

An Inner Relationship Focusing Approach to Transforming the Inner Critic

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Abstract

This dissertation explored how the practice of Inner Relationship (IR) Focusing affects participants' relationship with their self-criticism. A mixed-method research design was utilized with a qualitative emphasis. Ten individuals participated in a month-long, IR Focusing workshop that specifically addressed working with the "inner critic." The Self-Criticism Questionnaire, a Likert-scale self-report measure, was administered pretreatment and posttreatment. Following the workshop, a semi-structured interview was used to investigate participants' experience of the workshop, as well as, their experience of self-criticism in general.

A paired samples two-tailed t-test determined that the pretreatment and posttreatment scores of the Self-Criticism Questionnaire were not statistically significant. Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) Constant Comparison Method was used to analyze the qualitative data; four major themes and four minor themes emerged. Some participants reported that IR Focusing affected their relationship with self-criticism through its fostering of an increased awareness of its general process in the self, its fostering of its somatic aspects, and the process of disidentifying from self-criticism. The IR Focusing microprocess of *sensing into the body* was one of the specific ways that some of the participants reported working with these somatic aspects. One of the last and perhaps most significant ways that some participants reported their relationship with self-criticism was affected was through the practice of relating to it in a more compassionate and accepting manner. Specifically, some participants reported using the Focusing microprocesses of *acknowledging* and *listening* to interact with their inner critic in a different and more beneficial manner.

Focusing-Oriented therapists can use these results to enhance their conceptualization of the inner critic and the manner in which they guide clients in Focusing sessions that are working

with inner critic issues. Therapists who are not Focusing-Oriented can also use these results to enhance their understanding of how to facilitate change in their clients' relationships with self-criticism. Perhaps one of the most important clinical implications is the importance of conceptualizing progress regarding inner critic issues, not in terms of reduction or elimination, but rather in terms of change occurring to the client's *relationship* with his or her inner critic.