



## Strengthen Leadership by Calming Your Inner Critic

- *Do you wish you had more courage to speak up in meetings?*
- *Do you want to contribute more than you currently do?*
- *Do you know you have more potential than is being expressed?*

### **Expressing Your Leadership**

Leadership involves being visible, taking a stand, and mobilizing others into action. It includes creating vision, making plans and decisions, managing conflict, caring about and empowering others. It requires self-esteem, plus the willingness to assert, take risks, demonstrate courage, and most risky of all, to be ourselves.

Many of us have been taught to muffle our voices. Even when opportunities show up we may pass them by because we are inhibited from using our power.

Ultimately, leadership is about the best use of ourselves. In Walt Whitman's words, "we influence by our presence." The route to using ourselves fully and embodying our power requires that we become clear about our strengths, our gifts and talents. We need to keep our voices strong and feel entitled to use them for self-expression and making contributions to the outside world.

### **What Inhibits Leadership**

If we have a strong inner voice that is critical, it may thwart use of our full leadership capacity. A strong "Inner Critic" tells us that we are not good enough, that we fall short in comparison to others, that we will not be taken seriously, that someone else could do a better job, that we will never leave a mark and that we need more training before we are ready to speak up. The Inner Critic dampens our spontaneity, casts doubt on our instincts and holds us back.

Many of us hold the myth that our Inner Critic is our best motivator, holds our interests at heart and just wants us to improve. This isn't so. In fact, self-criticism increases insecurity and self-consciousness and ultimately gets in the way. It can promote standards of perfectionism and stymie mobilization.

### **Good Leaders Have A Strong Inner Coach**

Good leaders know how to take action and move forward. They have a strong Inner Coach that gives them neutral feedback-- both positive and corrective-- and encourages them to take the next needed action. When something does not go well, an Inner Coach says, "OK, what's to learn from this?" or "What supports do I need to do this differently next time?" The Inner Coach encourages, celebrates and stays determined to keep us learning and feeling proud of our efforts.

## **Increase Confidence and Leadership Skills**

### **Tips for Strengthening The Voice of An Inner Coach**

1. Think of a success in your life and identify your qualities that contributed to making it a success.
2. Name these qualities as leadership skills.
3. When something doesn't go well, find a way to tell yourself what you can learn & note what you might do differently next time.
4. When something goes well, congratulate yourself and identify which of your skills contributed to your success.
5. Listen to your self-talk and become aware of the automatic internal voices in your head. Hear what they say to you.
6. Interrupt your self-talk when it is negative and find something more constructive to say to yourself.
7. Create an image of a positive Inner Coach (think about the people in your life who have played that role).
8. Bring this image to mind several times a day and practice saying encouraging messages to boost courage and confidence.
9. Challenge yourself to take more risks and express your leadership self - deliberately take a stand, speak up, choose to take the lead when an opportunity shows up.
10. Remind yourself that you are practicing new skills. Be patient, change is a process.