

Inner Critic or Conscience?

*Understand
the distinction.
Identify the
difference.*

JACQUI ALDER

*'It's not how others see you which
matters, it's how you see yourself.'*

JACQUI ALDER

Hi, I'm Jacqui Alder.

Thanks for taking the time to download this resource. I hope you find it helpful.

Helping you is why I'm here.

When women come together in the spirit of mutual support, magic happens. Let's face it, we could all use a little magic in our lives.



As women you and I face some specific challenges.

When I started this venture, my goal was to help women tune into themselves, focus on what's important, and act accordingly.

In the years since I created my [original self-coaching journal](#), I've been actively engaged with many of the women who've used it.

These women, the women I mentor, and the women in my community workshops have taught me much.

In particular, I've learned **how difficult you find it to hear yourself above the noise.**

Why does it seem so noisy?

As a woman, you're living in the middle of significant social change. **Whilst much has changed since the times of your grandmother and mother, much has remained the same.**

The result is you're in between two worlds. One is where your role remains defined in traditionally feminine lines such as nurturer, carer, wife, or mother. The other is the world of work, study, career, and business where roles and the concept of success are still largely defined in masculine ways.

It's virtually impossible to live up to these competing expectations. Striving to do so can be frustrating and exhausting.

Consequently, women today are experiencing an elevated sense of inner conflict.

Together, these factors can **fuel your inner critic and lead to increased self-doubt and reduced self-confidence.**

If you identify with the above, then this resource is designed to help by quietening your inner critic.

Doing so *is one of the methods* that may **soothe your sense of inner conflict.**



About Your Inner Critic

If you have an inner critic, you'll likely experience her as a judgemental inner voice who wags her finger and tells you what you should and shouldn't do.

Did you notice I said 'if'? Not everyone has an inner critic. Some people have no form of inner voice at all. I share this with you as it reinforces **one of my central messages**, one I hope you'll remember. **We're all different, so what works for others may not work for you and vice versa.**

I figure you're reading this because you have an inner critic, she's overly active, and you'd like to do something about it. Before you start work, here are some important things I'd like to share with you first.

You weren't born with an inner critic.

For the vast majority of us having an inner critic is a natural part of the human experience, yet we weren't not born with one.

Your critical voice originated around the time you developed language skills. This is why **some people hear the voice of their parents when their inner critic is speaking.**

As you've continued to develop and experience life, your inner critic has absorbed your hurts and your fears, and will likely continue to do so. **When she speaks, your past hurts and fears are speaking. This is why what she says can hurt you or cause you to feel fear and shame.**

If you're to come to terms with her, you'll need to develop compassion for your inner critic – even when she's being mean to you.

The voice of your inner critic is your voice.

Not all negative inner dialogue comes from your inner critic.

There's a tendency to categorise all negative thoughts as being from your inner critic, or in the case of women, as a result impostor syndrome.

Personally, I **loathe the whole impostor syndrome narrative** because it's unhelpful and **reinforces the myth that women as a gender lack confidence.** But that's a topic for another day.

*Compassion
for your
inner critic is
self-compassion.*

Not all self-questioning or self-doubt is unhealthy.

There are many circumstances where it's healthy and necessary to check in with yourself or to keep your ego in balance. **This healthy inner dialogue occurs when your conscience is guiding you.**

About Your Conscience

Your conscience is your ethical compass. It develops throughout your childhood as you learn your moral code* and become able to distinguish right from wrong.

The purpose of your conscience is to help you make healthy choices and function as a positive member of human society.

For example, a young child will learn that it's wrong to steal another child's toy.

As you can see, whilst they are different, your inner critic and your conscience also have some things in common.

The tricky thing is, how do you tell the difference?

* Note: Your moral code is a function of the social culture in which you were raised, and your own beliefs developed through experience.

Inner Critic or Conscience?

There's a seemingly simple distinction: your inner critic works against you, and your conscience works for you.

Simple, but not necessarily easy to get a handle on. It takes practice at listening to yourself and patience while you learn to tell the difference.

One of the emotions that may confuse you is guilt.

This is because you can feel guilt for different reasons. Here's my suggestion on how to make the distinction when trying to understand which type of guilt you're experiencing.

A poke in the ribs.

When your **inner critic** wants to bring you into line, so you succumb to her bullying. This type of guilt comes from a concern about how others will react or judge you.

A prick of conscience.

