

3 Things to Help You Receive Criticism Better

One of the best ways to grow is by hearing critiques about yourself from peers and mentors in relationships you trust. But not all criticism is constructive, and even when it is, it can still be hard to receive.

How do you know which criticism should be taken to heart and which should be dismissed? And how do you respond to each in a way that promotes growth?

I think there are three things to remember when it comes to dealing with criticism in your life.

First, all criticism is not created equal. Some criticism is meant to hurt you more than it is meant to help you. One way to distinguish between good criticism and bad criticism is to ask yourself: *Does the person offering the criticism have the context of relationship with you?* If someone doesn't know me, chances are the criticism they offer is based on misunderstanding.

If I don't have a foundation of friendship with a person, it's unlikely I will take their all of their criticism to heart.

Another question I ask myself is: *Does this person have the expertise to offer criticism in this area?* I might not have a strong relationship with a real-estate agent, for example, but if he or she shares advice or criticism about my real-estate decisions, I will likely consider them carefully. I might not take every critique this person gives me, but it certainly helps me know how much weight to give it.

Thinking about the source of the critique—both the expertise and relationship of the giver—helps me know if and how I should receive it.

Second, you can learn a lot by listening. Whenever I'm critiqued, especially if it's by someone I care about or respect, I try to hear the concern all the way to the end. When they are done explaining, I ask more questions to make sure I understand what they are saying. I even repeat it back to them to make sure I'm interpreting it correctly.

If the person is someone I trust because of the context of relationship or because of their expertise in a specific area, I want to know all the details of their critique so I can understand how to make the specific changes I need to make.

If I don't have a foundation of trust with the person, hearing their critique all the way to the end gives me valuable information about them and about what they are thinking.

Finally, don't always take criticism personally. Whenever I'm receiving criticism and start to feel insecure, I remind myself my identity is not built on what others think about me. Also, my identity is not built on what I am able (or not able) to do. I am not the sum of my abilities or inabilities.

My identity is found in Christ.

When I can keep this in mind as I receive the criticism, it keeps me from feeling defensive and allows me to take the criticism and use it to make myself better.

Do you have a hard time receiving criticism? What helps you make the most of it?

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