

Clarifying Internal Voices

1

The following tool is a simplified version from the book “More Transforming Negative Self Talk” by Steve Andreas, available on Amazon.com.

1. Select voice *“Remember a troublesome internal voice that has criticized your behavior in the present moment, reminded you of past failures or embarrassments, or foretold future failure, etc.”*

2. Listen to the voice *“Now listen carefully to the sound of this voice—the tonality, volume, tempo, hesitations, etc. that you hear—all the qualities that allow you to recognize someone’s voice on the phone instantly, out of all the thousands of voices you have heard.”*

3. Identify voice *“Whose voice is this? Is it your voice or someone else’s?”* If it is someone else’s voice, go directly to step 4, below. If it is not ask, *“Who did you learn from to talk in this way?”* If you can’t identify the voice, ask, *“If you did know, who would it be?”* or *“Who does this voice remind you of?”*

4. Add image of person *“As you hear this voice, see the person who is speaking to you, and watch all their facial movements, expressions, gestures, etc., to find out what else you can learn about their experience as they talk to you.”*

5. Larger context *“Now expand the scope of what you see and hear to include the larger context in both space and time. Where are you, and what just happened that this person is responding to? View this event in detail, including what happened earlier that was relevant to this event, and also what happened later as a result, in order to understand it more fully and completely.”*

6. Notice speaker’s limitations *“Notice what that person was simply unable to do because of their upbringing, beliefs, frustrations, or other inadequacies or limitations. Realize that both what they said, and how they said it, may have had very little to do with you, and a great deal to do with their difficulty in communicating clearly and directly.”*

7. Clarify message *“Ask the person, ‘Would you please clarify your message? What would you say to me if you had been able to express yourself fully, and talk honestly about **all** your experience of this situation? What is it that you really want me to hear?’ ”*

8. Give thanks for any clarification *“Thank this person for clarifying their communication.”* If the communication is still unclear, ask again—as many times as necessary, thanking them for each response—until their communication is clear to you.

9. Ask for the positive intent *“Ask the person, ‘What is your positive intent in telling me this?’ ”* If the response doesn’t appear to be positive, ask for the intent of this intent. *“Thank the person for this response, and ask them, ‘What is your positive intent in telling me that?’ ”* You may need to ask several times before you receive an answer that you think is positive, and that you can agree with. Usually the positive intent is some kind of protection, either for you, the voice, a third person, or a group.

10. Give sincere thanks for the positive intent *“Tell this person, ‘Thanks very much for telling me your positive intent.’ Then ask them, ‘Would you be willing to consider communicating in a*

For private NLP sessions or NLP training with Mark Andreas visit: www.markandreas.com

The following tool is a simplified version from the book “More Transforming Negative Self Talk” by Steve Andreas, available on Amazon.com.

different way, so that it would be much easier for me to pay full attention to what it is that you want me to hear?’ ” Usually you will get a “Yes” answer, because this proposed change supports the positive intent in communicating with you even *better* than what it had been doing. If you get a “No” answer, that means that there has been some miscommunication. Back up one or more steps and clarify the miscommunication before moving forward again.

11. Explore different ways of communicating *“Explore with this person different ways that they could speak to you until you find one that both of you like. This could mean different words, different voice tone, tempo, tonality, etc. Whatever most clearly communicates the positive intent.”*

12. Test in the contexts where the voice used to speak in the old way *“Ask this voice to practice communicating to you in this new way in the original context or contexts where it used to speak in the old way, and find out how it goes? If it goes well, Ask, ‘Does any part of me have any objection or concern about any of the changes that have been made?’”* If you notice any objections or resistance, back up one or more steps to modify how or when the voice speaks to you, and then come forward again.

13. Rehears in the future *“Imagine future situations where this voice can support you by communicating to you in this new way. Step in and experience now, what it will be like.”*

Working with Objections:

If any objections arise, in any sensory modality (feelings, images, words or sounds), first discover whether or not it is actually an objection, and then do whatever is necessary to satisfy it in order to reach agreement and congruence.

There are three different fundamental ways to satisfy an objection:

a. Adjust the change so that it no longer interferes with one or more other important outcomes that you have. For example: *“Choose the voice of a different trusted friend, and find out if that works better for you.”*

b. Carefully contextualize the change so that it doesn’t occur in any context in which it might interfere with some other important outcome. For example: *“This change might only be appropriate in your personal life, not in your professional life, where it could cause trouble.”*

c. Reframe or re-categorize the meaning of either the change or the objection to the change, so that there is no longer any conflict between their outcomes. *“You object to having this person speaking using your friend’s voice because you think you might lose track of reality. But actually it is a sign of your creativity and flexibility; crazy people are very rigid and uncreative. And as long as you don’t tell anyone else about this voice, it won’t concern them.”*

Or, of course, you can use any combination of the three kinds of modification above—either simultaneously or sequentially.