



Accept Critical Feedback

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Who among us enjoys hearing that we've failed or disappointed someone? Our natural tendency is to avoid critical feedback (criticism) and those who are likely to provide it.

Yet this feedback is oftentimes exactly what you need to hear to succeed. What if instead of becoming instantly hurt or defensive, you listen to it with an open mind? What if you went so far as to actually *agree* with this feedback?

Accepting and *agreeing with criticism* is a difficult undertaking at any level of your organization.

Here's an example. Frank, your subordinate, continually frustrates you.

You: "Frank, your effort on this job was less than satisfactory."

Frank: "You never take time to provide proper direction."

You: "At your level you shouldn't need more detailed directions! Just do your job!"

Your reaction continues an unproductive cycle of 'blame' communication. Instead, stop to consider the critical feedback just provided to you.

The Wiser You: "You're right. Let's slow down to make sure we understand each other's expectations."

Similar scenarios happen daily with partners, associates, spouses, friends, even volunteers-- anyone whom you depend upon to do what is expected of them. Partners don't always do their fair share; husbands don't always take out the trash; friends are known to disappoint one another and volunteers get busy with other priorities.

The key is to accept critical feedback for what it is (and isn't) and to learn from it.

Below are my **Top 7 Tips** for making this difficult concept a habit.

1. **Seek criticism.** If you are open to critical feedback and accept it on a regular basis, it won't be such a shock when it comes. Encourage and reward those important to you who care enough to provide it, thus contributing to your future success.
2. **Be discriminate.** Don't set the same value on all criticism that comes your way. If the grocery clerk indicates that you are impatient, it may not be so. However if your partner provides this valuable feedback pay attention.
3. **Separate fact from fiction.** People offer criticism for a variety of reasons. Not all are valid. Someone may have gotten in an accident on their way to work. They are angry at themselves so they criticize everyone and everything. It may be more about them than you.

4. **Respond by agreeing.** Especially in an explosive situation, your agreeing will diffuse it quickly. “I agree that I’ve not spent enough time with you. I hear you and intend to improve. What are your suggestions?”

5. **Look deeper into the person providing criticism.** A wise person once told me that if I am upset with more than three people at one time, it’s likely me and not them. For example, I may criticize someone for not providing what I need from them instead of merely stating it. If you suspect there’s a deeper meaning, ask them.

6. **Look for themes.** Pay attention to feedback that sounds familiar. For example, if you received the same critical feedback in your last job as your current position it’s time for you to listen and make a change.

7. **Choose timing.** As with any form of feedback, timing is everything. You may be in the midst of solving a major dilemma when a partner wants to provide critical feedback on yesterday’s board meeting. It’s not that you’re not interested, but you’ll be in a better position to accept, agree with and learn from this important feedback in a few hours.

If you don’t believe you can improve something in your world to become more successful you’ve slipped into apathy which leads rapidly to a downward spiral.

Instead shake things up by looking for ways to step up your game. Ask, be open and accept critical suggestions from those whom you trust and respect.

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