

# SENSITIVE TO CRITICISM?

## 8 STRATEGIES TO TAKE CRITICISM IN THE BEST WAY



1

### CUT YOURSELF (& OTHERS) SOME SLACK.

We all react to criticism. In these moments, treat yourself with the same kindness that you would a valued colleague or loved one. As far as possible, also assume the best intent from the one providing the criticism.

2

### MANAGE YOUR EMOTIONS.

If you feel the temperature rising in terms of defensiveness or anxiety, take some deep breaths or take a quick walk. If you feel the need to snap back in a defensive way, step away to rethink your response.

3

### NOTICE YOUR SELF-TALK.

The inner story we tell ourselves can dial up or down our emotions. Thoughts like, "How dare they think that way?" will escalate defensiveness and anger; "I didn't do this right, so I'm a failure" will escalate shame.

4

### LISTEN WITH WITH CURIOSITY.

Replace negative self-talk with curiosity and an open mind. Think about how you can learn and improve because of this feedback. Look for the growth opportunity.

### AFFIRM YOURSELF.

Prepare a few affirming statements you can tell yourself when receiving criticism, e.g., "This is a blessing in disguise, not a personal attack" or "I seek improvement, not approval."

### FORGIVE YOURSELF.

Avoid falling into shame and despair by telling yourself, "Everyone makes mistakes and no one is perfect. I choose to be grateful for this stepping stone in my personal growth."

### AVOID "WHAT ABOUT-ISM."

We sometimes try to take the heat off of ourselves with defensiveness and counter-criticism: "Oh yeah? You think you're so perfect? What about [insert counter-attack here]." Step away if you feel the need to do this. Re-engage when you can remain open and curious to the feedback.

### SAY THANK YOU.

Regardless of the intent, criticism can be a gift to help us improve. Express appreciation for this gift.

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### THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

- Think about a few, recent situations where you received feedback or criticism. What was your reaction? What were the results of your reaction on yourself and others?
  - What would change for the better if you could change your reactions to criticism?
  - Which of these strategies might work the best for you?
- Who can support and hold you accountable in using these strategies?

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