

Are You a Critic?

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

The easiest path you can take is to be critical of others.

- You can be critical of your boss.
- You can be critical of your job—and the jobs of others.
- You can be critical of your family—and other families.
- You can be critical of the government—and critical of society.
- In fact, the more you look, the more you can be critical of everything going on around you.

This is what most people do. The odds are pretty good that you do it too.

When being critical becomes your focus, then you often become paralyzed. You can become such a critic of everything that others do that you become afraid to do anything because you know exactly how others will criticize it.

Throughout most of my life the people I have witnessed are concerned with:

- doing; or,
- are critics of those who are doing.

There are a lot of directions that you can take in your life. For the most part, the direction most people take is to be a critic. The best direction you can take is to be a doer.

Critics spend their time thinking about what is normal and what is abnormal—and trying to be as normal as possible. Their self-esteem comes largely from their own perception that they are “fitting in” and somehow superior to those who are not necessarily doing so. They spend their lives avoiding being what they might be—and, instead, do everything they can to be “normal” and fit in in the way(s) they believe that they should.

Most of the world is built upon finding fault, judging and being critical. The media reports largely negative news about rapes, car crashes, murders, explosions and other mayhem. Then, of course, there are constant scandals about politicians taking bribes, politicians having affairs, celebrities getting arrested, and other people having problems.

And then there is your circle of friends. Here, there are stories about secret affairs, addictions and other issues. Very rarely is there gossip about how so-and-so had a really nice day and is really happy.

The hardest path you can take is to not be critical of others, do your own thing, and be the person who is criticized.

You want to be criticized for doing, making an effort, and trying to make something of yourself.

In fact, the less you criticize others and the more you are out there doing what others will not, the more successful you will become.

You are what you think about. Where you focus your attention will determine how happy you will be. Focus on what you are doing and want to do and not worrying about what others are doing.

It is easier said than done. That is why so few people are successful in this world; they are too afraid of what others are doing. Success is how you feel inside, your excitement about doing what you want to do, and your happiness in the world. By the time most people are 25 years old, they are dead inside spiritually and have been reduced by their own internal voices and critics to a shell of what they could be. They die spiritually when they are young and spend decades before they die physically. Once the critical voice takes hold, it becomes hard for people to realize their full potential—emotionally, physically, and in every other way.

Most people in the world are critics. Because they are critics, they worry about how what they do will look to others all the time. Because they worry about how what they do is going to look, they rarely do much of anything. Their actions and opinions are largely governed by what is the normal and right thing to do. Anytime they see someone doing something that others are not doing, they make fun of that person and they may exclude that person and gossip about that person.

When you are a critic, and associate with other critics, you become programmed to be critical and negative of not only others, but yourself as well. Every action you take, you judge yourself under a microscope, and you are careful to only do what you think you should be doing. If you look at others negatively and associate with others who constantly look at others negatively, you will be influenced by this and look at yourself negatively as well.

People who are critical of others and the world typically live with a sense of fear of being judged and a high level of self-consciousness that hurts them and limits their lives in a massive way. In truth, the world and happiness can open up to you when you see the world as welcoming, kind, and a fun place to live. Your experience of the world and life will all be a result of how you view it. Most people are more concerned with looking good to others than feeling good about themselves.

There are many aspects associated with looking good—often at your own expense. People do all sorts of things in an attempt to look good to others:

- They buy expensive clothing and wear expensive clothing they may not even like to look good to others
- They buy cars that they think make them look good
- They work in jobs they do not enjoy, but which they think look good to others
- They spend their time trying to associate with people they believe make them look good, but who they may not like
- They get plastic surgery and starve themselves

- They buy homes in expensive neighborhoods

Everywhere I look, I am surrounded by people trying to look their best to others.

Someone in my neighborhood just got indicted for insider trading and is losing everything and going to prison. For years, I watched this person going around trying to impress others with his wealth, get in the most exclusive social circles and buy respectability. Most recently, he spent a few million dollars buying a film at Sundance so he could run in the same crowd as producers and movie stars.

