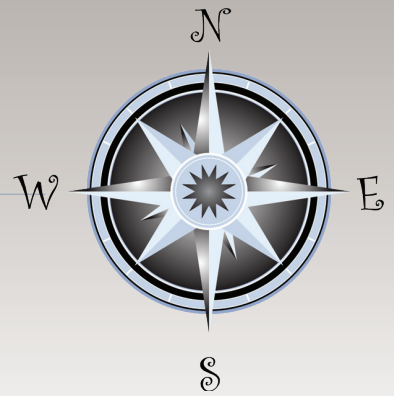


The Courage Principle of CRITICISM



*If you learn from criticism, you will earn position with great men.
If you reject criticism, you will damage your own interest.*

PRINCIPLE OF THE WEEK

"I hate it!" is the most common response to the word criticism. By definition, it is the act of analyzing or passing judgment. As strange as it may seem, we can benefit greatly by receiving criticism. Some people think that all criticism is just a negative approach to things. Nothing could be further from the truth. Constructive criticism can be a useful tool to help us bring correction to important areas of our lives. It can be a difference maker and should be viewed as an opportunity for growth. Winston Churchill once said, "Criticism may not be agreeable but it is necessary. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things."

Everyone who honestly wants to learn and grow should be open to criticism and even ask those they trust to give them accurate evaluations. It may be easier for others to make observations if they are asked and their answers may give us insight we have never considered before and aid us in reaching our potential.

Sometimes criticism may come from someone we view as a fault-finder with a bad attitude. Our natural instinct is to not listen to them because of their approach. But remember, others may feel the same way but may not have the courage to confront us or may be afraid they will hurt our feelings. It is important to listen and accept criticism no matter who it comes from. This does not mean that all criticism is valid but it should be considered, weighed out, and possibly even discussed with someone that we know has our best interests at heart before it is dismissed. There is value in listening to the criticism apart from the person giving it. The things they say may contain useful information to help us change and mature regardless of the spirit in which it is given.

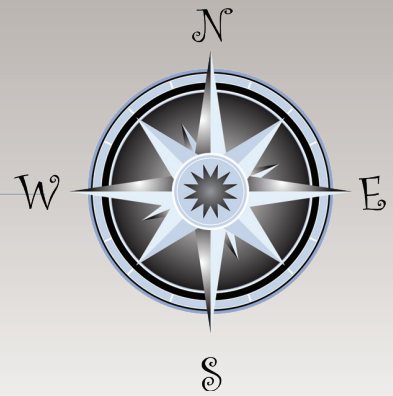
The other side of criticism is when we are the ones who are giving it. Giving criticism is a tremendous responsibility. We have the power to help someone grow or cause them to lose hope or refuse to address important issues because of our delivery. Criticism should not be given out of anger or because we feel the need to "stick it to" someone. Ideally, criticism should only be given when we truly want to see the other person's growth and have their best interests at heart. Sometimes, in a business environment, our job responsibilities may dictate the need to give criticism to someone who does not naturally bring out our "loving" side. When we find ourselves in this position, we need to proceed with caution, choose our words carefully, and make sure we stick to the facts.

Benefits

There are many benefits to receiving and giving criticism well:

1. You become wiser, grow as a person and further develop your character. You can learn and grow from criticism no matter who it comes from or how they give it.
2. You gain good judgment. If you value the truth over the personality presenting it, you are able to judge the criticism as viable or not.
3. You become a good listener and analyzer. If you keep an open mind, you then value the critic, understanding that there is an opportunity to better your actions and build more significant relationships.
4. You are able to help others improve the quality of their life by giving them clear, constructive input that is intended to help them in either their personal life or with their career.

Action Plan for CRITICISM



Characteristics

Those who handle criticism well:

- Give and receive criticism from a place of humility. Growth is always the goal – either listening to enable their own growth or speaking with the intent of promoting growth in someone else.
- Remain open minded when someone criticizes and try to really hear what the other person is saying.
- Avoid becoming defensive or stubborn when receiving criticism.
- Do not bring emotion, anger or personal attacks into the conversation when giving criticism.

6. Be objective. Do not criticize in a way that seems emotional or personal. You may also want to gently probe as to what caused a person to act in a particular way in order to open up deeper dialogue. This can help to defuse any feelings of accusation or judgment.

Remember... Thoughts become actions. Actions become habits. Habits become our destiny.

Steps to Follow

1. Be committed to humility. Regardless of if you are receiving or giving criticism, humility is a becoming trait. It keeps you from alienating yourself from others and ensures you maintain a good attitude and remain approachable.
2. Take a look at the criticism you are receiving. Is there a value or principle that you are breaking? The criticism could be a warning sign that serves to bring about the right change at the right time.
3. When you receive criticism, take the time to evaluate it. The key is to realize that there may be something in it that could bring real growth to your life or help you to do something better. Often people do not receive criticism because of pride.
4. When giving criticism, do it privately. No one likes to be singled out or humiliated in front of others.
5. Recognize and say what is valuable in a person before bringing attention to what needs to change. Show the benefits that will be theirs by bringing about the change.

Reflect and respond

1. What is your attitude when you are criticized?
2. What affects you most, the criticism itself or the person who is delivering it?
3. Do you feel you are good at giving criticism? What could you do to improve your delivery?

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|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| Evaluate yourself from 1 to 10 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Why did you give yourself this rating | | | | | | | | | | |
| What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating? | | | | | | | | | | |
| What specific action can you put into practice to test the benefits of this principle? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Check list for the daily reading of this principle | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | | | |

Completed

Not completed