

Effective Strategies I Use To Deal With Criticism

We all face criticism, in life, in our jobs, or business, criticism is an unavoidable fact of life.

Criticism can come from people you know: your co-workers, your boss, your colleagues, and even your loved ones. It can also come from strangers, people commenting on social media, rude customers, a driver on the road, and so on. The point is you can't go through life without criticism.

Aristotle said,

“There is only one way to avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, and be nothing.”

You will often find criticism hard to ignore. Anyone who says he or she is not affected by criticism is lying. Criticism attacks who you are, how you see yourself, or your sense of confidence in an action you just completed, there is no way you will not be affected by it.

This is why the way you choose to deal with criticism affects other areas of your life. You must have mechanisms and strategies that you use to deal with criticism.

I have learned a lot from my experiences with different types of criticism, and over the years I have learned how to manage criticism and use it to become a stronger and more resilient person.

Below, I will share the effective strategies I use to deal with criticism.

Smile and take a moment before you respond to criticism

When you are criticized, it is very important that you don't react in anger and create a situation that can get out of hand. For me, I take my time to assess the situation, I smile, and it is often a false smile, but it helps to diffuse the situation.

If you wait patiently, you show that you are the stronger person, and you don't get baited into a confrontation you want to avoid, you will avoid an incident that could create bad feelings between yourself and the other individual.

Distinguish between constructive criticism and destructive criticism

Criticism can be constructive with the intent to give valuable feedback, or it can be destructive if the sole intention is to hurt. When you are able to distinguish between the two types of criticism, you will be better equipped to deal with any criticism you face.

The main difference between both types of criticism is the intent of the person criticizing you. Constructive criticism is made to point out your errors, to help you identify areas where you can get better, and improve. The goal of constructive criticism is to help you become a better version of yourself and not to put you down.

On the other hand, destructive criticism is often malicious, the person making the criticism is not offering any solutions or trying to help you get better, instead, the person is attacking your self-esteem and your confidence.

To identify the type of criticism you are facing, you should listen carefully and try to understand the intentions of the person criticizing you. If the criticism identifies a problem you have and it offers a

solution, then it is constructive. If it doesn't and it was only made with the intention of hurting you, then it is destructive.

Ignore destructive criticism

Destructive criticism is made with the intent to hurt you, to attack your self-esteem, or it can even be done to tarnish your reputation. When someone publicly attacks your abilities, mocks your ideas, mercilessly pokes fun at your physical attributes, then that person is a destructive critic.

When you identify criticism as destructive, to protect yourself the best thing is to ignore it. You should shut off what that person is saying and stop listening. The sole intent of destructive criticism is to harm you, and you shouldn't internalize such abuse and let it have negative effects on your life.

Sometimes, ignoring criticism is not an option. If you receive destructive criticism regularly, then you can't ignore it. If it is in an office environment, then you should report it to a superior you trust will do something about it. You should never subject yourself to such constant abuse in silence.

If reporting to a superior is not an option, then you should confront the culprit. You should make it clear how that person or group of individuals have attacked your character, and that you want that person to stop criticizing you.

Always remember that the words of a destructive critic is not a reflection of your true self and block it out.

Value constructive criticism

As human beings we will make mistakes, we are not perfect. Our mistakes can attract criticism from others. When this happens, we must see such criticism as an opportunity to improve ourselves.

I am sure you value praise more than criticism, that's just been human. When people compliment us, we feel happy, and when we are criticized, we feel bad. However, the truth is that if all we ever hear from others is praise and flattery, we will never become better versions of ourselves.

When you face constructive criticism, you should try and see things from the perspective of the person criticizing you, try to identify suggestions that can help you improve as an individual. If you see constructive criticism as a learning experience, and you use it wisely, you will be a better and stronger person because of it.

According to Michel de Montaigne,

“We need strong ears to hear ourselves judged frankly, and because there are few who can endure frank criticism without been stung by it, those who venture to criticize us perform a remarkable act of friendship, for to undertake to wound or offend a man for his own good is to have healthy love for him.”

Try not to take it personally and never lose belief in yourself

Often when we are criticized we get defensive and we lash out because criticism feels like a personal attack. But this is a wrong approach. Instead of taking criticism as a personal attack, you can choose to listen to what that person is saying and then decide if the criticism is constructive or destructive.

If it is constructive, you can learn from it. Alternatively, if it is destructive, you should ignore it and move on.

Believe in yourself. The fact that someone disagrees with you doesn't make them right and make you wrong. They are entitled to have an opinion, it is up to you to stand by what you believe and see things through.

It is also very important that you don't allow criticism to negatively impact your sense of self-esteem. Stay true to yourself. By staying true to yourself, you can draw on your inner strength to deal with the setbacks you face.

Confidence in yourself also helps you to distinguish between criticism that is designed to help you get better and criticism that is made with the intent to hurt you.

Act on criticism

You have listened to your critic, you have made a decision as to whether the criticism is constructive or destructive, now you need to act on the criticism.

If the criticism is constructive, address the issues raised by the person and work towards becoming a better person.

If someone has criticized you in a way that is helpful and with the intention to aid you in fixing your flaws, thank that person. When you appreciate sincere criticism, you have shown maturity, and that person will be more likely in the future to give feedback in a friendly and supportive manner.

If the criticism is hurtful, try to understand what motivated that person to attack you. The person could have been jealous, the person could have been lashing out due to a bad mood, or the person could simply

be a very malicious individual. What is important is that you know that a person's opinions do not reflect who you truly are.

Accept that criticism is a part of life

Criticism is everywhere. At home, at your workplace, when meeting strangers, you will always face criticism in one form or the other. This is why you must accept criticism as a fact of life.

Criticism can be good or bad, but it is unavoidable. So you should get used to it, learn how to obtain feedback that will make you a better person from good criticism, and how to disregard hurtful and negative comments that come with destructive criticism.

Constructive criticism provides you with a learning opportunity, it is feedback on the quality of decision you have made in life. If you learn from it, you can become a better person.

You can also learn from negative criticism. More often than not, there is an element of truth in every critical statement. You can identify the truth from what has been said and leave the negative and hurtful comments behind.

Never lose focus

If you are been subject to constant negative and destructive criticism, you should never let it change who you are. If what you are doing works for you, and you can't identify any positive suggestions from the criticism you face, then please don't change who you are just to please others.

You should remain confident in who you are. Confidence doesn't mean arrogance or the belief that you are beyond criticism. It means you believe in your ability and you don't let the opinion of others affect your self-esteem.

Accept things you cannot change about your life. And love yourself for who you are. Keep your distance from people who derive joy in hurting others and putting people down. Hang out with people who sincerely care about you, and who are comfortable with the real you.