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## **How Constructive Criticism Can Help Us Learn**

Taking criticism is not always easy, but if a person is smart, they can use it to their advantage and make it a positive and useful key to learning. The key is to not to overreact and get defensive. This is hard to do because it is human nature to be sensitive and self-enveloped. We become defensive when someone tells us we are not right or have not done well. It can take a very objective, rational individual to handle criticism, but anyone can handle criticism by practicing it more effectively.

Once we have learned to handle criticism effectively, we can take what is said and apply the criticism and suggestions to make what we are doing more efficient or to produce a better product. Usually the person giving the criticism would be a teacher, employer or mentor and would have more experience in what is needed and would have more knowledge to make it better.

It is a good thing to remember to accept the persons' suggestions and comments and thank them for their comments. Usually the goal in constructive criticism is to critique an individual so they will benefit or improve. One needs to remember that it is the criticizer's job to help him or her perform better and it is in their best interest to accept the criticism and apply the suggestions. This is where criticism can be used to one's own advantage. When used effectively, a person's performance will be improved the next time around.

Not only does accepting constructive criticism take practice, but giving constructive criticism in a positive way takes practice. Constructive criticism must be used effectively if the receiver is to improve. The following are four points to remember in giving constructive criticism:

- Constructive criticism has to be genuine. A person giving this criticism has to genuinely feel it is important to give.

- The person receiving the criticism must have some level of understanding of your role, and understand that you truly want them to improve.
- Do not use statements like, “I want you to...” or “You must understand...” The stage is being set for the individual to become defensive.
- Take a team approach. Use sentences like, “Let us look at the following...” or Let’s put our heads together. By doing this, you have created a collegiate type atmosphere. Both individuals are on the same level and the stage can be set to critique, not criticize, and then begin to construct a foundation for improvement.

Criticism is an important and effective tool to help people improve and learn, whether it be in a school setting, a work setting or in our homes with our families. The important thing is to not give criticism that makes the person feel defensive, but make them realize that it is to their advantage to take that criticism and apply it to improve themselves and learn from their mistakes and their experience.

## References

Peace and Healing, Williams, Dan, Psy.D., PA-C, [www.peaceandhealing.com](http://www.peaceandhealing.com)

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