

Beliefs

Vanessa and Joan were both faced with the same potential stressor: the judge’s order to attend Narcotics Anonymous for one year. Because Joan felt that Narcotics Anonymous would do her some good, she did not react with stress to the judge’s order. She did not find the idea of going to Narcotics Anonymous stressful.

However, because Vanessa felt that she didn’t have a problem and didn’t want to go to Narcotics Anonymous, she reacted with both anger and stress to the judge’s order. When she went to Narcotics Anonymous, she hated it.

Despite facing the same potential stressor, Vanessa felt stress, but Joan did not. The difference between Vanessa and Joan was their beliefs. In other words, Vanessa hates Narcotics Anonymous while Joan enjoys Narcotics Anonymous because they have different beliefs about whether they have a problem with drugs, whether they need help with that problem, and whether Narcotics Anonymous can help them. In this case, what a person believes has a tremendous impact upon what he or she feels.

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EXERCISE 3

Please answer the following question:

Name an event that you found stressful. How might you have felt about it if you’d had other attitudes and beliefs about the situation?



Part 3: Building a Positive Self-Attitude

Addiction affects your attitudes and beliefs in serious and negative ways. The drive for alcohol and other drugs made you say, do, and think things that you wouldn't ordinarily. Now that you are in treatment and early recovery, you may become even more aware of the ways in which you have hurt yourself and others. This awareness can make you feel bad about yourself.

But the reality is that right now, by working through this session, you are doing something good for yourself and others. Treatment is a powerful step toward emotional health. During this time, you can start working on your self-esteem.

We have what can be called an internal critic. Your internal critic judges you harshly. Your internal critic may tell you that you are inferior, self-centered, unattractive, unworthy of love, or hopeless. The internal critic is an irrational part of your life. The internal critic can lower your self-esteem. But you also have a rational side. Fortunately, your rational side can confront your irrational internal critic. Doing so can help to increase your self-esteem. This section will show you how.

Understand Your Internal Critic

Your irrational internal critic can be harsh and mean. Your internal critic can blame you when things go poorly. Your internal critic may tell you that you always cause problems. Your internal critic may tell you that you are not good enough or smart enough. Your internal critic may tell you that you will never get better or make it through treatment.

As mean and irrational as these self-criticisms can be, they provide a form of self-protection. It may sound strange, but these irrational self-criticisms are ways in which you unconsciously try to protect yourself. The problem is that they don't work that well, and they hurt you. As a first step, it can be useful to try to understand the meaning behind irrational self-criticisms.



LEARNER OBJECTIVES FOR PART 3:

You will

- Understand that you have an illogical internal critic
- Learn how to challenge illogical internal criticism
- Focus on your strengths
- Accept things you cannot change

Your internal critic judges you harshly.