

Author Gay Hendricks (The Big Leap is a book I highly recommend) says criticism and blame are the biggest destroyers of intimacy in close relationships.

So Gay and his wife Katie went on a criticism and blame “fast” years ago and their relationship bloomed into the marriage they both had always wanted.

This wasn't easy at first **because they didn't realize how much they were addicted to criticizing and blaming one another.**

But over time, **they normalized taking responsibility.**

I love this so much, “normalizing taking responsibility.” Not only does it take everyone off the hook so to speak, it makes growing and becoming the woman you’re supposed to become just a natural part of your own evolution.

Adopting a less critical and blame-free approach in relationships can significantly enhance intimacy and overall relationship satisfaction with everyone you come in contact with AND yourself!

Here are five scientifically supported strategies to become less critical and stop the habit of blaming:

- 1. Practice Mindfulness and Self-awareness:** Mindfulness involves being fully present and aware of our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings without judgment. By cultivating mindfulness, you can become more aware of your critical thoughts and the impulse to blame. This heightens self-awareness and allows you to pause before

reacting, choosing your responses more wisely, and breaking the cycle of criticism and blame.

Research has shown that mindfulness can **improve emotional regulation**, reduce stress, and enhance relationship satisfaction by promoting empathy and connectedness (Kozlowski, 2013).

USE your tools to create an even stronger mindset. Meditate, journal, and use positive affirmations...all of these tools help you build an incredible mindset, helping you leave the blame, shame, and criticism game behind.

2. Develop Empathy: Empathy involves understanding and sharing the feelings of another person. Cultivating empathy can help shift the perspective from a self-centered viewpoint to a more compassionate understanding of others' experiences and challenges.

This shift can reduce the tendency to criticize or blame, as it fosters a deeper understanding and connection between partners. **Studies indicate that higher levels of empathy are associated with better relationship quality and less conflict** (Simpson, Ickes, & Blackstone, 1995).

Developing empathy with yourself is simple—just think of yourself as your very best friend. Would you be that brutal with your bestie? Of course not.

3. Use Effective Communication Techniques: Learning and practicing effective communication techniques such as **active listening, using "I" statements instead of "you" statements, and expressing needs and feelings openly and respectfully** can help reduce the urge to criticize or blame. These techniques encourage expressing

yourself without attacking the other person, which can prevent defensive reactions and promote a more positive and constructive dialogue. Research supports that positive communication patterns are crucial for relationship satisfaction and longevity (Gottman & Levenson, 1999).

And believe it or not, you can do this with yourself. Accept responsibility without criticism or blame and employ empathy instead. Watch how you begin to evolve!

4. Foster a Growth Mindset: A growth mindset, the belief that personal qualities can change and improve through a concerted effort, can be particularly beneficial in relationships. It encourages seeing mistakes or shortcomings not as fixed traits but as opportunities for growth and learning.

Embracing this mindset can help you refrain from criticism and blame, opting instead to focus on positive changes and solutions. Studies have shown that a growth mindset is **associated with more adaptive relationship behaviors**, such as forgiveness and positive problem-solving (Dweck, 2006).

When you apply a growth mindset to the way you think, everything flows in line: your relationships, your actions, your words. Not only that, but your relationship with yourself is far less harsh.

5. Engage in Joint Problem-Solving: Instead of resorting to blame when issues arise, couples can benefit from engaging in collaborative problem-solving. This approach involves working together to understand the problem, generating potential solutions, and agreeing on a course of action.

It shifts the focus from blaming each other to tackling the issue as a team. Research suggests that couples who engage in cooperative problem-solving experience higher relationship satisfaction and are better able to resolve conflicts (Bodenmann, Meuwly, & Kayser, 2011).

Implementing these strategies can be challenging, especially in the face of established patterns of behavior. Its consistent practice and a commitment to personal growth and relationship health that can lead to significant improvements in the way partners interact, enhancing intimacy and reducing the destructiveness of criticism and blame.

References:

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