
Developing a Nurturing Voice

ATTACHMENT WORK

*. . . If you ever, ever feel like you're nothing
you're perfect to me.
You're so mean
When you talk about yourself,
you are wrong
Change the voices in your head
Make them like you instead. . .*

excerpted from "Perfect" by Pink

Developing a nurturing inner voice is one way to counterbalance the critical parental messages that so many of us have introjected—the voice that keeps telling you that you're not good enough, that something is wrong with you, and what a disappointment you've always been and will always be. Presently, that voice and its messages serve only to limit you and keep you stuck in the past, whereas creating a new one—a responsive, empathic one to calm, soothe and encourage you—would be much more helpful in the present.

EXERCISE 1

Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I know anybody who has this nurturing quality? (S)he may be real or fictional, it really doesn't matter. Who is it?
2. When you've settled on one person, bring him/her to mind and allow him/her to truly come to life. Picture the person in his/her nurturing aspect. What does this person look like? What is (s)he doing? Perhaps singing to a child, stroking his/her hair? Using a calming voice, when a child is scared? Cooking a favorite meal? Reading a storybook? Whatever feels right.
3. Allow that scene of nurture to become as vivid as possible. Truly listen to the words being said and the tone of voice (s)he is using.
4. Now, imagine being one of the people in the scene, either the child or the nurturing figure, whichever feels right for you. What would it feel like to be that child/nurturing figure? Try taking on that role. Truly embody it for a few minutes.
5. Now imagine a time when you were criticizing yourself. Hear the words you said and the feelings that those words brought up for you.

6. Now consciously switch out of the critical voice and into this more nurturing one—words and tone.
7. Notice what it feels like to be responded to with kindness and compassion instead of criticism.
8. Practice this imaginally a few more times.
9. The next time you find yourself using the critical voice, once again consciously switch out of the critical voice and into this more nurturing one, both words and tone.
10. Practice switching voices as often as you are able.

EXERCISE 2

Remember a time when someone said, “thank you,” and you knew that (s)he truly meant it.

1. How did it feel to be acknowledged, appreciated, or loved?
2. Embody that feeling for a few moments.

Now remember a time when a loved one acknowledged something good that you did or said.

1. How did it feel to be acknowledged, appreciated, or loved?
2. Embody that feeling for a few moments.

Now remember a time when you felt appreciated or loved.

1. How did it feel to be acknowledged, appreciated, or loved?
2. Embody that feeling for a few moments.

What do you value most about yourself?

Of the people to whom you matter (and who matter to you), if asked, what would they say they value most in you? What qualities do they admire?

Now, think of your closest friend. If asked, what would (s)he claim to value most in you? Are those things the same (i.e., do you value the same things in you that your friend does)?

What other things about you do you value, but others may not recognize? What are they?

**The following section includes imagery scripts designed exclusively
for furthering this work.**