

More About Self-Criticism ^[1]

[Liya Panayotova](#) ^[2], Psychologist, liyap.com3.4K reads

There's more to self-criticism than meets the eye. It is related to both our brain as well as body. There are several types of self-criticism and various ways of its manifestation.

Some gender differences may also be observed, with regards to self-criticism. It has several advantages and disadvantages and it's important to analyze whether or not self-criticism is affecting you adversely.

Brain Activity

Research has found that self-criticism is linked to certain areas in the brain. Engaging in self-criticism is seen to activate areas in the lateral prefrontal cortex as well as dorsal anterior cingulate cortex both of which are responsible for processing error detection and correction.

People high in self-critical activity tend to show an activated dorsolateral prefrontal activity. This demonstrates that error processing and behavioral inhibition are more active in self-critical individuals. On the other hand, ventrolateral prefrontal cortex activity is seen among those with the self-reassurance trait.

It has been suggested that self-criticism stimulates the same neurophysiological systems as criticism by others. This implies that self-criticism then becomes an internal stimulator, while maintaining the key threat, linking neurophysiological circuits.

Effects of Self-Criticism

When we make errors or have particular faults that may lead to social disapproval, it is perceived as a threat to the self. Self-criticism is thus viewed as an attentional focusing on faults and errors with a punitive response.

Bodily Effects

Self-criticism affects our bodies by triggering the fight or flight response, which further sends signals to increase blood pressure, adrenaline and cortisol. We are therefore readying to confront or avoid the threat. It can also lead to weight gain as well as suppress our immune system.

Psychological Effects

Self-criticism has further been associated with a range of psychological disorders, namely mood disorder, self-harm, social anxiety, aggression and post-traumatic stress disorder. The earlier the onset of excessive self-criticism, the higher the predictor rate of psychological problems.

However, it is also important to remember that it is never too late to alleviate self-critical behavior.

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