



Overcoming Criticism

6 Truths to Take to Heart

Everybody has to deal with criticism. One of my favorite authors, Seth Godin says, "If you are remarkable, it's likely some people won't like you...nobody gets unanimous praise ever. The best the timid can hope for is to be unnoticed. Criticism comes to those who stand out."

So how do you handle criticism without losing respect for yourself and that of others?

Remember these six truths.

1. If you swing the sword, everybody loses. Don't fire back at your critics. They are just waiting to get a rise out of you and you are giving them ammunition to shoot back at you. Learn to respond kindly and remember these points. First, consider the source. Are the critics out for your or the organization's good or their own? Next, use discernment in formatting your response to criticism. Don't respond publicly if you possibly can avoid it.

Don't take it personally. A friend of mine told me several years ago, "Remember your critics don't know you well enough to hate you personally. Let them get to know you so they will have a good reason not to like you." He was right. We take opposition to our ideas personally because we feel we own the ideas. We don't. Respond with kindness. Learn statements like, "Thank you for your opinion. I will think and ponder on it and do what is necessary at the right time." Always use tact when responding with kindness.

2. Look at your critics – See who is opposing you. Often you will find that they have something in common that may not be to your benefit. Look for alliances that are unusual. Is your opposition the same ones you've always fought? Are they people who have the best interest of the organization at their hearts or are their own motives ruling their judgment? People tend to follow negative trends for no good reason. British statesman Benjamin Disraeli said, "It is much easier to be critical than to be correct." I heard this in church one Sunday, "65% of people don't like change. The other 35% are lying about it." There will always be opposition to any change or new idea, so don't let it stop you automatically.

3. Weigh your critics—don't count them. Once we get into counting our opposition, we start losing. If you consider the "weight" of those who are in your opposition you might be surprised as to how little influence they have. Are your critics influencers? Are they individuals with any clout? Spend your time enlisting the support of those with respect. Make sure those who you respect and respect you are in your camp. Stay confident and you will turn your critics around. Jean Rostand said, "Take heed of critics even when they are not fair; resist them even when they are."

4. You can be rescued. No situation is hopeless unless you conceive it to be so. There is always a solution and you can be rescued from your troubles. Your own thoughts and attitude can turn your opposition around. Always keep a positive attitude around your critics and you will turn their criticism into dust. Some of the greatest cause leaders wound up in jail, Mohandas Ghandi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. Not that your goal should be to secure a criminal record but these leaders were willing to face their opposition by going to jail and wound up leading movements that freed other people. Their inner strength and devotion to their causes rescued them.

5. You have a greater purpose. Remember why you were put here. Find your purpose and stick to it. See things in the light of your entire life, not the moment of crisis. The people named in the paragraph above all had a dedication to their life's purpose. It kept them focused during their darkest days. Look inside yourself and ask what you were put in this situation for. Esther in the Bible was told by her uncle, "who know but that you have come to the kingdom for such and time as this." Maybe this is your defining moment. It is the time you were put here to take a stand and change the culture of your organization.

6. Take a look at you—be kind to & honest with yourself. Don't be so critical of yourself. We spend too much time being so hard on ourselves it gives our critics the advantage. Often you are your own worst enemy. You are the opposition you need to win over. Dale Carnegie said, "If you believe in what you are doing, then let nothing hold you up in your work. Much of the best work of the world has been done against seeming impossibilities. The thing is to get the work done."

Lightening up on yourself will help you lighten up on your critics. Show yourself some mercy. Quit remembering the times you failed. Learn from your failures and turn them into lessons for success.

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