The first time I met this man and his wife I knew that he was extremely concerned with what others thought—and that he was going to get in trouble. He was far too critical of everything around him; he understood the social and financial pecking order far too well. He was too up-to-date on styles, cars, neighborhoods and everything. He was a critic in the extreme, and he would do anything to be perceived in the right way—in the short term at least. Now he is going to prison, and the Securities and Exchange Commission is taking everything he owns.

When you become overly critical of others and your values are out of whack, you need to keep amassing wealth, connections, material objects and so forth to make sure you too will not be looked down upon and criticized by others; you will do so by any means necessary.

I spend my days corresponding and speaking with some of the most talented people in the country: Attorneys who went to the very best law schools and have the presence to get jobs in some of the best law firms in the United States. These attorneys are also some of the most unhappy people out there. Many are working in jobs that they positively do not enjoy—and even if they do enjoy parts of their job, they are drawn to work in the most unpleasant of conditions (such as large law firms, where they work incredible hours and are largely disposable).

Despite their unhappiness in these jobs, most attorneys rarely end up doing anything else. I have listened to attorneys complain about their work for a few decades now and it is very rare that they get the courage to walk away and do something they like. The reason for this most often has to do with “how it will look” to others. If you suggest a less prestigious job to them, they generally will “laugh” and tell you they could never do that. The reason is because of how it would look to others—their parents, peers, and so forth. Most attorneys are more concerned with how they look to others than with their own happiness.

Have you ever met a social climber? Like I am sure you do, I also come across them often. At one point in my life, I was good friends with a well-known movie producer. Once word got out, all sorts of aspiring actors and actresses suddenly wanted to be my friend. I was an attorney at the time and had no interest in being in the movie business. Notwithstanding, I suddenly had a stable of people hungry to be in the entertainment industry seeking introductions and wanting to be my friend. When I got tired of being friends with the producer, my wannabe friends disappeared as quickly as they appeared.

When you associate with people because of how you think they will make you look, that is your own internal critic governing you. I know of people who have gotten married to others because of how they thought they would make them look. I once knew a man who had a wife who treated him horribly but who was very charming at parties. One day over lunch, that man told me he had married his wife largely because he thought her social skills would get him ahead in his career. Here, the man was apparently more concerned with his career than being happy with someone he loved.

I work in an office building in the center of Malibu that is surrounded by all sorts of shops and so forth. When I walk around here, it looks like a war zone: certain people look so thin, they appear to be dying, and others have had so much plastic surgery they look like they are suffering from nuclear radiation burns. Why starve yourself—or slice up your body so much? Because you are concerned with how others view you to an extreme and because you are a critic.

There is nothing wrong with being concerned about how you are viewed by others, or even being somewhat critical of yourself. The problem is that most of us take this critical voice to an extreme and it does no good. When you concentrate on finding what is right in your life and what others are doing right, you see the world as a happier place—and you become happier too.

You need to learn how to manage your mind. When you are inspired by what you and others are doing right, you become more enthusiastic about the world and do and act more. You become more inspired by what you can achieve and excited about acting.

Find reasons to be excited and not to be a critic. There is much to be happy about in the world. You are alive, for one. You have an opportunity to make a difference. You can become a better person. You have achieved something in your life and can achieve more. People love you and you can love yourself. You are not starving. You live in a great part of the world—and more.

You can also find reasons to be excited for other people. When you are critical of other people, they do not want to be around you. They avoid you (as they should) and will find reasons to dislike you. This creates a cycle of bad energy and emotions that does no one any good. Imagine how much better your own world (and the world of others) would be if you found reasons to be excited for others instead of being critical of them. Also, if you are not critical of others, you will not be critical of yourself as well. There is certainly nothing wrong with being liked by others and yourself—being critical is one of the largest obstacles to this.

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