICATIONS, AVOID, RESIST, REACT, GIVE IN AND BUY THE SODA.
- R** REINFORCE THE HABIT AND THE DESIRE

How could this go differently?



## Option 1: The Band-Aid

This means you just decide to change your mind . Right then and There. You don't think like that anymore.

- C** LUNCH
- T** I WANT A SODA, BUT I DON'T DRINK THEM ANYMORE.
- F** DECIDED.
- A** QUIET THE CHATTER IN HER HEAD BY ACKNOWLEDGING THE URGE, BUT NOT FOLLOWING THROUGH. PROCESS (DESCRIBE AND ALLOW) THE URGE. GRAB A SPARKLING WATER AND MOVE ON.
- R** BUILD CONFIDENCE AND SLOWLY REWIRE THE HABITUAL URGE FOR SODA.

This method works great when you are fully ready and decided to change your thinking. You are committed to the new result, capable of making the change, and are willing to speak gently to yourself when the urge pops up (which it will, 1,000 times per day). Over time, the urges diminish and the chatter and negotiation in your head disappear. Amazing!

# HOW TO CHANGE YOUR MIND

## OPTION 2: BRIDGING THOUGHTS WITH THE THOUGHT LADDER

Now Jenna wants to work on her thoughts about herself as an APP. She has begun to notice that often there is a thought buzzing in her head saying “I’m not as good of an APP as my colleagues are”. It’s not all the time, but whenever something doesn’t go according to plan, the inner critic in her head offers it up to her. She wants to start quieting that sentence in her head.

This example is tougher than the last because Jenna has tied her worth up in that sentence. The thought is more insidious and more charged than the one suggesting a soda.

For this type of work, we suggest what we call the **bridging thoughts** or the **thought ladder**. In this strategy, you introduce one new thought when the old one pops up. The new thought is just a tiny bit different than the original thought. Whenever the old thought pops up you think the new one as the next sentence in your head. Once the new thought becomes routine you move to another and another until you have slowly worked your way to a new, believable mindset.

### Example:

1. I am not a good APP
2. I’m an APP that makes mistakes
3. I’m an APP that makes mistakes sometimes
4. I’m an APP who is learning from mistakes
5. I’m an APP that sometimes doesn’t make mistakes
6. I’m an APP that makes mistakes sometimes but always learns from them
7. I am great at learning from my mistakes
8. Great APPs make mistakes and learn from them
9. I’m becoming a great APP
10. I’m a great APP a lot of the time
11. I’m a great APP






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# BRIDGE THOUGHTS

*Write about a pattern of thinking or belief you would like to change.*



*Why is this a problem for you?*



*If you could choose something else to believe about this, what would it be?*



# BRIDGE THOUGHTS

HERE ARE SOME STEMS FOR BRIDGE THOUGHTS:

*I'm open to believing....*

*I'm feeling \_\_\_\_\_ and that's okay*

*I'm practicing believing.....*

*It's possible that*

*I'm becoming someone who thinks...*

*I may be wrong about....*

*I'm willing to believe...*

*Write a series of bridge thoughts to get to your new beliefs. Try to write at least 5.*

What if you don't know what result you want or how to get there? Your brain will want you to be confused about this, since that's easier, but it's not helpful.

*How can you let go of this confusion now? (Hint: ask yourself, "but if you DID know, what would you say?" Or ask you future self, the one who already figured it out what they would do.*