

The Quacking Duck (aka The Inner Critic or Gremlin)

Each of our minds is equipped with an “inner voice” designed to keep us from doing stupid and dangerous things. It protects us from doing things that lead to public ridicule, embarrassment, or making fools of ourselves. It keeps us safe by reminding us what is needed to be accepted by others and to be acceptable to others.

This inner voice of judgment or “the Quacking Duck” is very resistant to change. Consequently, when we are in the process of making significant life changes, the *DUCK* comes out in full force bombarding us with messages designed to maintain the status quo. Its primary tactic is to generate a sense of negative self-judgment, which results in self-limiting behavior. It condemns, criticizes, assigns blame, and instills guilt. It does whatever it takes to keep things as they are, all in the name of protecting us from ourselves.

Each of our *DUCKS* has its own favorite set of messages for getting what it wants and preventing us from getting what we want. Typical *DUCK* quackings include: “*I should . . .*”; “*I can’t . . .*”; “*They won’t like it if . . .*”; “*Give it up, stupid.*” While the *DUCK* works mostly at an emotional level, it can also operate from a very rational level: “*I’ll be more productive if I keep things going as they are*”; “*After all, I have to earn a living*”; “*I need more time to think this over.*” Not all such statements are *DUCK* messages; thus, we must develop the necessary skills for distinguishing between the negative judgments of the *DUCK* and clear valid assessments. One of the primary values of developing self-awareness is in making distinctions between self-limiting beliefs and self-actualizing assessments, assessments that move us toward our goals.

Without a doubt, the *DUCK* will appear from time to time no matter how self-aware we are. While we can’t get rid of the *DUCK*, nor should we, we can learn to reduce its negative effects. To do this we must first become aware of its presence. We must notice when it speaks and what it says. Answering the following questions promotes an awareness of the negative effect of *DUCK* statements: “*When do I find myself judging myself?*” “*When do I find myself judging others?*” “*What does my DUCK say to limit my behavior?*” “*When is my DUCK most active, least active?*” “*What did my DUCK prevent me from doing today?*” “*When my DUCK quacks, how do I handle it?*” “*What does my DUCK say about my future plans?*”

Some people find it useful to name their *DUCK* and maintain a list of what it is fond of saying and when it speaks. Other people find it useful to directly confront their *DUCK* in the following manner: “*Is this my DUCK talking? Hello DUCK. What purpose are you seeking to achieve with these negative statements of yours?*”

Others prefer to simply SHUT THE DUCK UP!

