

3 Healthy Ways to Respond to Crushing Criticism

One of the most important things to be able to discern, as an artist, is constructive criticism versus hateful criticism. Learning never stops. There will always be new ways to make things better, fresh tools to replace the old, and trends that outdate the last. The journey to create original artwork is often a laborious one laden with doubt. So the question that remains is *“How do we, as creative curators, deal with the criticism that we might not always see as constructive?”*

1. Remember, they're not always out to get you.

Artists tend to swoon over their own work as if it couldn't possibly get any better. Then they show it to a friend or colleague who begin pointing out things to improve, how it really isn't that appealing, or that it's not communicating the desired message. The artist then feels the onset of resentment and defense welling inside them. *Not this project*, they think to themselves. *It's perfect! Flawless!* Another thought that quickly follows is *What do they know?*

2. The person giving criticism oftentimes knows more than you do.

That might not always be the case, but if you're not just showing it someone who knows little about design, a pastor or someone in another department, then you're most likely showing it to someone who does. Instead of becoming defensive about your artwork, receive the criticism with an open mind. Try to see it from their perspective. It might not always make sense, but maintaining a respectful attitude is always key in making difficult conversations easier. Take a breath and listen.

3. Walk away.

(And I don't mean walk away from the person giving you their thoughts).

After you've received criticism, take a moment and walk away from your project. Granting yourself time to decompress and not look at it for a day or two allows you to dive into it with a fresh perspective. You begin to see where you might have made an error, or details that could be added, which can elevate your work to another level. Momentarily walking away from your art is one of the most beneficial things you can do, even before showing it to someone.

No one likes being told that the thing they've spent hours laboring over needs more work. However, criticism, constructive or not, is inevitable. Reminding yourself that your identity is not in your artwork, but in the ultimate Creator will allow you to distance yourself from emotional hurt from critics. Criticism is better received with an open hand than with a clenched fist.

"The trouble with most of us is that we would rather be ruined by praise than saved by criticism." –Norman Vincent Peale

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