



# Transforming Your Critical Voices and Limiting Beliefs

By Kris Hallbom

I worked with a talented 32-year old man, to help him release an unconscious critical voice that was holding him back in his life. Oscar had an inner critical voice that traveled everywhere with him, and in his mind, he constantly heard the words,

“You better not be wrong, or else you'll lose everything and then you'll be all alone.”

Now take a moment and try on Oscar's critical voice, by saying the above statement and notice how it makes you feel...

Most people experience a sense of dread when they say the above statement, which is exactly what Oscar felt all of the time. Hence, Oscar's biggest problem was that he was always stressed out and worried about saying or doing the wrong thing, and he could never relax.

Interestingly, it was also this same voice that motivated Oscar to do well in life. Because he was so afraid of doing the wrong thing, he tried to do everything right. From an outsider's perspective, Oscar appeared to have a charmingly perfect life. However, on the inside he felt tightly wound up like a ball of rope, and he felt helpless and all alone.

## What is an Unconscious Critical Voice?

An unconscious critical voice is an inner voice that was heard at some point in a person's childhood, and stays with the person throughout his or her life. Whenever you ask someone if they have an inner critic or a critical voice that follows them around, most people will emphatically say, “Yes!”

What's even more interesting is if you ask the person to point to the location of their critical voice, they'll typically know right where it is! And more often than not, the critical voice will be located either behind their head or it'll be located on the left or right side of their head. In Oscar's case, the critical voice was located behind his left ear.

## Your Critical Voices Are Directly Connected with Your Limiting Beliefs

Another interesting aspect about critical voices are not only do they say damaging things like, “You're stupid” or “That was a dumb thing to say”... they can also serve as a limiting belief.

In Oscar's case, it turned out that his critical voice was a limiting belief that came from violent events in his childhood. Oscar and his parents immigrated to the United States from El Salvador when he was a small boy, due to the onset of the Salvadoran War. Several of their friends and neighbours had been tortured and killed for saying or doing the “wrong” thing, which is why they left the county.

As a child, Oscar parent's often told him that it was important to

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## “From an outsider’s perspective, Oscar appeared to have a charmingly perfect life”



work really hard in life and to never make any mistakes. This belief was drilled into Oscar from an early age, because his parents had seen so many of their friends executed during the war for doing and saying the wrong thing. Oscar then generalized this belief to include his work life, his personal life and his overall safety. As a result, he had a huge fear of saying or doing the wrong thing.

So, Oscar kept repeating statements in his mind like, “You better not be wrong, or you’ll lose everything, and then you’ll be all alone.” And over the years, this belief transformed into an unconscious critical voice that followed him everywhere. Of course, the positive intent of the critical voice was literally to protect him and keep him safe by doing and saying the “right” thing.

Moreover, this unconscious critical voice represented all of the heinous and violent crimes that happened in El Salvador during the Civil War. So in a sense, it was what I call a Cultural Limiting Belief...

### Cultural Limiting Beliefs and How to Change Them

My husband Tim Hallbom and I have identified a lot of cultural limiting beliefs in the private work that we do, especially with clients who have parents or grandparents that immigrated from other violent and war infested countries. Whenever I work with someone on their most core issues, I ask them a lot of questions about the history of their family—because more often than not, a person’s core issue will go back a couple of generations.<sup>1</sup>

When I first started working with Oscar, he told me that “he had this critical voice going on all the time” and it really stressed him out. I asked him where the critical voice was located, and he pointed to the left side of his head. I then asked him to literally pull the voice away from him— and place it about six feet in front of him, so that he could see it floating in space.

I asked Oscar, “Whose voice is it, and what do you see in the space where you placed the voice?”

“This is really strange,” he replied. “I see a man’s index finger pointing at me and it’s telling me that I better not get it wrong!”

I asked Oscar who the “mysterious finger” belonged to, and he immediately said that it was his grandfather’s finger! I then asked him if there was anything else located behind his grandfather, and he replied, “Yes, I can see a whole ocean of people standing behind him, and they’re all of the people who were killed during the Salvadoran Civil War.”

### The Healing Power of Positive Intention

It became clear to Oscar in that moment that the positive intent of his inner critic was all about keeping him safe. It was literally to avoid getting killed. Oscar got emotional at this point during the session, because he realized that not only was the voice trying to keep him safe and protect him, but it was also helping him to stay connected with his family and his Salvadorian roots. I asked Oscar to honor and acknowledge all the feelings of love and connection that he had for his family and the Salvadorian culture, as a whole.

Afterwards, he told me how incredibly good it felt to do that, because his parents had taught him to forget where he came from, and to only think of himself as an American. And now he felt more connected to his cultural roots.

The next thing I did was to ask Oscar to fill the space behind his left ear (where the critical voice had been) with golden light, so that the space would no longer be empty. In his pioneering work with critical voices, my husband Tim has found that it’s not ecological to leave a void when you remove a person’s critical voice, because sometimes another voice will take its place.

Keep in mind that the critical voice has occupied its location in space for a number of years, and habit alone can prompt the unconscious mind to refill the space with another critical voice.

### Dynamic Spin Release and the Energy of the Mind

I then asked Oscar to think about all the stress and anxiety that he felt whenever he thought about the critical voice and the cultural limiting belief— and to notice where he felt all of the negative feelings in his body that were associated with those things. ▶

## “The positive intent of the critical voice was literally to protect him and keep him safe”

▶ “Whenever I think about that critical voice and belief, I get a tight feeling in my throat,” he said. I then told him to imagine pulling the tight feeling out of his throat and to place it out front of him so he could see it floating in space. As soon as he could see the image of the tight feeling in his throat, I asked him what it looked like.

