

Erosion: The Psychopathology of Self-Criticism

By Golan Shahar

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Self-criticism is a personality trait that has been implicated in a wide range of psychopathologies and developmental arrests. Defined as the tendency to set unrealistically high standards for one's self and to adopt a punitive stance towards the self once these standards are not met, self-criticism is both active and cyclical. Self-critics actively create the social-interpersonal conditions that generate their distress, and their distress itself exacerbates self-criticism.

Erosion offers a comprehensive treatment of self-criticism based in philosophy, developmental science, personality and clinical psychology, social theories, and cognitive-affective neuroscience. Professor Golan Shahar expertly summarizes the most recent research on the topic and synthesizes theory, empirical research, and clinical practice guidelines for assessment, prevention, and treatment. The book rests upon three elements that, as Shahar argues, are central to the maintenance of self-critical vulnerability: the importance of a concept of an authentic self or the need to "feel real"; the importance of intentionality and goal-directedness; and the power of interpersonal relationships and cultural context. Shahar argues that exploring these elements requires an integrated clinical approach that incorporates multidimensional assessment and interventions which reconcile science, practice, and policy. The result is a broad and scholarly volume that is useful to practitioners, researchers, and theorists interested in self-criticism.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This impressive book is rich in conceptual, empirical, and clinical analysis of the common but formidable problem of pathological self-criticism. Clinical scientists and practitioners alike will enjoy the author's engaging style and will find much to learn and think about." --*Constance Hammen, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor, Departments of Psychology and Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles*

"Golan Shahar's new book makes important contributions to understanding the psychological basis of self-criticism, one of the core mechanisms that underlies not just depression, but much other psychopathology as well. Anyone who has interest in these areas will benefit from this creative, scholarly, and very insightful book." --*John Riskind, PhD, Professor of Clinical Psychology, George Mason University*

"For anyone who doubts that research can have clinical relevance or that clinical expertise can help to better conduct and understand the implications of research, this book is the perfect antidote. This inspiring, wise, and innovative book is a must-read for clinicians and researchers alike. A major achievement." --*Paul Wachtel, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Psychology, City University of New York*

"Golan Shahar's original and brilliant book integrates the capacity to address the singularity of every human mind with the necessity to identify the deep structures that lie under and beyond the singular performances. Through his profound study of self-criticism, Shahar illuminates the overlap between two poetics that hitherto seemed contradictory: the rigorous poetics of scientific thinking and the rich poetics of clinical practice, thereby establishing a new space in which both languages come into play in a wise and graceful way." --*Dana Amir, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Psychoanalyst, Poet, and Senior Lecturer, Department of Counseling and Human Development, University of Haifa*

"It is not very often that a clinical psychology treatise manages to negotiate the lab, the library, and the clinic with great skill, humility, and sparkling wit. Golan Shahar has achieved this in *Erosion: The Psychopathology of Self-Criticism*, and the readers of his book will be well rewarded for their investment of time and scholarly energy... *Erosion* is a masterful study, and it reads easily despite detailed research and numerous theories and clinical anecdotes... I believe *Erosion* will become a classic not just in Shahar's village but around the globe as well." --*Spyros D. Orfanos, PsycCRITIQUES*

About the Author

Golan Shahar, PhD, is Professor of Clinical-Health and Developmental-Health Psychology at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, where he directs the Stress, Self, and Health Lab. Dr. Shahar is the founding director of the Ben-Gurion University Center for the Advancement of Research on Stress (BGU-CARES). He also serves as Visiting Professor of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine. He is the author of over 130 publications/book chapters in the fields of personality, stress, psychopathology, psychosomatics, and psychotherapy and currently serves as the Chief Editor of the *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*.

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