

Responding to a Harsh Inner Voice

Identity values and self compassion | Clinicians | 10 to 15 minutes

Explore self criticism without debating the client or prescribing positive thinking.

Use a recent, manageable example and ask permission before changing the language. The goal is a more workable response that the client can believe. Neutral accuracy may be more accessible than warmth or compassion at first.

Understand its role

Client: I am useless. Clinician: That is a painful way to be spoken to, even from inside. Would you be willing to look at what happened just before that thought? If the client agrees: What is this voice trying to prevent or make you do? Reflect the answer without declaring the voice helpful or harmful in every situation.

Move toward a fair account

Clinician: Could we describe the event as a camera might record it, then add what a fair person would need to understand? Client: You want me to make excuses. Clinician: Responsibility still matters. I am asking whether a global insult helps you repair this specific event. What wording would feel both honest and fair?

Choose a response

Clinician: When the thought returns, what would you like to do next? Offer VAL03 if useful. Possible next steps include a repair, a practical support, a pause, or a valued action. Close with: Does this language fit you, or should we change it?

Language the client found believable and the action they selected