

GUIDE TO THE INNER VOICES OF MINISTRY



You have multiple inner voices. Some help you lead like Christ (Sage), while others drain you (Saboteurs). This guide helps you spot the difference.

The Sage Voices of Ministry

There are 5 Sage Powers that you tap into when you are living out of the Sage part of your brain, when your mental fitness is strong (the goal of the *Positive Intelligence*® mental fitness program).

- **Empathy** – “The compassionate pastor within.”

Question: How would I speak to a beloved congregant in this situation – and can I offer myself the same grace?



- **Explore** – “The curious disciple within.”

Question: What if this challenge is an invitation to learn? What am I being shown here?



- **Innovate** – “The Spirit-led creative within.”

Question: If nothing was off the table, what bold new response might I try?



- **Navigate** – “The wise elder within.”

Question: From the end of my life, what would matter most about how I handle this?



- **Activate** – “The faithful doer within.”

Question: What is one small, loving action I can take in the next 24 hours?



Typical Ministry Saboteur Voices

There are 10 specific negative inner voice patterns (Saboteurs) that have been identified. They are based on your greatest strengths that often get overused and abused.

- **The Inner Critic (Judge)**

Voice: “You’re failing your people; good pastors don’t struggle like this.”

Impact: Drives shame, overwork, and hiding.

Sage Shift: “What am I learning from this, and how might this make me a more compassionate pastor?”



- **The Hyper-Achiever Pastor**

Voice: “Bigger numbers, more programs – then you’ll finally be “faithful enough.”

Impact: Burnout, transactional relationships, constant striving.

Sage Shift: “If success was measured by depth of transformation in one person, what would I focus on this week?”



- **The Pleaser Pastor**

Voice: “You must keep everyone happy or you’re failing.”

Impact: Overcommitment, weak boundaries, resentment.

Sage Shift: “What is this community’s true desired outcome, and how can I love them without abandoning my own limits?”



- **The Controller Leader**

Voice: “If you don’t manage everything, it will fall apart.”

Impact: Micromanaging, no succession, exhausted staff.

Sage Shift: “Where can I empower others, trusting God and my team more?”



- **The Avoider Minister**

Voice: “Let’s not deal with this conflict/board issue/underperforming staffer. It might sort itself out.”

Impact: Unaddressed problems grow, resentment and confusion spread.

Sage Shift: “What is the gift in addressing this now? What small, courageous conversation could I begin this week?”



- **The Stickler Perfectionist**

Voice: “The sermon must be flawless; this service can’t have any glitches.”

Impact: Pressure, criticism, and paralysis; team feels nothing is every good enough.

Sage Shift: “What is already working? How can ‘excellent enough’ serve people better than ‘perfect but late’?”



- **The Hyper-Rational Theologian**

Voice: “If I can just think this through, analyze it, and get the doctrine right, I’ll be safe.”

Impact: Distance from emotions; people feel unheard or ‘managed,’ not loved.

Sage Shift: “What is this person feeling right now? How can Empathy and presence matter more than having the perfect answer?”



- **The Restless Visionary**

Voice: “On to the next idea! New series, new ministry, new initiative!”

Impact: Constant change, little follow-through; congregation and staff feel like whiplash.

Sage Shift: “Which one initiative, if fully completed, would serve our mission most deeply right now?”



- **The Victim Sufferer**

Voice: “No one understands how hard this is. I’m alone in this.”

Impact: Resignation, hidden resentment, loss of agency.

Sage Shift: “What power do I still have to choose my next loving action? Who could I vulnerably invite into this with me?”



- **The Hyper-Vigilant Watchman**

Voice: “Something’s about to go wrong – if I relax, I’ll miss it. The church, my reputation, or these people aren’t really safe.”

Impact: Chronic anxiety, over-preparing, difficulty delegating.

Sage Shift: “What real risk needs calm, thoughtful attention – and what is just my fear spotlighting worst-case scenarios?”



The goal of the *Positive Intelligence*® mental fitness program is to move you from Saboteur to Sage. We do that through a simple process that, through the program, becomes a natural habit promoting inner wellness, productivity and healthier relationships! The simple steps?

- Step 1 – **Notice**: Name the voice (“My Inner Critic is loud right now.”)
- Step 2 – **Pause**: 1-2 minutes of sensory attention (breath, feeling your heart or hands) to re-center.
- Step 3 – **Ask Sage**: Use one of the Sage questions above (Empathy, Explore, etc.) and write down what emerges.

That process encompasses the 80% muscle building activity while the program provides the essential 20% insight with the knowledge piece. Together it helps you to build new habits for life and will help you feel more in control, focused, healthy, happy, productive and enhance your communication skills!

Which inner voice shows up most often in your ministry week?

Where do you see your own primary Saboteur showing up most in ministry right now – sermons, staff leadership, or pastoral care?

If you led primarily from your Sage for the next 30 days, what would change in your congregation – and in you?

To request access to a free Saboteur Assessment contact: Barbara@ClergyLifeCoaching.com with the Subject Line: **Saboteur Assessment** and I’ll send you a link to take the 5-minute assessment