When your **conscience** lets you know you're out of step with your values. This type of guilt arises from a concern you may be betraying your own ethical standards, and prompts you to reconsider your actions.

Now it's time to focus on you.

In the table below, I've listed some **clarifying questions and guidance** notes. These will help you **distinguish** whether your current inner voice is **your critic or your conscience**.

| FOCUS | QUESTION |
|--------------------|---|
| TONE | <i>How is my inner voice speaking to me?</i> |
| LANGUAGE | <i>What words and phrases do I hear her say?</i> |
| MY EMOTIONS | <i>What emotions do I feel in response?</i> |
| MY BODY | <i>What physical response do I feel?</i> |
| USEFULNESS | <i>How does what she's saying help me deal with the current situation or future situations of a similar nature?</i> |
| VALUES BASE | <i>Is my inner voice treating me in alignment with my values? E.g., Respect, Kindness.</i> |
| OVERALL | <i>When I take all of the above into account, is my inner voice working for or against me?</i> |

Grab a blank journal or some paper, go somewhere where you can hear yourself think and write down your answers. The more you practice this, the better you'll become at telling the difference.

| INNER CRITIC | CONSCIENCE |
|---|---|
| <i>Judgemental Scolding Minimising</i> | <i>Encouraging Inquiring Constructive</i> |
| <i>Should / Shouldn't /Can't Stupid, lazy, etc</i> | <i>Could / Perhaps Words of encouragement</i> |
| <i>De-energised Fear, Anxiety, Hurt, Guilt* Disheartened (disempowered, down)</i> | <i>Energised Curious, Thoughtful, Guilt ** Uplifted (empowered, up)</i> |
| <i>Clenched jaw, Churning tummy, Tension headache, Sore back</i> | <i>Neutral, I can feel myself smiling</i> |
| <i>Unhelpful Closed statements. Past focus. What I did wrong, or didn't do.</i> | <i>Helpful Open questions. Future focus. Learning, inspiration.</i> |
| <i>No</i> | <i>Yes</i> |
| Holds Me Back | Guides Me Ahead |

How does it feel?

At this point, **I wish you were sitting opposite me so I could ask you.** Other women I've worked with tell me they feel relieved; relieved to have identified whether it's the unhelpful or the helpful inner voice speaking. Also, because the process has helped them quieten their mind to some degree, if not entirely. **How about you?**

What would you say your emotions are?

I recommend **you write your emotions down** as it's a helpful way of processing them. Any time you spend practice observing your emotions, be they positive or negative, puts you on the path to improved self-management and self-empowerment.



Inner critic or conscience?

Was it your inner critic or your conscience?

Depending upon which it was, I've some final **suggestions for you.**

Your Conscience

If it's your conscience speaking, reflect upon **which of your core values is motivating her.** Then, write down why the particular value is important to you.

Doing this will **help you tune into your conscience** and be less likely to experience doubt or resistance when she speaks to you. Once you've done so, follow her guidance and **keep reflecting upon your values** as you walk with her.

I can't stress enough the importance of this. Research has shown **regular values reflection is particularly beneficial for you.**

It enhances your sense of self-worth and helps you overcome barriers.

If **you'd like some help** reflecting upon your core values, the values exercise from my self-coaching journal is available to **download from my website for free [here](#).**

Your Inner Critic

If it's your **inner critic** speaking, try imagining her as a young child and look at her with kind eyes. Remember, **she's you and you deserve compassion.**



*'Look at yourself
with kind eyes.'*

Listen to what she has to say. **Don't respond by arguing or justifying yourself.** This'll fuel your inner critic and drain you. It's more helpful to **kill her with kindness.**

Listen for her emotions and lift her spirits by focusing on how you can **turn those negative emotions into their positive opposite.** I've a scientific term for this technique: **The Flip It.** This is something you can do anywhere, anytime you feel your inner energy is draining you. Ask yourself, *'How can I Flip It?'* Focus on how you'd like to feel instead and what you can do to make the change.

One Last Thing

Remember, this is but **one of the methods** that can help soothe your sense of inner conflict. It's not the only method, and it doesn't work for everyone.

I recommend you **try it and persevere** through the initial discomfort you'll likely experience.

If after doing so you find **it doesn't work for you, stop.**

Sometimes things aren't right for you. It may also be that the timing is not right, or you're not ready.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is to let go.

Either way, I wish you well.

With love Jacqui.



INNER CRITIC or
CONSCIENCE?