Oscar replied, “I see an image of a gooey black blob with pointed edges around it, and it’s turning clockwise.”

I told him that is was great that he could see which way it was turning, and I continued to say, “Now, go ahead and spin the image of the black blob counterclockwise as fast as you can, until it explodes into a bunch of little particles floating in space. As soon as this happens, you’ll see a big cosmic vacuum come in and suck away all the particles... and then a symbolic gift will instantly appear where the particles were. Now tell me, what kind of a gift do you see in front of you?”<sup>2</sup>

Oscar told me that he saw a golden pocket watch with his minds eye, and that it was floating in front of him.

“What does the pocket watch mean to you, and what is the healing message it has brought for you?” I asked.

“The pocket watch means that it is my time to have the life I want, which means being able to finally relax and enjoy all the success that comes my way,” he said in a relaxed voice tone. “I also feel like the pocket watch belongs to my grandfather, and seeing it makes me feel more loving and connected with him,” he added.

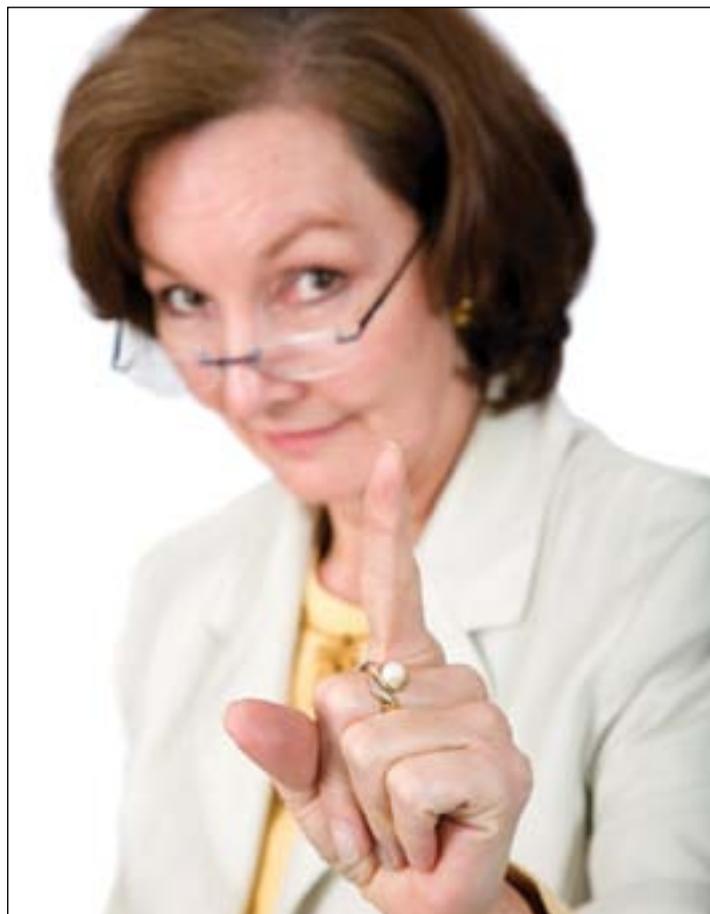
I then told him, “Good, that is a nice metaphorical gift for you right now in your life... Now, go ahead and send the golden pocket watch out on a mission to the outer rims of the universe to collect all of the healing energy and wisdom throughout the universe, and throughout all of space and time,” I continued in a hypnotic voice tone.

“When the pocket watch returns, it will bring you back another gift or it will transform into another healing metaphor that is special to you. Remember that time is simultaneous, and these gifts come back very quickly. So, look in front of you right now, and tell me what your new gift is?” I asked.

“Well the pocket watch came back with a bright shining star,” he said with a smile on his face and a look of surprise. “Ahhhh, a bright shining star, what a great gift!” I said in a confirming tone.

“What is the meaning of your gift,” I asked, and Oscar emphatically replied, “It means that I can shine now and I’m safe to be who I am! It’s my time to shine, and I can relax and enjoy my success!”

In that moment, I noticed the muscle tonus in Oscar’s face soften



up and his whole body completely relaxed. Which was way different from the tightly wound posture that I had seen at the beginning of the session.

“Now go ahead and reach your hands out in front of you,” I said to Oscar, “and imagine the pocket watch and the bright shining star floating back into your hands. As soon as they’re in your hands, you can bring them back into your body, letting the healing essence of those metaphorical gifts float throughout every cell in your body—throughout your DNA, and throughout the energetic essence of who you are.”

As I was saying this, he pulled his hands towards his chest and imagined bringing all of it in. He then fell into a deep trance—and I continued to do a hypnotic induction with him, in which I tied together all of the healing metaphors from his gifts with his overall goal of being able to completely relax and enjoy all the success that he had achieved at such a young age.<sup>3</sup>

When he came out of his trance, he looked really different from when he first walked into my office. His body posture was more relaxed and he seemed totally comfortable in his body. A few weeks later I received an email from Oscar, and he told me that his life had totally changed as a result of the work we did that day. ■

**End Note:** Some of the details in this article were altered to protect the privacy of the client.

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### Footnotes:

1. Dynamic Spin Release Training Manual by Tim and Kris Hallbom, NLP California (Burlingame, CA 2010).
2. Dynamic Spin Release and the Energy of Your Mind by Kris Hallbom, NLP California (Burlingame, CA 2008).
3. Patterns of the Hypnotic Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D. (Volume I) by Richard Bandler and John Grinder (Meta Publications, 1975).