



## Tool 12

# Four Steps for Taming the Inner Critic and Recruiting the Inner Ally

The nature and persistence of internal conversations, either as interference or support for our abilities, is vital to consider in our work with the mentee. As mentor-coach, we listen for evidence of the mentee's inner critic (interference) and inner ally (support) as she or he shares insights, observations, and reflections. (See *When Mentoring Meets Coaching*, Chapter 8, pp. 183–185, for more on internal conversations.)

We help the mentee build the capacity to notice when their inner critic shows up, loosen its highly subjective grip, and create a more objective space, where they are able to first *notice* and then *choose* whether they want to live into or move beyond the limitation.

Similarly, we help build the mentee's capacity to notice and call on their inner ally, when additional resources or potential is required. As mentor-coach, it can be helpful to develop conversational shorthand to flag the presence of the inner critic or the absence of the inner ally.

Once the familiar messages from the mentee's inner critic have been identified, it is important to listen for evidence of them and reflect it back to the mentee.

**Mentor-coach:** *I'm hearing tentative language here. Who is that speaking?*

Alternatively, if it feels like the mentee is feeling under-resourced in meeting a challenge, you might invite them to recruit their inner ally.

**Mentor-coach:** *And what does your inner ally say about your ability to meet this challenge?*

## Four Steps to Tame the Inner Critic and Recruit the Inner Ally

The mentee can follow the steps below to expand their awareness of their inner critic and inner ally as well as their ability to choose how they want to respond to them. The integration of these four steps will grow as the mentee's awareness increases. Like all new behaviour, this progression requires practice, commitment, and support over time.

### Step 1 Identifying

- Identify the messages that you consistently hear from your inner critic and/or inner ally.
  
- Describe the impact of these messages on you.



## **Step 2 Recalling**

Recall a recent situation where your inner critic or inner ally showed up.

- *What were its messages?*
  
- *What was the impact of the messages on you? on others?*

## **Step 3 Noticing in the Moment**

Notice, in the moment, the presence of your inner critic or inner ally.

- *What messages are you receiving?*
  
- *What is the immediate impact of the messages on you?*

## **Step 4 Noticing and Choosing**

Notice, in the moment, the presence of your inner critic or inner ally, and choose how you want to respond.

- *What do you say to your inner critic to get it out of your way?*
  
- *How can you harness support from your inner ally?*