

SPEND TIME WITH YOUR INNER CRITIC

Individual, Dyadic, or Group Art Exercise

USE THIS EXERCISE TO BUILD:



Social and
Emotional
Abilities



Resilience
and a Growth
Mindset

PURPOSE

After experiencing violence, brains can become primed to hyperfocus on danger and consequences. This means that even when someone is no longer in danger, the brain may still be operating from a place of fear and hypervigilance. People who survive traumatic experiences may internalize guilt or shame about what happened. We may hear a critical voice in our head saying that we are not worthy or deserving of good things, and even further, we might start to believe that voice. As a practice in self advocacy and shifting harmful narratives we hold about ourselves, this activity asks participants to identify their inner critic and respond to it; what do we want to say back to that voice?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY LENGTH: 1 HOUR

10 minutes for instructions | 40 minutes for crafting | 10 minutes for reflection

MATERIALS

Crafting materials (magazines, newspapers, drawings)

Paper, glue, scissors

Items to draw with (markers, colored pencils, crayons, pastels)

Notes for the facilitator

- This exercise requires vulnerability and would be best placed after trust has been built with participants.
- Make it your own! Combine this with an affirmations exercise such as Exercise 9: Create Your Own Affirmations.

When using this activity with children:

- Consider age (recommended range: 15–18 years old)



HOW TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE

- 1 Ask survivors to reflect on a word or phrase they often associate with their inner critic, and write it down in large letters on a piece of paper.

Examples: “Bad parent/sibling/partner,” “never do anything right,” “always choose the wrong partner,” “never stick up for yourself,” etc.
- 2 Then, using the art supplies provided, participants will cover up that word with images and other words/phrases reflecting their strengths and capabilities, or aspirations, essentially “disproving” what was originally written down.
- 3 Eventually, what they wrote down will no longer be visible, and they will have a new image filled with positive words, visuals, and affirmations about their own strengths and capabilities. Debrief with reflection questions.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you notice about how you felt at the beginning of this activity?
- Why did you chose that word or phrase to associate with your inner critic?
- How did it feel to cover up the word or phrase?
- How did you feel at the end of this exercise?