

How to Manage Your Inner Critic (a.k.a. your Evil DJ)

And avoid being hijacked by your negative thoughts.



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How to Manage Your Inner Critic

Key Takeaways

- **Your thoughts are not necessarily facts.**
Challenge those negative inner-critic thoughts.
- **Women can calibrate or rate their performance and abilities differently to men —**
often unknowingly and usually more negatively.
- **When your Inner Critic or Evil DJ is in charge, it can adversely affect your perceptions, decisions and actions.**

In the video, Kate lost her confidence at work in a very short time because her Evil DJ dominated her thoughts and distorted her perspective of how she was performing. By working extra-long hours, and feeling stressed and exhausted, Kate became much more vulnerable to the influence of her Evil DJ's negative narrative.



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Personal Insights Activity 1 – What are Your Triggers?

Take a few minutes to reflect on what situations, tasks or scenarios such as those listed below trigger your Evil DJ or inner critic.

Once you have thought about your triggers, share and compare these with a partner.

Circle the ones that are true for you.

Do you hear negative sound tracks when:

- you are tired or stressed?
- considering trying something you haven't done before?
- things haven't gone as well as you hoped?
- someone else gets praised or promoted and not you?
- you compare yourself to others?
- you are given a compliment?
- you are given feedback?
- you have to sell yourself or your achievements?
- someone doesn't reply to an email or acknowledge your work?
- other?

Personal Insights Activity 2 – What Soundtracks Does Your Evil DJ Play?

Now you've thought about what scenarios can trigger your Evil DJ, it's time to think about the 'soundtracks' you hear the most. Each person's Evil DJ has a few negative themes it plays more than others. What are yours?

Once you've identified your Evil DJ's most common soundtracks, consider whether certain soundtracks play only with specific triggers. Then share your discoveries with the group.

Which negative themes or soundtracks does your Evil DJ focus on more than others?

- "I'm not good enough"
- "I'm not achieving enough"
- "I'm scared of failing"
- "I'm not ready yet"
- "She's/he's way better than me"
- "I feel like an imposter"
- "I'm not doing that well/I didn't do that well"
- "Other people are judging me poorly"
- Any other themes?

Do you notice certain soundtracks play at specific times? What are they?

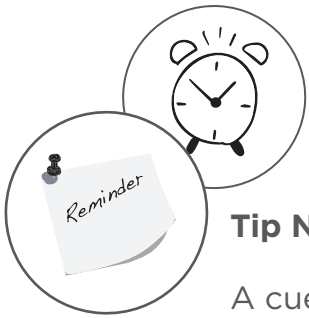


How to Prevent Being Hijacked by Your Evil DJ...

Now you know what triggers your Evil DJ or Inner Critic (and the soundtracks it likes to play), you can pay closer attention to managing your thoughts when you experience a trigger event.

But it's not always that easy is it? In Kate's case, she was too stressed, tired and run-down to have the presence of mind to ask if her Evil DJ was in charge.

What's needed is an external 'cue' or interrupter—something that makes it easier to pause and take stock even when stressed. This is where the tip below comes in...



Tip Number 1 — Choose a Cue to Check in with You

A cue is something that reminds you to take an action you want to take in the future. It's often used to create a new habit. It could be a bracelet or fitness band, calendar reminders, alarms on your phone, or a picture or note on your desk. Its job is to prompt you to pause for a moment and check to see if your thoughts are constructive.

Ideally, you need to check in on your thoughts several times a day, especially if you are feeling tired or stressed.

Check in Questions:

When you check in on your thoughts, ask these 3 questions:

- Am I stuck in my head right now?
- Is my Evil DJ in charge?
- If so, ask: Is there any evidence to support these thoughts?

Exercise: Choose your Cue

Take a few minutes now to select a cue that feels right for you. What can you choose that you will notice even when you are very stressed?

Once you have chosen your cue, plan how you will make sure you use it in the week ahead. Share your 'Cue Plan' with the group.

My Cue is:

This is how I will use my Cue:

Two More Techniques to Try

1. Play the Name Game

Help create distance and objectivity from your negative thoughts by talking to yourself as if you were another person...in other words use your first or given name rather than the pronoun “I” and say “you” not “me”.

This technique helps to detach you from your thoughts and allows you to consider them more objectively. It makes it easier to challenge what your Evil DJ’s try to tell you.

EXAMPLE

Kate would say: “Kate, how are you going to get this project done?” (Rather than saying “How am I going to get this project done?”)



2. Ask When You Think About the Past

When something doesn’t go as well as you hoped, don’t waste time repeatedly criticising yourself or dwelling on what went wrong.

It’s important to avoid lingering regret. Research shows that, if you only focus on regret and self-blame, you are more likely to perform worse in a similar situation in future.

Instead, create a problem-solving and growth mindset by asking yourself questions about what other, additional actions you could have taken to improve the outcome. Try to ask open-ended questions, especially those beginning with ‘What’ or ‘How’. This is called ‘counterfactual’ thinking.



Techniques Continued

If you can reflect on past events by trying *'Ask When You Think About the Past'*, you are more likely to do better at a similar task in future.

EXAMPLE

Instead of regretful self-criticism such as “You messed that up”.
Kate could ask herself: “Kate, what else could you have done to prepare?”

REMEMBER

Repeatedly criticising or blaming yourself can actually lead you to perform worse in a similar situation in future.



Pay it Forward

USE A CUE THEN HELP SOMEONE ELSE

Now you've learnt how to keep your Evil DJ in check, it's time to practise. Commit to using your chosen cue regularly in the next week to check in and challenge your thoughts. The more you try it, the more you will build this constructive new habit.

You can also use these techniques and ideas to help a friend, colleague or family member who appears to be under the influence of their Evil DJ or Inner Critic. Ask them to pause and think about what evidence there is for the thoughts they're having. Then get them to come up with their own cue, so they can continue to check in with their thoughts and tune out their Evil DJ.

Remind them:

Your thoughts are not necessarily facts.

