

Amnestic Socratic Double Standard Technique

What is the Amnestic Socratic Double Standard?

The Amnestic Socratic Double Standard is a TEAM-CBT technique designed to address resistance to changing how you feel and think. Often, we hold onto negative emotions and thoughts because they secretly serve a purpose or reflect a deeply held value.

In this method you interact with an "Amnestic Clone." A version of yourself who remembers your negative feelings and their advantages, but has "forgotten" the downsides. By talking to this clone, you can safely examine the benefits of your current state and then gently challenge them to see if they truly make sense.

Case Example: "My depression motivates me"

Ramesh was struggling to find a new job and felt he had failed at life. He felt deeply depressed and, while he wanted to feel better, he felt stuck. Through a Positive Reframe, Ramesh realized his depression actually had some "good reasons":

- It motivated him to succeed.
- It showed he had high standards for himself.

To help Ramesh decide if he was ready to let go of these heavy feelings, the therapist suggested the Amnestic Socratic Double Standard.

Therapist (as Amnestic Clone): Ramesh, I remember feeling depressed, and I think it's for a good reason. I can't quite remember why, though. Can you remind me how this depression is helpful to me?

Ramesh: Well, it helps motivate you to succeed in life.

Therapist (as Clone): You're right! So, I should definitely keep feeling depressed, because it is the best and only way to motivate myself to succeed. Is that right?

Ramesh: Well, no. I wouldn't want someone else to have to suffer just to stay motivated. I can probably learn to be motivated without having to feel this miserable.

After the role-play, Ramesh realized that although these feelings might feel like advantages, he wouldn't want someone else just like him to suffer the disadvantages just for those benefits. He realized he could get those same advantages in other ways without the pain of depression. He also noticed that he was holding a double standard and realized he wanted to treat himself kindly, just as he would for others.

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How You Can Use This Technique

Step 1. Identify a negative thought or emotion you want to change and write it down.

Step 2. Identify the Advantages Ask yourself: "How does this help me?" or "What good things does it say about me?" (e.g., it protects me from criticism or shows I have high standards) . Write these advantages down.

Step 3. Imagine the Amnestic Clone Imagine a clone of yourself who has amnesia. They remember the feeling but only remember that it is advantageous based on what you wrote in Step 2. They are convinced they should continue feeling this way.

Step 4. The Double Standard Test Ask yourself: "Would I want this clone to continue thinking these thoughts or experiencing these emotions?" Why or why not?

Step 5. If you answered "no," imagine your clone saying: "Isn't this the best and only way to get [Advantage]?" . How would you respond to each advantage to show your clone they deserve a different path?

Step 6. Write down how you felt after your response.

Important Things to Keep in Mind

- The Goal is Insight: This process helps clarify your true desires and values rather than forcing change.
- No Wrong Side: The part of you that wants to change and the part that wants to stay the same are both trying to help you.
- Clarity First: Whether you choose to move toward change or stay where you are, the most important outcome is gaining clarity on why you feel stuck.

Final Note

As you practice the Amnestic Socratic Double Standard, remember that the "clone" represents a part of you that is trying to protect your values. By offering that clone the same compassion and logic you would offer a dear friend, you begin to break down the double standard that keeps you stuck. Whether you decide to move toward change or find peace in staying where you are, the goal is to make choices that feel intentional and kind to yourself.