

“Slaying the Inner Critic”

By Carol Ann Erhardt

I have a little demon who sits on my shoulder and whispers negative things in my ear. If I try to ignore him, he gets louder and louder. Sometimes he screams until I give up, shut off my laptop, and go sulk in a corner while chowing down on a huge chocolate candy bar. He’s been known to say very hurtful things. *“You’ll never finish this book. Why are you even trying?” “You better go back and start over, because everything you’ve written is stupid. No one will like it.” “You should start something new, ‘cause this just isn’t working.” “Get a job as President of a huge corporation. It’ll be easier than you getting this piece of junk published.”*

Yes, my little demon is male. I don’t know why. Maybe your demon is female. Or maybe your demon is just...a sexless demon. In any case, you would probably like to “do in” your demon, too. All that negativity is so counter-productive to what I’m trying to accomplish. I’ve even been tricked into believing I have writer’s block by this horrid creature on my shoulder. I’ve gone into hibernation, immersing myself in reading book after book, accompanied by various and many chocolate treats. I’ve made myself so busy with “things that need accomplished” around the house, that I just don’t have time to write.

Score 20 for the demon, zero for me. It’s time to stand up for ourselves and fight back! How, you ask? Here is my secret formula for slaying the inner critic.

First, close your eyes. Envision what your inner critic looks like. If you’ve never done this before, do so now! It’s very important that you know what your critic looks like. Mine, as I said, is a little demon. He has tiny legs and clawed feet that grip onto my shoulder. His head is huge and round. He is hairless, has big teeth, a huge mouth, and slanted, evil eyes.

Second, imagine yourself picking up a weapon that will destroy your inner critic. Since you’ve already given your critic substance, finding the right weapon should be easier.

Now imagine yourself slaying your inner critic with the weapon you’ve chosen. I have a pointed pitchfork. With that pitchfork, I stab my demon all the way through. I love to hear his screams. Heh, heh, heh. Now I picture a huge roaring fire and stick the pitchfork with the demon attached into the flames. What a stench! He turns black, and finally crumbles into nothingness.

Perhaps this seems a bit extreme to those of you who dislike violence. I abhor violence. However, my inner critic is only a figment of my imagination. Thus, I condone the use of extreme force to destroy this “illusion” which I’ve allowed to infiltrate my creative forces.

I hope this works for you! But, “shhh.” Don’t let your inner critic in on the secret.

Happy slaying! Happy writing!